INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI®

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A

LITERARY TEXT AND IDEOLOGY IN THE WRITINGS OF THE YOUNG MARCEL PROUST (1887-1900)

by

FRANK ROSENGARTEN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French in partial fulfillment of the requirements for degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2000

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

UMI Number: 9959220

Copyright 2000 by
Rosengarten, Frank

All rights reserved.

UMI®

UMI Microform9959220
Copyright 2000 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

© 2000

FRANK ROSENGARTEN

All Rights Reserved

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 8, 1999
Date

Chair of Examining Committee

December 8, 1999
Date

Executive Officer

December 8, 1999

Prof. Robert Dombroski

December 8, 1999
Date

Prof. Royal Brown
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Abstract

Literary Text and Ideology in the Writings of the Young Marcel Proust (1887-1900)

by

Frank Rosengarten

Adviser: Professor Mary Ann Caws

The main purpose of this dissertation is to elucidate the relations between Proust's early fictional and critical writings and the evolution of his ideas concerning art, society, and politics. To accomplish this task, the dissertation attempts to do the following:

1) establish a theoretical framework for the ideological criticism of literature in general, while at the same time, especially in chapter two, examining a series of critical studies of Proust in which ideological questions have been given prominent attention.

2) situate the writings of young Proust in their socio-historical context, emphasizing various literary, artistic, and philosophical currents from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries that exerted an important influence on him.

3) review the philological and internal textual problems that present themselves in the analysis of such works as Les Plaisirs et les jours and Jean Santeuil, both of which (or parts of which) have appeared in a variety of guises and have undergone significant editorial interventions resulting in noteworthy differences of format, style, and order of presentation.

4) connect the literary critical principles which young Proust elaborated in

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the 1880s and 1890s with his fictional and poetic writings during the years 1892 to 1900.

Essentially, the dissertation argues that Proust's youthful writings are not ideologically innocent. On the contrary, they are in many respects typical expressions of a widespread idealist reaction in the late nineteenth century to what was perceived, by the educated bourgeois class to which Proust belonged, to be the intolerable encroachments of positivist thought into the literary world, and the spectre of a new militant materialism among the working classes. Proust was a representative of an aesthetisizing intelligentsia that saw art as the sole means of enlightenment and liberation. Yet he was more than that, and one of the burdens of this dissertation is to explain the attributes of character, mind and vision that set him apart from his generation.

In sum, the dissertation combines elements of an intellectual biography with those of a social literary analysis.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

For Lucy, with love everlasting

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Acknowledgments

As teacher and mentor, Professor Mary Ann Caws was always available to me to talk about troublesome problems concerning the structure and organization of this dissertation. I am indebted to her for her indispensable guidance and support. Professors Robert Dombroski and Royal Brown were also careful readers of the dissertation, and asked pertinent and probing questions.

Among the many friends with whom I discussed aspects of my work on young Proust, and who gave of their time to read several different drafts of my dissertation, I wish to thank in particular Professors George Bernstein, Joseph Buttigieg, and Kate Crehan. George read through an early version of the thesis, and pointed out numerous places where the writing was fuzzy, and where I needed either to amplify or to clarify an argument about key issues in young Proust's early writings. Kate helped me to see how certain lines of inquiry and critical positions deriving mainly from Marxism needed to be articulated in a more nuanced manner than I had done prior to her reading of what I had to say in chapters one and two about the ideological criticism of literature. Joe brought an enthusiastic interest in the subject and in the critical approach of the dissertation to his reading. I place very high value indeed on the recommendations he made concerning ways of improving and developing arguments of central importance to my study.

Without the help of librarians and administrative staffs at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, at the New York Public Library, and at the Rare Books and Manuscript Divisions of Columbia University in New York City and of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the University of Illinois in Urbana, I would not have had access to crucial manuscripts and other types of important documents relevant to the period with which this study is concerned. I am especially indebted to Caroline Szylowicz, the able administrator of the Kolb-Proust Archive for Research at the University of Illinois, who made me the beneficiary of her exceptionally comprehensive knowledge of every aspect of Proust's life. While working at the Archive, I had the good fortune to meet Dorothy Kolb, whose husband, the late Professor Philip Kolb, acquired the critical materials, manuscripts, and periodicals that form the basis of the Kolb-Proust Archive. She is engaged in the process of collating the voluminous papers left by Professor Kolb, and has played a leading role in organizing seminars and conferences dealing with Proust.

Finally, I am indebted to the professors and staff of the Ph.D. Program in French at the Graduate School of the City University of New York. All of the professors with whom I pursued my French studies, after a professional life devoted to Italian language and literature, made it possible for me, in a sense, to reinvent myself, and at a rather advanced age, as an aspiring scholar of French literature. I would like to mention in particular Professor Marcel Gutwirth, whose analysis of À la recherche du temps perdu I had the pleasure of following in a course he gave at the Graduate School in the mid 1990s.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Part One: A Critical Framework
ch. 1 The Ideological Criticism of Literature 17
ch. 2 Ideological Questions in Proust Studies 36

Part Two: The Socio-Literary World of the Young Proust
ch. 3 Eros and Friendship at the Lycée Condorcet 73
ch. 4 Three Parisian "little magazines" in the 1890s: *Le Mensuel, Le Banquet,* and *La Revue Blanche* 93
ch. 5 With Reynaldo Hahn in Town and Country 121
ch. 6 Young Proust and the World of the Parisian Salons 138

Part Three: Literary and Ideological Crosscurrents in *Pleasures and Days*
ch. 7 The Vicissitudes of a Text 162
ch. 8 Problems of Structure, Unity and Aesthetic Philosophy 179
ch. 9 Elitism and the Primacy of the Spiritual 201
ch. 10 A Profusion of Intertextuality 228

Part Four: The Critic and the Novelist
ch. 11 The Critical Principles of a Visionary 258
ch. 12 Literary Text and Ideology in *Jean Santeuil* 294

Concluding Remarks 339

Appendices A&B: Introduction 343

Appendix A: Selected Variants in the Manuscripts of *Les Plaisirs et les jours* 345

Appendix B Selected Variants in "La Mort de Baldassare Silvande, Vicomte de Sylvanie" from the Pre-original Version in La Revue Hebdomadaire to its Appearance in *Les Plaisirs et les jours* 362

Works Cited 367

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Abbreviations Used in the Text and in Footnote References

Recherche=À la Recherche du temps perdu

PJ=Les Plaisirs et les jours

JS=Jean Santeuil

CSB=Contre Sainte-Beuve

BSAP=Bulletin de l'Association des Amis de Marcel Proust

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Introduction

In all periods of his life as a writer, Proust was intensely concerned with philosophical and psychological problems ranging from the ordinary occurrences of everyday life to the loftiest and most universal "laws" governing the human condition. From his earliest literary projects, he was at once a writer and a thinker, a poet and a philosopher. Writing was for him an undertaking that demanded the utmost rigor and discipline, a commitment to oneself and to the search for truth, by which he meant not so much systems of truth as processes of enlightenment gained through reflection, reading, and self-scrutiny. Worldly and involved in numerous friendships and professional relationships, Proust kept his eyes fixed on what mattered most to him, which was to express in literary form the insights and "illuminations" that came to him either by the grace of "involuntary memory" or as a result of arduous intellectual labor. One did not exclude the other: the former was a gift, something that nobody could anticipate or seize through an act of will, while the latter implied a mastery of the world's thought, an understanding of how and why thinkers from antiquity to modern times had conceptualized what they took to be the essential questions facing humankind.

Because of these traits, and these intermeshing interests, it is unwise and unproductive to separate the "poetic" from the "philosophical" side of Proust's personality. He cared deeply about the ideas, the thought that he invested in his writing. He bridled at the remarks sometimes made about his work to the effect that it was too absorbed with the intimate details of life and lacked structure and an overarching design.

It is possible, to be sure, that despite the importance he attributed

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to the philosophical content of literary creation, Proust would nonetheless have looked askance at attempts, such as the one made by this study, to privilege ideological questions in a consideration of his writing. But the term "ideology" as I use it (explained in chapters one and two, and at scattered points elsewhere in this study) has undergone a remarkable evolution from its modern origins in eighteenth-century French thought to its current usages in the critical writings of Robert Dombroski, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, Marcia Landy, Frank Lentricchia, Raymond Williams and many others too numerous to mention here who, over the past four to five decades, have enriched it with their often subtle and innovative studies of modern and contemporary literature. Intellectually speaking, I consider myself to be a fellow traveler of these and other like-minded figures in modern criticism, and I have tried to use the word "ideology" as applied to Proust with due regard for this critical body of work. It will be up to the reader to judge whether I have succeeded in fulfilling this intention. In any case, I am convinced that Proust studies can benefit from more attempts along the lines of this one.

While I give due consideration to what is distinctive and exceptional in the writing of young Proust, my more primary interest is in the various affiliations that connected him to a certain socio-literary milieu and to an assortment of ideas about literature, art, and philosophy broadly characteristic of an entire class of literary intellectuals in the last decades of the nineteenth century. My view of young Proust is that he was indeed original, but that he was also very much a child of his time, a product of a civilization that provided him with a whole gamut of modes and forms of literary expression. For these modes and forms were deeply rooted in the soil of French literary history, or better, in particular authors, genres and practices belonging to that history. These will be

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

duly noted in the course of the present study.

The chronological frame I have imposed on myself and the reader raises difficult questions, one of which is whether it is ever sensible to treat only a part of a writer's life. I have gambled that it does, and justify this decision in several ways. First, Proust's early years are often somewhat overshadowed by his great and crowning achievement, À la recherche du temps perdu, which belongs to the years 1908 to 1921. It is certainly natural that this should be the case, but I feel at the same time that a thorough grounding in the events, trends, personalities, issues and currents of thought that marked Proust's youth and shaped his writing up to the turn of the century, is a necessary precondition for adequate understanding of his mature accomplishments.

Second, by focusing our attention on the years of Proust's early education, his first attempts at short story writing and criticism, his formative friendships and relationships, his early sexual proclivities, and above all, his remarkable assimilation of a literary and philsophical heritage--encompassing principally the classics, seventeenth century drama and moral reflection, and nineteenth century literature and philosophy--we put ourselves in a position to see the totality of his work in clearer historical perspective. Proust was part of a socio-literary world, not an isolated "genius" soaring far above the heads of his merely mortal contemporaries, as he is sometimes pictured. This belonging to a time and a place becomes unmistakably clear when one confronts his life and thought from the mid-1880s, when he was a still a lycée student tasting for the first time the lush fruits of his literary and philosophical heritage, to the turn of the century, at which time he made a crucially important decision to put aside a novel he had been working on for about four years in order to devote himself to the writings of John Ruskin. This was an intellectual and an emotional

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

experience of the first order, absolutely indispensable to grasping the salient characteristics of the ideas and attitudes he was to bring some seven years later to the writing of his great novel. In short, a study of young Proust helps us to situate him more efficiently and decisively in a culture, a milieu, a moment in historical time, amounting to a rootedness which we neglect at our peril.

Third, at the risk of sounding rather too sentimental, I think that Proust's early period has the charm and the freshness of youth itself, the thrill of discovery and adventure, the pain of loss and disappointment, the yearning and the sometimes boundless idealism of a period in life when the experiences of the millennia become somehow new and are relived and reinterpreted by a still unscathed imagination. One of Proust's great merits was his ability, as seen in the Recherche, to recreate this period in his life, and to envision the world as it had once been seen by him, but transfigured, illuminated by the calmer, more detached perspective of his mature years. For these reasons, it seems to me that concentrating our attention on the years 1887 to1900 is well worth our time and effort, not in order to cut ourselves off in any way from what was to come later, but instead to prepare the way for a deeper and fuller understanding of it.

The claims that I think this study can reasonably make on the reader's attention fall into four interrelated categories: methodological, critical, philological, and socio-historical.

By methodological, I mean the analysis of issues and problems associated with the term "ideology," which have only rarely been adequately incorporated into Proust studies. This is rather surprising when one takes note of what was told to me during a recent stay in Paris, that after Napoleon Bonaparte, Proust is the most studied French personality. Even if not literally true, what is incontestable is the fact that the Proust bibliography continues to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

grow apace, without any signs of slowing down. But this massive accumulation of scholarship has not been especially friendly to ideological questions; the reason may reside in the fact that Proust himself said and wrote many things that would seem to foreclose any possibility of studying him profitably from this vantage point. But as I hope to show, these warnings and admonitions must not be allowed to turn us away from an area of inquiry that has been so carefully cultivated and developed over the past half century, and whose origins are to be found in French intellectual history of the eighteenth century.

By "critical," I mean two things. First, that this study makes a conscientious effort to review and evaluate a representative selection of Proust scholarship, both in its specific relevance to ideological questions and, more generally, in what it can offer us that is helpful for grasping the controversies and debates that have always surrounded Proust studies. Second, I mean the circumspect attitude I take to the project at hand. This is a critical and an analytical study, not a partisan one that stands or falls on the correctness of its "line" or on the unchallengeable persuasiveness of its arguments. Everything is challengeable, especially in literary studies, where apodictic statements are not only inappropriate but harmful. I try to harness Marxist concepts for some of what I have to say, but not by denying the pertinence of other schools of thought and other critical perspectives. Yet Marxism is not part of the intellectual mainstream in this country, and to this extent the present study, although supported theoretically by a sizeable literature, can still be seen as somewhat "subversive" and "against the grain." If that is the case, then I gladly accept whatever criticisms such a position might evoke.

The word "philological" as I use it here refers essentially to parts two and three, and to the two appendices, where my scrutiny of some of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

primary materials of Proust scholarship is brought into play in several different ways: close study of several key manuscripts (in photocopies), comparative analyses of various editions of Proust's early writings, and consideration of the history of Proustian texts, meaning the often rather unusual vicissitudes of his writings as they made their way in periodicals and in book form at different moments and in different intellectual climates. Together with my own scrutiny of these materials, I have of course paid due attention to the primary research and scholarship of editors, biographers, literary historians, philologists, and others who can legitimately be regarded as "scientific" in their study of literary texts.

As for category four, the socio-historical, I mean by this simply my effort to provide at least the rudiments of an approach to Proust's early writings that is responsible and responsive to context, to what Lauro Martines calls "the voices of a writer's social world."[1] These voices are numerous and at times in conflict with each other, and so it is always when one tries to make sense of an historical period and, more problematically, to place intellectual and artistic products in their historical setting. In this connection, I pay some attention to what other scholars have to say, especially those who, as discussed in chapters one and two, have resolutely dealt with ideological questions in Proust studies. Nothing in this study can somewhow be wrested free from its moorings in existing scholarship and criticism. What I offer is part of a critical continuum, a collective project that connects each fragment of research to its counterparts both in this country and elsewhere in the world. Criticism is an international undertaking, and each contribution to it will, hopefully, resonate with similar or like-minded projects far beyond the national borders within which it was conceived.

We owe every writer and every literary work a full measure of

[1] In his Society and History in English Renaissance Verse (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

respect for what they represented in their own time, but this does not mean that our critical approach must be limited necessarily to what an author or a work conveyed to themselves and to their contemporaries. To adhere to a type of historicism which demands that we read a given work of literature and interpret a writer's style and conceptual framework solely in accordance with what these terms and concepts signified in their own historical moment is to confuse philological rigor with antiquarianism. In this respect, I agree with what one of Proust's most sensitive critical interpreters in this country, Julius Edwin Rivers, had to say in his Proust and the Art of Love:

> It is not, then, sufficient to read Proust from the perspective of his own time, his own place, and his own life. We must simultaneously read him from the perspective of our own times, our own places, and our own lives. Like Einstein's time and space, culture and knowledge are relative. We do not know what Proust means until we have plotted not only the coordinates joining him to his own culture but also those joining him to the culture that came after him and that is fashioned partly in his image.[2]

Let me explain now how I have organized my study, and then, in concluding this introduction, consider some of the basic notions that undergird the critical practice of scholars whose ideas and example I have tried to follow.

The two chapters comprising Part One are designed to give the reader an understanding of the critical problems and perspectives which I have emphasized in my effort to understand the relations between the various literary and critical works that Proust produced during the years covered, and the values that comprised his evolving conception of the world. Chapter one, while focusing on Proust, also deals in a more general way with the foundational principles on which the ideological criticism of literature is based. Chapter two discusses critical works that have dealt centrally with ideological questions in

---

[2] Julius Edwin Rivers, Proust and the Art of Love--the Aesthetics of Sexuality in the Life, Times, and Art of Marcel Proust (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) 196-197.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Proust studies over approximately the last forty years. Neither of these two chapters constituting my "critical framework" makes a claim to completeness in any sense. My choice of critical writings reflects my preliminary value judgments, which I think that I make sufficiently clear.

Part Two looks at the specific world within which Proust came to an awareness of himself as a social being and as a literary intellectual, from his student days to his début and subsequent participation in a number of Parisian salons. I have tried in this section of the study to keep the interactive nature of his personal and professional relationships in mind. Proust was, intellectually and literarily speaking, the first among equals at the Lycée Condorcet, and a familiar figure in the salons, but he was also engaged in a learning process; he willingly acknowledged what he had learned from his teachers, and paid homage to his literary mentors. In short, by focusing attention in the four chapters of Part Two on the group of budding writers at the Condorcet whom Proust regarded as his friends, on the main literary periodicals with which he was associated, on his relationship with the composer Reynaldo Hahn, and on several of the salons he frequented, I hope to have shed some light on the experiences that contributed most decisively to the formation of his world view. Each of the four chapters of part two includes analyses or summaries of fictional and critical writings of the years 1887 to 1895 that offer insights into Proust's emerging conception of life.

Part Three is at once a socio-literary and a philologically grounded analysis of Proust's most important writings published in the 1890s, the anthology Les Plaisirs et les jours. This book is the bearer of an extraordinarily heavy load of literary and philosophical referentiality. For this reason, it is quite difficult to know with certainty where Proust's sources end and he begins. But

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

this is precisely the point, especially in a study of the traces left by ideology in a work of literature. In Proust's case, it is never possible to separate his response to and use of other writers and his own interpretations and innovations with respect to these writers. He was attached to them, yet at the same time broke free from them. I am referring here not only to his French influences, but to English, Russian and American ones as well. He found "elective affinities" in many different times and places. Through an examination of how these affinities manifested themselves in Pleasures and Days, it becomes possible to extrapolate from them in order to draw some tentative conclusions about his ideological orientation with regard to such issues as class affiliations, religious sentiment, political loyalties, and the role of art in society.

Part Four concerns the ever more intimate reciprocal relationship in Proust's evolution during the 1890s between his work as a critic and his work as a writer of fiction. The inseparability of these two functions in Proust's case is as evident as it is in that of Charles Baudelaire, whom Proust regarded as the greatest poet of the nineteenth century and a critical mind of the highest order. With such a master, Proust engaged in writing an ambitiously conceived novel, Jean Santeuil, and then, when that project failed to materialize in the way he had hoped, devoted himself to a critical appraisal of John Ruskin. This is the moment when, for all practical purposes, Proust's aesthetic philosophy assumed its mature form, and his general ideological orientation became relatively stable; relatively because, like many of his characters, Proust was a many-sided protean creature for whom the notion that every individual plays multiple roles and assumes diverse identities in life was virtually axiomatic.

To those readers for whom ideological criticism of a writer such as Proust may seem unwarranted and even scandalous, let me say that I am fully

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

aware of the fact that Proust was always careful to distinguish between writing harnessed to serve practical, this-worldly purposes, and writing whose spiritual essence removes and liberates it from the realm of historical contingency. What, it could be asked, do Proust's signal accomplishments--the delightful music of his prose, his lyrically contemplative vision of nature and human society, his memorable portraits of men and women in the throes of obsessive impulses and desires, his insights into painting, music and the other arts, his theory of memory and time.--have to do with ideology?. Viewed from this angle of vision, an ideological analysis of Proust could easily seem to be a fruitless enterprise, condemned to founder on its misunderstanding of his artistic methods and intentions.

True enough, Proust belongs to a school of aesthetic theory according to which literary texts are ontologically distinct from non-literary ones. But such a distinction rests on a premise which this study does not share, and which Proust himself honored "more in the breach than the observance": the premise that literature and ideology belong to realms of expression so different in nature and aim as to make them incommensurable. If this were the case, to attempt a transposition of the language of literature into that of politics or philosophy, or vice versa, to cross over from one domain of expression to another, would be a violation of sacrosanct boundaries. But without the possibility of such "transgression" the various areas of critical inquiry would have to be considered as inaccessible and irrelevant to each other. The result would be an impoverishment of intellectual activity in all of them.

In theory, Proust was committed to a spiritualized, quasi-religious conception of art and literature. In practice, however, it is my contention that virtually all of his writings, whether critical or fictional, personal or philosophical,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

were responses to specific moral, psychological, and socio-political problems of his time. His writing, with all of its poetic and musical qualities, also served eminently practical ends. In the pursuit of relevance, he felt an irrepressible need to explore the world in many directions at one time, wherever this exploration might take him, irrespective of genres, modes, and preconceptions of any kind concerning the proper place of this or that style or type of writing. In a word, Proust thought of writing as an effective way to engage life and to confront human problems. Moreover, I think it is reasonable to argue, with Gilles Deleuze, that in Proust's writing, memory and the whole "nostalgic" return to places known and loved in childhood, with all of their undoubted importance, are not the key to his work, even to the Recherche; that "Proust's work is not turned towards the past and the discoveries of memory, but towards the future and the progress of an apprenticeship." Deleuze reiterates this idea elsewhere in his study, with different words: "what is essential [in the Recherche] is not memory and time, but the sign and truth. The essential thing is not remembering, but learning."[3]

I have drawn in this study from various Marxist literary theorists, because I believe that the arguments they have proposed concerning the relations between literature and society are compelling. They have been especially important in the field of ideological criticism for the evident reason that Marxist theory, from its very inception in the writings of Marx and Engels themselves, has always seen literature and art as one branch of what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "ideological creations" [4] linked dialectically and in multiple ways to both the socio-economic base of society and to other "superstructural" branches

---

[3] Gilles Deleuze, Proust et les signes (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964) 36 and 111.
[4] Mikhail Bakhtin and P.N. Medvedev, The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship, trans. Albert J. Wehrle (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 17-18.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of creative activity--science, ethics, religion, philosophy.The critical thought and methododology of Raymond Williams, Fredric Jameson, and Terry Eagleton, to name only three well-known figures who have applied the theory of historical materialism to the problems of literary study, constitute an indispensable point of reference for my own work and for that of scholars throughout the contemporary world. But of course they have drawn in their turn on an older and extremely rich Marxist critical literature that includes such names as Gyorgy Lukács, Walter Benjamin, Antonio Gramsci, and Rosa Luxemburg. These are among the thinkers on whom I have based aspects of my approach to Proust.

I have also drawn quite heavily from literary scholars whose work is theoretically eclectic and independent, as well as from some who are not linked even indirectly to the philosophy of historical materialism. Among the former group, Lauro Martines, in Society and History in English Renaissance Verse, has argued theoretically and demonstrated concretely as well as anyone I know the validity of "social literary analysis," meaning analysis that presupposes and integrates into its practice the multiple links joining any act of poetic or fictional writing to a specific social milieu and to problems of a political and ideological nature. Among the latter, I would single out T.S. Eliot, in his essays "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and "The Function of Criticism," insofar as he theorizes the critical need to attach poets and writers to various socio-literary traditions; Northrop Frye, who despite his enormous intellectual effort to theorize a specifically literary history independent of the non-literary, has in The Anatomy of Criticism offered the reader a brilliant commentary on the ways in which works of literature are connected organically to a historical totality, to an ultimately coherent order of things; and Teresa De Lauretis, who is persuasive in her view that feminist thinking involves "a confrontation, a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

struggle, a political intervention in institutions and in the practices of everyday life." [5] She argues that feminism finds itself faced inexorably with the practical need to interrelate literary and film studies with society and politics, and not only because such interrelations are required by the vicissitudes of everyday life but also because an activity such as literary or film production draws its vital energy from its embeddedness in specific social and historical contexts.

Women scholars, some of whom are associated politically with the women's movement, have been at the forefront of Proust studies as they bear upon philosophical and methodological questions. Among those who have had an impact on my own thinking and understanding of Proust are Mieke Bal, Germaine Brée, Anne Henry, Renée A. Kingcaid, Julia Kristeva, Maria Paganini, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. They have produced a body of Proust scholarship affiliated in various ways with feminism that has helped me to see the different ways in which Proust's imagery, plots, themes and character types are often the bearers of implicit ideological assumptions which, moreover, were widely shared by many of his contemporaries. Brée was among the first to shed light on the classical and Judeo-Christian origins of Proust's moral universe; Anne Henry, all of whose work on Proust is germane to my study, has studied the Recherche and Proust's early collection of stories and prose poems, Pleasures and Days, from a philosophical point of view in such a way as to make it difficult ever again to dissociate him from the great philosophical revolution inaugurated by Immanuel Kant; and Renée A. Kingcaid situates young Proust in a "decadent" as well as in a symbolist context to show how his early writing was shaped by contemporary trends in French poetic practice and critical thinking in the 1890s. Sedgwick's contribution to Proust studies will be discussed in

---

[5] Teresa De Lauretis, Alice Doesn't--Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) 3.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

chapter one.

In recent decades, Marxist intellectuals have paid close attention to other ways of thinking about literature and society. They have tried to engage other disciplines, to show in what ways an historical materialist criticism not only borrows necessarily from other schools of thought and other disciplines, but depends on them for its own critical vitality and relevance. Michael Ryan was one of the first American scholars in recent decades to attempt "a critical articulation" of Marxist theory and deconstruction.[6] His example has been followed by many writers in such fields as sociology, anthropology, foreign languages, social and literary theory, and philosophy. In Film, Politics, and Gramsci, for example, Marcia Landy has "sought to make bridges between Marxist and poststructuralist concerns." While deriving her main critical categories from the "open Marxism" of Gramsci, she makes a strong case for the relevance to Gramscian Marxism of poststructuralist analyses of how various "narratives [of nation, patriotism, family, religion etc.] have been constructed, what has been left out, and the designs and interests of the narrator."[7] Another example of Marxist-based interdisciplinarity is Randy Martin's Socialist Ensembles--Theater and State in Cuba and Nicaragua, which borrows methodological procedures from cultural anthropology to illuminate the ways in which both "street theatre" and professional theatrical companies have interacted with the larger political communities of revolutionary Nicaragua and Cuba.[8] This interaction has taken place on many levels and effectively belies simplistic notions of unilateral and "totalitarian" tendencies as dominant in these two countries. Martin's work is but one of many similar attempts to work with

---

[6] Michael Ryan, Marxism and Deconstruction (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

[7] Marcia Landy, Film, Politics, and Gramsci (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 3.

[8] Randy Martin, Socialist Ensembles (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Marxist methods and concepts as a living body of thought which must continually grow in many different directions.

To conclude these introductory remarks, let me say that three premises undergird the critical framework of this study: first, that no literary text, no matter how lyrical, lofty, or idiosyncratic, should be seen as somehow ideologically innocent; second, that literary texts are ideologically laden in ways that require methods of critical analysis appropriate to them considered as certain kinds of artifacts, as particular examples of "ideological creations;" and third, that social life, society, "is a vital whole or unity of some kind" which, "in semiotic terms, permits meaning to be 'transcoded--transposed from one network of signs to another."[9] This is a methodological principle developed in an especially eloquent manner in recent decades by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

At this point, it is appropriate that I attempt to clarify more fully the ways in which, in the main, I shall and shall not be using the word "ideology" and the phrase "ideological criticism" in the course of this study of the young Marcel Proust. This is the main purpose of chapters one and two.

---

[9] Martines 4.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Part One

A Critical Framework

Ch. 1 The Ideological Criticism of Literature

Ch. 2 Ideological Questions in Proust Studies

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter One

The Ideological Criticism of Literature

Ideological criticism forms part of a larger socio-historical approach to literature, inasmuch as ideology is one of the signifying practices joining historical processes to various forms of expression in the realms of art, science, philosophy, religion, and others. It is a critical approach that depends, for its particular relevance to literary study, on historicising writers and their works, which means placing and situating them in their time, not mechanically, but dialectically. As Eagleton argues in Criticism and Ideology, historically based criticism takes for granted that writers, even geniuses such as Proust, do not make the materials with which they work, that forms, values, myths, symbols, ideologies come to them already worked upon. Writers effect significant interpretations and modifications of these received materials, but their innovations cannot be separated from the pre-existing; the new is not autonomous, something created *ex nihilo*.

In their critique of formalist literary criticism, Mikhail Bakhtin and P.N. Medvedev argue that, as "ideological creations," works of art demand socio-historical understanding and ideological analysis, but they also demand a discerning appreciation of what they offer that is distinctive and original, in sum, what makes them function specifically as art and not, let us say, as sociological treatise, political polemic, or philosophical reflection. In other words, while works of literary art may and often do contain many passages (as in the fictional writings of Proust) and even whole chapters (as in War and Peace) that are sociological, political or philosophical in character, what they do with those

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

passages must be evaluated with a vocabulary and within a conceptual framework that are appropriate to literature. Here is how Bakhtin and Medvedev articulate this point:

> Literature is one of the independent parts of the surrounding ideological reality, occupying a special place in it in the form of definite, organized philological works which have their own specific structures.The literary structure, like every ideological structure, refracts the generating socioeconomic reality, and does so in its own way. But, at the same time, in its "content," literature reflects and refracts the reflections and refractions of other ideological spheres (ethics, epistemology, political doctrines, religion, etc.). That is, in its "content" literature reflects the whole of the ideological horizon of which it is itself a part.[10]

Ideology as conceived by Bakhtin and Medvedev is not a separable "superstructural" manifestation of a socio-economic "base," as some Marxists have defined it, but rather a constitutive part of that base .

A closely related way of thinking about ideology relevant to this study is to understand it, with Antonio Gramsci, as being "in its highest sense. . .a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life."[11] But Gramsci's definition needs to be modified in its specific relation to the subject matter of this study, since I will not always be using "ideology" only to characterize Proust's "conception of the world" but also to indicate ideas and principles relating to the world view of a particular social class or caste. Ideological criticism must pay careful attention to the ways in which class identification and affiliation influence any writer's choice of materials, and his/her sense of where the potential readership for a specific work is to be found. This depends on a tacit agreement between writer and public concerning

---

[10] Bakhtin and Medvedev 16-17.

[11] Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971) 328.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the shape and style of any literary work. As Bourdieu expresses it, "a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded."[12] In the case of young Proust in the 1890s, there is no reasonable and defensible way, in my opinion, of detaching his writing from the predominant belief systems of the aristocratic and bourgeois social worlds to which he belonged and with which he identified himself, even if he did so with some significant reservations and anxieties that are interwoven into the texture of many of his youthful narrative and critical writings.

In current literary and sociological discourse, the word "ideology" often means simply the process of production of meanings, signs, and values in social life. For James Kavanagh the term refers to "the fundamental framework of assumptions that defines the parameters of the real and the self."[13] In the work of Terry Eagleton, among the many definitions of the word which he examines the one that I think is most comprehensive and analytically useful for the purposes of this study is "the ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolize the conditions and life-experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class."[14] This definition has the advantage of tying the word down to specific socio-historical interests and aims. Literary production, as a fundamental signifying practice, enters the total social process via a writer's ideological assumptions which in turn express themselves in diverse choices of genre, style, and mode of discourse.

Ideology is one of the four "basic concepts," together with culture,

---

[12] Bourdieu 2.

[13] James Kavanagh, "Ideology," Critical Terms for Literary Study, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press) 310.

[14] Terry Eagleton, Ideology (London: Verso, 1991) 29. By "symbolize" Eagleton probably means that ideas and beliefs resonate with the life conditions, experiences and world view of classes and social groups and that they do so on the level of signs: verbal, pictorial, dance, rituals and so forth.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

language, and literature, on which Raymond Williams grounds his seminal study Marxism and Literature.

As in all of his critical writings, Williams is careful to historicise the term ideology.[15] He reviews its uses by the Enlightenment *idéologues* and by Marx and Engels, and does so in an intellectually independent manner. Although obviously sympathetic to Marx and Engels's formulations, he acknowledges their polemical and one-sided character. Speaking of an oft-quoted passage in The German Ideology , he argues that "the language of 'reflexes,' 'echoes,' 'phantoms', and 'sublimates' is simplistic, and has in repetition been disastrous. It belongs to the naive dualism of 'mechanical materialism', in which the idealist separation of 'ideas' and 'material reality' had been repeated, but with its priorities reversed."

Williams's main contention is that any and all reductionisms, whether materialist or idealist in origin, are inimical to the fundamental Marxist precept that consciousness and its products are parts of the total material social process itself. He points out that "thinking" and "imagining" are social processes that become accessible in tangible form such as works of art, "whether in sound, pigments on canvas, writing, or in worked marble or stone." He then takes note of the tensions never satisfactorily resolved in Marx's writing between the notions of science and of ideology, where the claims of the former to exactitude and disinterestedness conflict with the merely self-serving and partisan character of the latter, a troublesome distinction which sometimes appears in Marx's thought. It is responsible for the equation ideology=false consciousness (although Marx himself never actually used this phrase) that has had such a crippling effect on attempts to use the concept of ideology in literary study.

---

[15] Raymond Williams, "Ideology," in Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 55-71.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Williams concludes his short and typically dense essay by wondering whether the terms ideology and ideological can be regarded as sufficient, within the material social process of signification, to comprehend those products of such a process which are not ideas or theories but rather works we call art and literature. He raises and leaves hanging the question of their adequacy after such a long history of bitter controversy. For my part, I choose to think they are still useful, as long as they are meant to designate a problematic and complex relationship between literary texts and ideology, the latter understood as the ideas, feelings, values, and beliefs about the world which a writer brings to the act of literary creation, whether consciously and critically, as I think Proust did for the most part in his writing, or unconsciously, which Louis Althusser tended to emphasize in his reflections on ideology.

Obviously, unconscious and therefore unpredictable forces were at work in Proust's creative imagination, as they are in the imaginations of all artists. Proust himself attributed a decisive importance to non-rational and pre-reflective impulses. We should remember in this connection that the famous epiphanic insights out of which the Recherche was born flowed from sense experiences and were in essence, as Proust himself said, the results of "involuntary memory," not of conscious reflection. Nevertheless, I think it is fair to say that Proust was almost always intensely conscious of what his life experiences and thought could provide to his art, so that Althusser's conception of ideology as "alluding in the main to our affective, unconscious relations with the world, to the ways in which we are pre-reflectively bound up in a social reality,"[16] is at best of limited relevance in the context of this study.

Where we discover Althusser's greater relevance, on the other hand, is in his analysis of "ideology and ideological state apparatuses," for it

[16] Eagleton, Ideology 18.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

sheds light on Proust's educational experiences and on his class affiliations and class-determined ideological affinities which must, I believe, be taken into account in the attempt to understand the world view that is generally implicit but at times explicit in his early writings. A primary aim of this study is to point out the traces left in young Proust's early fictional works and articles of literary, artistic and cultual criticism by the Parisian literary and professional intelligentsia, and specifically by the upper bourgeois and aristocratic personalities who held and frequented a group of fifteen to twenty prominent Parisian salons in the 1880s and 90s.

Proust's close sense of identification with his family's middle class heritage, especially on his father's side, where he could trace his origins back to at least the late 16th century (but he speaks in one letter of finding the name of several ancestral Prousts in provincial archival documents dating back to the 14th century),[17] and his absorption of idealist philosophical thought imparted to him by several of his professors at the Lycée Condorcet[18] and later at the Sorbonne, during his formative years, were also important in that they combined to give him a feeling of rootedness in a social history and in an intellectual tradition worthy of being defended and asserted. But at the same time, he assimilated and made his own certain values of the French aristocracy, some of whose representative figures, notably the poet Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, gave him a sense that there were enormous benefits as well as

---

17 Marcel Proust, Correspondance de Marcel Proust, ed. Philip Kolb, t.xii (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1984) 209.

18 In Les Années de collège de Marcel Proust (Paris: Gallimard, 5th ed. 1959) André Ferré observes that the Condorcet, situated on rue Caumartin on the Right Bank and founded in 1803, was first named the lycée Bonaparte. Ferré observes that during Proust's years there the school had a rather "cloistered" atmosphere because the building that housed it was originally a monastery. Ferré describes it as a "collège d'amateurs" whose reputation, from a practical career-oriented point of view, was inferior to that of such lycées as Henri IV, Louis-le-Grand or Saint-Louis, which prepared students for admission to the "grandes écoles."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

liabilities in the qualities of a social class whose prestige was by no means entirely eclipsed by bourgeois ascendancy from the Revolution of 1789 to the birth of the Third Republic in 1875.

In Althusser's formulations[19] particular ideologies are the means by and through which ruling classes strive historically to reproduce the mode and relations of production which they see as best suited to their own interests. The abstract term ideology, on the other hand, is for Althusser an "eternal, omni-historical" reality which he sees as inherent in the human condition because man is "an ideological animal by nature." In this sense, he avers, "ideology has no history."

Using terminology which echoes the thought of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci (but also diverges from it in various ways), Althusser elaborates a theory of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), by which he means the ideologies of religious, educational, family, legal, political, communications, and cultural organizations which, in their separate spheres, transmit and perpetuate the ideology of the dominant or ruling classes. These ideologies are distinct, for the sake of analysis, from the repressive state apparatus, inasmuch as they operate prevalently in the "private" domains of life as opposed to the "public" domain of state power. But in effect, together with the repressive state apparatus, they form part of a single system of power which finds outlets in a variety of spheres and social practices. The "private" realm of ideologies performs the function of ideological "hegemony," meaning the decisively important task of winning popular approval and consent from the masses of people, without, however, ever being able to eliminate resistance to that hegemony, in myriad forms, on the part of subordinate and oppressed

---

[19] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971) 127-186.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

classes.

Ruling ideologies need "professional ideologists" to consolidate their hegemonic role in society, ideologists who perform many of the same functions as those performed by priests in the pre-capitalist era, when the Church was at once the source and the institutionalized embodiment of secular as well as of religious authority. Lay intellectuals of all kinds, literary as well as political, writers, teachers, journalists, as well as lawyers, managers, business executives etc., are the "priests" of the modern era.

In what I take to be the weakest and most debatable aspect of his formulations, Althusser insists on a definition of ideology as a "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." This definition makes it theoretically difficult if not impossible to understand ideology as a generative force, influencing and shaping the way different groups and sectors of society create the world they live in. Be that as it may, Althusser does not get himself caught up in the "imaginary" aspect of ideology. Instead, he traces out a key idea that gives his thought a real and immediate force; he does this by focusing on what he calls "the decisive central term on which everything else [in his argument] depends: the notion of subject."

It is the manner in which he seizes on the ambiguity of the term subject, meaning both 1) a free subjectivity which individually chooses and elaborates its own ideology, and 2) a subjected being who submits to a higher authority (whether religious, political, intellectual, or all together), that endows Althusser's thinking with its particular intellectual appeal. Every subject in the first sense must be related to a Subject in the second sense; the relationship between the two, Althusser argues, is "specular" and mutually necessary. The existence of ideology and the "hailing or interpellation of individuals is one and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the same thing." In other words, there can be no subjectivity without a Subject to refer to in the form of an authority which may assume different names in different historical periods, whether "soul" as in Plato, God in the thought of religious philosophy, or the state in modern political parlance. As already noted, Althusser maintains that the structure of all ideology, interpellating individuals as subjects in the name of a Unique and Absolute Subject, is specular, i.e. a mirror-structure, and *doubly* specular: this mirror duplication is constitutive of ideology and ensures its functioning.

Finally, we need to consider Althusser's notion that it is through the ISAs that ideologies are realized, i.e. that they translate into real historical terms certain class relations and conceptions of the world that do ensure the functioning of ideology but that also ensure the resistance and opposition, even the revolt, of those members of society who experience the ruling ideology as oppressive or inimical to their interests. Class struggle is in this way guaranteed to characterize all class relations, as asserted by Marx and Engels in the opening paragraph of the Communist Manifesto.

What all of this has to do with young Proust can be summarized as follows. First, as an intellectual and writer with impeccable bourgeois credentials, and as a highly educated individual with the sophistication, the personal charms, and the fund of knowledge to allow him to circulate in the upper echelons of Parisian society, Proust sought out and aimed to reach a highly particular kind of readership; a readership which more or less shared his world outlook, was interested in what he had to say about literary and intellectual matters, and in general responded, if not always with enthusiasm, at least with a sense of amusement and recognition, to the idiosyncrasies of his temperament and style. Second, his family background and connections were

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

such that he had ample access to all of the resources from which his class and his literary associates drew for their sense of personal and group identity. Third, and perhaps most important for the line of inquiry taken by this study, Proust was a superbly gifted "subject" whose ideological choices depended crucially on his relationship with an ultimately spiritual Subject for whom body and soul, matter and spirit, the visible and the invisible, if not parts of an abolute dichotomy, required a supreme act of artistic and philosophical creation to be finally brought into touch with each other and reconciled. Proust was not religious in a conventional sense, and may not even have believed in any abiding way in God, but he did depend, for almost everything he thought and wrote, on the notion of a soul and of transcendence that expressed themselves through, if not religious belief, then its nearest contemporary substitute, namely Art. If we were to remove the idea of the soul, of the inner spiritual self, of the individual as the ultimate arbiter of life choices, and of works of literature (like all works of art) as "the children of silence," that is, as the products of arduous self scrutiny, it seems to me that what we most associate with the Proustian world view would simply collapse.

The point here, which will be developed in subsequent chapters, is that Proust's life as a writer hinged in tangible ways on his sense of belonging to a specific social milieu, to an educational establishment, to various elite intellectual coteries, to a family history, to a heritage of philosophical idealism, and to a long unbroken continuity of literary achievements in genres bequeathed to him by writers in whose work he found inspiration. To these ties I would add his concept of a political destiny which, broadly speaking, was transmitted to him and to many of his friends and colleagues from centuries of French national unity and patriotism.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

But there is more to Proust's personal identity and his relationship with the established values and norms of upper crust Parisian society than appears in the several preceding paragraphs, aspects of his existence that nourished in him a rather sharply defined oppositional stance vis-à-vis that society. I am not speaking here specfically of his intellectual and literary sensibilities, which were of course exceptional in more than one respect, the manifestations of his "genius," but rather of certain features of his personal existence, all of which will be scanned in future chapters for what they can reveal about his conception of himself as a thinker and writer.

I am referring concretely to four areas of his life that tended, not to efface, but certainly to attenuate, his integration into the bourgeois-aristocratic society of his time. They are that he was homosexual; that he suffered from a chronic disease, asthma, from age nine that placed him in the category of "grand malade," someone whose every waking moment is consciously or sub-consciously concerned about survival; that he was Jewish, on his mother's side, and although baptised and raised as a Catholic, was acutely aware of his Jewish origins; and that he was, perhaps as a result of all three of these aspects of his life, a hypersensitive person, a trait that brought him many joys and many sorrows. His artistic sensibilities thrived on these forms of separateness and alienation; they were of as much importance to making him the kind of writer he was as the various factors in his life that allowed him to be a member of the most prestigious groups and classes of the period.

In sum, on the basis of the foregoing considerations, we are entitled to think that if, on the one hand, young Proust could feel himself a part of what Foucault has called "fellowships of discourse"[20] that assured him ready

---

[20] Michel Foucault, The Archeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language (New York: Harper and Row, 1972) 226.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

access to the minds and hearts of a culturally dominant socio-literary circle, he was also somewhat of an outsider, an observer, a person set apart from others by complicated emotional and intellectual needs. When asking ourselves what was at stake for Proust, ideologically speaking, in the act of writing, it seems to me that this outsider-observer status, which he maintained throughout his life, was partially responsible for breeding in him a conception of writing as a search for truth, cost what it may; that it was what fed the sharp and often devastating satire and critical commentary which he directed against the very social milieus of which he felt himself a part. It is to Proust's credit that he never abandoned the role of truth-seeker and critic, even though, as we shall see, his relationships with certain prominent *salonniers* were sometimes marked by deference that could appear, and perhaps really was, hypocritical and even sycophantic. It is well known that his life as a semi-closeted homosexual began to find literary expression in several of his early short stories, and eventually grew to become one of the most important sub-texts of his major work, the Recherche. I say "sub-text" for the same reasons that André Gide found Proust's treatment of the topic disappointing and inadequate, namely that while uttering a heartfelt plea for understanding the painful contradictions into which homosexuals, like their fellow suffering Jews, were destined to endure as members of "a cursed race," he masked this plea behind all kinds of other literary themes, arguments, and devices, so that the ultimate effect of his writing on the subject is to induce compassion in the reader, but not solidarity and the quality of identification with the sufferer that would result from a completely candid and politically charged exposure of an unjust taboo. Of course, the mores of the time were not friendly to such confrontation, and Proust probably did as much to bring homosexual experiences and feelings out of the shadows

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

cast by prejudice into the light of day as any other contemporary French writer, with the exception of Gide. In any event, that his own personal psycho-sexual situation helped to sharpen the oppositional and critical edge of Proust's writing cannot be doubted.

The same might be said with respect to the pervasive presence of death in his writing, and the accompanying sense of urgency with which he approached both the sensual delights and the moral and physical perils of human existence. There is hardly a work, hardly a chapter of Proust's writing, that does not cry out to the reader: *memento mori.* Doctrinal sources for such an attitude are less important in Proust's case than personal experience, even if he relied in many instances on an ancient religiously-inspired heritage to reinforce the message he was trying to communicate.

A framework of analysis such as the one provided by Althusser is therefore helpful for a general understanding of where and how Proust fits in the society of his time and of his place as a "priest" of bourgeois-aristocratic high culture in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. What it does not do, however, is offer a structure of interpretation within which we can understand why and how Proust evinced a critical perspective on even the most sacrosanct values and norms of the period popularly called "la belle époque," behind whose glitter there were so many unresolved issues, so many troublesome and ultimately destructive illusions. Such a structure is outlined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in several of her works.

It is interesting to note that without explicitly addressing herself to the question of ideology (the term is not included in the index of Tendencies, the work I have chosen to discuss here), Sedgwick performs one of the most brilliant ideological deconstructions of certain concepts and practices in

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

contemporary civilization that I have had occasion to read. Building on Foucauldian foundations, but steering some of Foucault's techniques of analysis in new and startling directions, Sedgwick takes as her particular province in Tendencies the current construction and deconstruction of sexuality as seen in a context at once social, political and cultural. Her key term is "queer," which she distinguishes from the words "gay" and "lesbian" in a philologically as well as politically suggestive manner. The words gay and lesbian have become, for her, objective, empirical categories, while the word queer "hinges more on a person's undertaking particular, performative acts of experimental self-perception and filiation."[21] Such a remark is typical of how Sedgwick interlaces her own deep-seated moral and political investments with literary and cultural analysis that depends decisively on a conception of sexuality requiring the widest possible spectrum of methodologies to interrogate and explicate.

Tendencies contains a number of observations about Proust's attitude toward homosexuality that are pertinent to the "ideological" concerns of this study, since it is reasonable to believe that his homosexual experiences and views on the subject heavily conditioned his world outlook and influenced his pessimistic understanding and vision of human relationships. These experiences and views are only glancingly present in his youthful writings, but I think that they nonetheless colored his depictions of love and sex in the stories, for example, of Pleasures and Days.

Sedgwick's comments on Proust in Tendencies deal with the Recherche, but they are useful for our purposes in that they reveal the extent to which he was a child of his time and class, and borrowed from available contemporary sources, usually without crediting them, for many of the ideas

[21] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Tendencies (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) xii.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

which an earlier Proust criticism ascribed to his intellectual originality. There are very few if any original ideas in Proust's writing. His genius lay in his interpretations and elaborations of received ideas, not in their invention; in the profundity of his psychological perceptions and insights; in the painterly detail and vividness of his descriptions; in the passionate tenderness of his evocations of people, places and objects, and in the passages of reflective commentary on the various characters and episodes of his fictions. What he called his "thought" referred for the most part to his singular theorization of existing notions about a wide range of matters. Edmund Wilson believed that Proust was "one of the great minds and imaginations of our day, comparable to Nietzsche, Tolstoy, Wagner, and Ibsen."[22] But this judgment in Axel's Castle should be read, I think, for exactly what it purports to say, which is that among the great artistic and philosophical innovators of our time, Proust deserves to be considered on the same plane as the other four figures Wilson mentions. To say that he also deserves to be placed on a level with Einstein, as Wilson claims in the sentence that follows the one just cited, is an overstatement. I do not think that we can credit Proust with independently achieved intellectual breakthroughs comparable in importance to the theory of relativity.

Proust's claim to intellectual originality might be his theory of "involuntary memory" and its associated insights; but as Proust himself acknowledged in the intellectually luminous concluding section of the Recherche, even this idea was not entirely his own, that he found distinct prefigurations of it in the writings of Chateaubriand, Nerval and Baudelaire.

Sedgwick alludes to several examples of Proust's borrowings. One concerns the "inversion trope" which he used in the Sodom and Gomorrah

---

[22] Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle--A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1870 to 1930 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931) 189.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

section of the Recherche, where a long disquisition on male homosexuals as "women trapped in a man's body" drew its basic concept from a widely known treatise by the German sexologist Karl Heinrich Ulrich, "who defined the homosexually oriented man in the Latin formula 'anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa', the soul of a woman in a man's body" which Proust adopted for his own literary purposes (Ulrich reversed the order for lesbianism).[23] Proust's thinking on this subject, Sedgwick trenchantly observes, "is famous as a thicket of pseudo-scientific self contradiction."[24] Another example concerns Proust's place in the ranks of thinkers who, at the end of the nineteenth century, despite their Kantian idealism, were strongly attracted to a certain form of positivism, or better, scientism. Proust was very susceptible to theories of inherited dispositions and tendencies, and in general to a type of thinking that had many features in common with late twentieth century biological determinism. In this regard, he and Zola were kindred spirits.

Where Sedgwick is most pertinent, however, is in her challenge to notions of human sexuality as somehow reducible to fixed norms and categories rather than as capable of a multiplicty of forms along a continuum. The word queer itself, she points out in her Foreword, derives from the Indo-European word for "across," which immediately suggests the many "across" formulations of Tendencies: across genders, across genres, across "perversions" and so on. This tendency to attack rigid delimitations of subject matter and fixed ways of thinking evidences itself in the first of three "Projects" to which most of the essays of Tendencies are devoted, namely to understand

> . . .the desires and identifications that move across gender lines, including the desires of men for women and of women for men. In that sense, self-evidently, heterosexuality is one of the project's subjects. But the essays are queer ones. Their angle of

[23] Rivers 184.

[24] Sedgwick 59n9.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> approach is directed, not at reconfirming the self-evidence and "naturalness" of heterosexual identity and desire, but rather at rendering those culturally central, apparently monolithic constructions newly accessible to analysis and interrogation.[25]

This project flows from the theoretical propositions of Michel Foucault, inasmuch as Sedgwick, like Foucault in The History of Sexuality, probes the ways in which contemporary culture has transformed various categories of sexual behavior into "sites of demand for the Truth of individual identity." In other words, Sedgwick, in Foucault's footsteps, argues that whereas homosexuality was in earlier times something some people did, a behavior, an action among myriad others, today it has become an essentializing category of identity. The word homosexual is in current usage what a person is, not a word designating an act.

Sedgwick is interested in the linguistic, literary and historically conditioned notions that correspond to or, as the case may be, place in question these ways of explaining human behavior, as evidenced in her essays on Diderot's story of lesbianism in a nunnery in La Religieuse, Henry James's rendering of overt and covert forms of sexuality in The Wings of the Dove, and the theme of autoeroticism in some of the fictions of Jane Austen. In the late nineteenth century, when Proust was a young man, Sedgwick reminds us that various "models" of homosexuality were being debated. He was among those who at the time were interested in "articulating explicitly gay subjectivities, or ideologies that would defend anyone labeled homosexual against the grossest punishment."[26] To accomplish this, it was necessary to replace the still predominantly criminal model of homosexuality with a medical model, which is essentially what Proust did in his early short story "Avant la nuit" and later in the

---

[25] Sedgwick 9.

[26] Sedgwick 90.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

above-mentioned pages of the Recherche. This viewpoint held that homosexuality had nothing whatever to do with violating any laws except those which a dominant legalistic and moralistic civilization chose to impose on a form of natural behavior, natural, that is, for the person who feels homosexual desire, which springs from a "disturbance" of the nervous system, not from any anti-social impulses. Young Proust expounded this point of view by having Leslie, the narrator of "Avant la nuit," recall to his distraught lesbian friend that Socrates, in The Symposium, "happily approved" same-sex desire among his close friends.

Sedgwick's analyses shed light on many of the human problems explored by Proust because she fixes her attention on aspects of late twentieth century culture that resemble and re-enact those of the late nineteenth century, such as the tendency to reduce everything to so many "addictions" and "disorders," which are then viewed "medically" rather than as choices, whether destructive or not, made by individuals in particular times and circumstances.

One of the most stimulating chapters of Tendencies, at least for Proust studies, is "Nationalisms and Sexualities," where Sedgwick makes a connection between Proust's Dreyfusism and his efforts on behalf of "gay recognition" which, she thinks, are the two "organizing principles for one another as they are for the volumes through which they ramify. . ." The connection is made between Jewish cosmopolitanism and the homosexual "diaspora," which thus form a coupling of two worlds that would otherwise be seen as irrelevant to each other.[27]

Sedgwick's book, while distancing itself quite consciously from the perspectives of historical materialism, is abundantly endowed with the kind of insights on which any ideological analysis of literature must draw. I think that the

---

[27] Sedgwick152.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

importance of what Tendencies offers the reader will emerge in the course of the next chapter, where I will look at some of the deficiencies as well as at the strengths of ideologically oriented critical work done on Proust from the early twentieth century to our own time.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter Two

Ideological Questions in Proust Studies

The purpose of this chapter is to survey a representative group of critical works which deal in a thoroughgoing way with the ideological content and implications of Proust's writing. The paucity of ideological analysis applied to Proust's early writings makes it necessary to deal mainly with what his sociologically oriented interpreters have had to say about the Recherche, the significance of which for Proust's early years will, I hope, become clear.

Generally speaking, and unsuprisingly, ideology has been a central concern of Marxist and Marxist-influenced scholars such as Edmund Wilson and Walter Benjamin in the 1930s and, in recent decades, Seth L. Wolitz, Robert Sayre, and Michael Sprinker. Some of their perceptions are remarkable as far as historical and sociological questions are concerned. On the other hand, with the exception of Sprinker, they have little if anything to say about issues of gender and sexuality which, as we have seen in the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, have assumed great importance in literary studies over the past ten years or so and have in fact yielded important insights into Proust's world view.[28]

Ronald Thornton's 1979 study Marcel Proust and Marxist Literary Criticism from the Nineteen Twenties to the Nineteen Seventies provides insight

---

[28] An excellent example in this regard is Jarrod Hayes's essay "Proust in the Tearoom," PMLA 110 (1995): 992-1005.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

into as yet untranslated Soviet criticism of Proust in the 1920s and 30s.[29]

Thornton points out some of the all too familiar negative aspects of Soviet commentary not only on Proust but on all writers associated with a "decadent" and corrupting western capitalist culture. The crippling effects of dogmatism, which in the mid 1930s officially proclaimed the irredeemable degeneracy of western bourgeois literature and the triumphal onset of a new revolutionary proletarian culture, were on display in the speech given on August 17, 1934 by Andrei Zhdanov to the first Congress of Soviet writers.[30] Basically Zhdanov echoed the Communist Party line on bourgeois literature in such a way as to heighten the presumed superiority of "socialist realism," the practical effect of which was to classify all contemporary writers as either "progressive" or "reactionary." That Proust was in the "reactionary" camp was all but assured by his predilection for what Zhdanov and his adepts called "degenerate" forms of sexuality and "mystical" notions about art for art's sake.

Yet Thornton makes it clear that there were some Soviet critics and scholars who, precisely by remaining within the framework of the "Marxist-Leninist" critique of bourgeois civilization, were able to raise a fairly broad

---

[29] Two useful articles on Soviet criticism and scholarship on Proust are by Yvette Louria, "Proust and Lunacharskii," Romanic Review 62 (1971): 127-132, and Gaston Boitchidzé, "Jugements russes sur Proust," Europe, 49 (1971): 156-166. Louria calls into question Lunacharsky's remarks concerning Proust's connections with "Jewish finance capital" and refutes the Russian critic's arguments that imply a close relationship between Goncharov's depiction of the Russian aristocracy in Oblamov with Proust's portrayal of a decadent French aristocracy. Because of his ideological blinders, she avers, Lunacharsky was unable to grasp the seriousness of Proust's moral vision. But Luria also acknowledges Lunacharsky's critical acumen, noting in particular his sense of Proust's novel as "cinematographic" in its appeal to the eye, the ear, the intellect and the emotions. Luria's essay has useful bibliographical information on the critical reception of Proust in the Soviet Union and on various Russian-language editions and translations of his writings. In his essay, Boitchidzé offers a survey of Soviet Proust criticism, indicating that critical opinion in the Soviet Union was not as monolithic and one-sided as is generally thought. He singles out for brief discussion A. Frankovsky, Maxim Gorky , Anatoly Lunacharsky, N. Rykova, A. Stein and M. Yakhontova (joint authors of a History of French Literature published in 1958), Z. Potopova, and several others.

[30] See Andrei A. Zhdanov, Essays on Literature, Philosophy and Music (New York: International Publishers, 1950) 7-14.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

range of problems intrinsic to Proust's writing that were in need of ideological exploration and analysis. In other words, even when used in a reductive and dogmatic manner, Marxism provided a basis on which to raise large questions about the relationship between literature and society that non-Marxist western thinkers did not always take into sufficient account. Gyorgy Lukács, Bertholt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Antonio Gramsci, Harry Schlochower and several other "western Marxists" are often credited with making the decisive intellectual breakthroughs that began to free Marxism of its schematic and tendentious abuses, but Thornton informs us that the Soviet literary establishment contributed in some measure to its own liberation.

Anatoli Lunacharsky and Alexandr Voronsky, and of course Mikhail Bakhtin and his group, were among the Soviet literary scholars who contributed directly or indirectly to a non-doctrinaire historical materialist critique of Proust. Lunacharsky noted that, like Balzac vis-à-vis the old and the new orders in the France of the early nineteenth century, Proust had been able to transcend the limitations of his own deep-seated aristocratism to reveal the senselessness of that class's existence.[31] What Lunacharsky found objectionable in Proust's writing was his tendency to get involved in analyzing "insignificant" emotional experience and devote hundreds of pages to ordinary events of no broad general importance. For Lunacharsky, the first Soviet "Commissar of Education and the Arts" from 1917 to 1929, Proust's evocative prose and gift for psychological analysis, in which Lunacharsky thought he was the equal of Dostoievsky, were somewhat vitiated by his trivializing instincts. For his part, Voronsky raised the issue of Proust's ability to reach a wide audience. Basically, he thought that Proust would not appeal to a mass readership: his

[31] Ronald Thornton, Marcel Proust and Marxist Literary Criticism from the Nineteen Twenties to the Nineteen Seventies , diss.,The University of Indiana, 1979, 45.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

work demanded the kind of close reading that the masses of people would never be capable of doing. In addition, Proust had almost no sense of plot development, his fictions had little if any action, and his sentences, though "luxurious," were also "heavy."[32] Yet a recently published anthology of Voronsky's critical essays shows that he had immense respect for Proust's illuminating recollection and interpretation of past events. "By means of protracted, stubborn and continuous exercise, by observing himself and making great efforts," Voronsky wrote in 1928, "Proust elevated the art of recollection to the heights of virtuosity. Indeed, the reader becomes convinced that the author is making nothing up, but faithfully recreating the most valuable scenes and events from his childhood and youth."[33]

Two Soviet women literary scholars, E. Galperina and N. Rykova, approached Proust with essentially the same preconceptions as their Soviet male contemporaries, but they did so with greater flexibility and with more appreciation of what was of lasting value in western bourgeois literature. Indeed, Thornton tells us that Galperina had the courage to oppose the condemnatory attitude of powerful Soviet figures such as Karl Radek who rejected Proust out of hand.[34] Like Lunacharsky, Galperina was struck by the "duality" apparent in Proust's magisterial command of language which, however, he often used to "write pages about nothing." What many critics in France and elsewhere in the West found so unusual in Proust, his deliciously ironic and humorous depiction of daily life, was found to be a deficiency by most Soviet critics. From a broadly historical point of view, one which Western critics, with few exceptions, tended to disregard, Galperina saw the Recherche, and

---

[32] Thornton 65.

[33] Alexandr Voronsky, Art as the Cognition of Life--Selected Writings 1911-1936, trans. and ed. Frederick S. Choate (Oak Park, MI: Mehring Books, Inc., 1998) 354.

[34] Thornton110.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

some of the stories in Pleasures and Days, as a veritable "encyclopedia of bourgeois parasitism." Proust was "the historian of the Third Republic," a novelist who, however, while bravely documenting the decline of imperialism, was nonetheless caught up in a type of apologetics that compelled him to "reproduce and to reaffirm" the social elite's right to its privileges and "refined feelings." Philosophically, Galperina had no doubt about where to place Proust: his penchant for a secluded life style led him into the trap of "total solipsism," which found expression in his concept of the superiority of life as recreated in art to real life.[35]

What we have here, I think, is an example of how a Marxist critique can at one and the same time lead to important insights into Proust's mind and world view, yet obscure those insights behind a screen of heavy-handed doctrinaire verbiage. This kind of stridency does not spoil the writing of Rykova, from whose study "The Final Stage of Bourgois Realism," written in 1936, Sprinker draws an epigraph concerning Proust's "critical realism." She noted that while Proust was not an entirely reliable chronicler of French socio-political reality, he did provide the reader with "certain elements of social criticism" and excelled in the exploration of man's "interior life." Rykova did not appeal to criteria of socialist realism when discussing Proust. Instead she understood him as the product of an historically determined mentality and social milieu within which, even while accepting many of its prejudices, he created a new kind of "novel-epic that treats of 'man' and 'society' in their mutual relations."[36]

Thornton discusses the views on Proust of some widely known protagonists of western Marxism such as Walter Benjamin and Gyorgi Lukács. It will be worth our while to examine a well known essay by Benjamin before

---

[35] Thornton112-118.

[36] Thornton131-138.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

shifting our attention to a seminal figure in American literary criticism, Edmund Wilson, whose conception of the world in the 1920s and 30s was shaped in part by the same perception of imminent bourgeois collapse that characterized the emerging generation of Soviet critics.

Walter Benjamin was one of the most idiosyncratic figures of the "Frankfurt School" that did so much to assimilate and to integrate the study of philosophy, psychology, literature, and art into Marxist studies, which were threatened at the time by an overwhelming economic reductionism. His essay "The Image of Proust"[37] has all of the characteristic features of its author's unconventional and unorthodox mind, even though his root assumptions were formed in the crucible of Marxist theory.[38]

The essay shows the effects of left-wing catastrophism in the 1930s. Benjamin places the Recherche in the context of socio-economic crisis in post-World- War I Europe, whose origins, he thought, could be traced back quite easily to Proust's depiction of late nineteenth-century French upper class society. One could detect in Proust's writing the belief that a whole civilization was on the brink of collapse. What was most symptomatic of this civilization's imminent demise was revealed, Benjamin believed, in Proust's unerring insights into the "consumerism" of the Parisian upper crust. This was a class

---

37 Walter Benjamin, "The Image of Proust," Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) 201-215.

38 In an exceedingly complex and original reading of Benjamin's essay, Carol Jacobs argues that the word "image" in its title is neither the image of life (biography) nor the image of poetry, but rather "what marks the ever increasing discrepancy between the two." Her main point is that the ambiguous relationship between life and poetry "which underlies the definition of the Proustian image becomes the fundamental if veiled concern of the entire essay." The most provocative part of Jacobs's reading of Benjamin's essay concerns her belief that, for the German thinker, the concept of "involuntary memory" in Proust is not really an unequivocally rejuvenating force which recalls and reactivates the past in the present, because what we get finally is the image, not life. Memory is fictive, it serves as a bridge to the image, not to life. Thus Jacobs privileges the idea of image as a literary device and as such one that has an essentially metaphorical and poetic function. See Carol Jacobs, "Walter Benjamin: Image of Proust," Modern Language Notes, 86, 6, December 1971, 910-932.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

which demanded that "the world of production [and of the producing classes] be gracefully and bashfully concealed behind the manner that is sported by the polished professionals of consumption." The German critic hailed Proust's analysis of snobbery as "the apogee of his criticism of society." In other words, Benjamin does not criticize Proust for having so rigorously excluded the working classes from his portrait of French society, since he does not attribute his neglect to personal failings or to the premises on which his understanding of literature was based. Rather he sees this trait as merely the outcome of a choice on Proust's part, a preliminary decision to concentrate on the dominant classes even if this resulted in a one-sided and skewed interpretation of the times. This is how Benjamin formulated this aspect of his essay:

> Proust describes a class which is everywhere pledged to camouflage its material basis and for this very reason is attached to a feudalism which has no intrinsic economic significance but is all the more serviceable as a mask of the upper middle class. This disillusioned, merciless deglamorizer of the ego, of love, of morals--for this is how Proust liked to view himself--turns his whole limitless art into a veil for this one most vital mystery of his class: the economic aspect. [39]

This provocative but not entirely transparent comment shows the extent to which Benjamin deployed his Marxist penchant for socio-economic themes in literature to develop original insights into Proust's achevements as a "demystifier" of the very class to which he owed so many of his loyalties. But Benjamin does not probe this contradiction; the rather small dimensions of his essay precluded such elaboration.

The social side of Benjamin's critique, which occupies mainly the second half of the essay, is preceded by some original comments concerning the distinctively literary virtues of Proust's writing. He sees the Recherche as a

---

[39] Benjamin 210.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

work that no ordinary taxonomic genre-hunters would ever satisfactorily label "a novel," and in so doing he anticipates what some of Proust's most important critics have said about the unclassifiable nature of his writing. Benjamin devotes some paragraphs to the question of memory and time in the Recherche, stressing the creative "weaving" of the threads of memory which he relates to the original Latin meaning of the word "text," from *textum*, meaning web, or more generally that which is woven. His philological aptitudes are much in evidence in the essay. Having identified the "web-like" nature of Proust's narrative, Benjamin moves to the difference between an experienced event, which is finite, and a remembered event, which is infinite, "because it is only a key to everything that happened before it and after it."

Benjamin did not agree with those critics who, he felt, emphasized excessively Proust's "idealist" intellectual heritage. He preferred to believe that his sense of time, for example, was in the final analysis not a mystical, otherworldly, visionary one but was rather time-bound. "It is true that in Proust we find rudiments of an enduring idealism," Benjamin acknowledged, "but it would be a mistake to make these the basis of an interpretation. . . .His true interest is in the passage of time in its most real--that is, space-bound--form, and this passage nowhere holds sway more openly than in remembrance within and aging without." [40]

Although I ascribe great and even preponderant importance to the role of idealist thought in shaping Proust's consciousness, I am willing to admit that the terms of his idealism, as I understand them, are not always easily reconcilable with other aspects of his world view, which tend strongly to combine around certain "laws" and "recurrences" in nature and in history that are easily conceivable within a materialist philosophical framework. But then

---

[40] Benjamin 211.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the whole question of what exactly idealism and materialism meant for Proust is one of the thorniest of problems, and it is sensible to avoid hard and fast conclusions. Benjamin wanted to claim Proust for the materialist camp. I would prefer to use the premises of historical materialism for the purpose of raising questions more than proposing solutions.

Edmund Wilson's ambivalence towards some of the leading figures of modernist fiction--Thomas Mann, William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf, Proust etc.--is evident in his pathbreaking work Axel's Castle--A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870 to 1930, published in 1931. He admired these writers for their psychological acuity, their mastery of complex literary forms, their passionate commitment to art, and their ability to create symbolic structures of intensely personal feeling and thought. But he also saw them as the last votaries of a cultish conception of art for art's sake that effectively removed them from the great new currents of revolutionary struggle being waged on behalf of an oppressed humanity.

Wilson's chapter on Proust in Axel's Castle[41] is one of the most perceptive and far-reaching essays ever written by a literary critic interested not only in narrowly defined aesthetic questions but also in the multiple links joining Proust's literary activity to the society and history of his time. He was among the first to point out the influence on Proust of nineteenth century British novelists, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens, the last of whom Wilson credited with having sparked Proust's flair for the "grotesque heightening" of character, as seen in his memorable portrait of the Baron de Charlus. He praised Proust's masterly handling of social scenes, marred only in the intermediate sections of the novel where he "blurred his effects by allowing the

---

41 Edmund Wilson, "Marcel Proust," Axel's Castle--A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870 to 1930 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931) 132-190.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

outline of the action to become obscured by the profusion of the hero's reflections on it."[42] In this remark Wilson anticipated the terms of an ongoing debate in Proust studies about the relationship between literary "creation" and "criticism" in all of his writing.

Wilson was able to see a side of Proust which, at the time he was working on the essay, no one else had fully recognized, namely the "ferocity" with which he critiqued the very social hierarchy he seemed to venerate, a ferocity nourished by the elements of "Jewish piety, intensity of idealism, and implacable moral severity"[43] in his personality. This was an overstatement perhaps, but in essence it was a true and very shrewd observation on Wilson's part which I intend to discuss in my analysis of Pleasures and Days.

Wilson's way of understanding Proust's notion of the unique place and mission of artistic creation in the modern world was also far more supple and subtle than that of most other critics of the time. He saw it as both a reaction to the destabilizing effects of new technology and the ceaseless flux of capitalist modernity and as a kind of "compensation for the anarchy, the perversity, the sterility and the frustrations of the world."[44] As indicated in chapter one, Wilson also thought that Proust's insights into the nature of time and relativity were the literary counterpart of Einstein's discovery of the "fourth dimension."

Of relevance to our purposes is Wilson's attempt at the end of his essay to link Proust with George Bernard Shaw. It is well known that Proust's philosophical formation was prevalently idealist and that he never showed the slightest interest in Shaw or for that matter in Marx and historical materialism. Yet Wilson felt the need to place Proust in the context of capitalist crisis in the

---

[42] Wilson 139.
[43] Wilson145.
[44] Wilson159.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1920s and 30s. In asserting that "Proust is perhaps the last great historian of the loves, the society, the intelligence, the diplomacy, the literature and the art of the Heartbreak House of capitalist culture,"[45] Wilson suggested a connection between a stage in the history of capitalism and its literary "refractions" (Bakhtin's term) which subsequent criticism, especially the work of Fredric Jameson, was to develop further and to modify.

At least two other scholars, Francis-Noël Thomas to an important extent, and Robert Sayre in a passing reference, have seized on the similarities between Shaw and Proust, arguing that for both authors writing was "a practical activity, an engagement with life that is meant to affect its course by changing the way people think and act."[46] Thomas is concerned with redeeming the idea of authorial agency and intention against various critical methodologies such as deconstruction and structuralism which, he believes, rob the act of writing of its essentially purposive character. What distinguishes Shaw from Proust is that Shaw "looked outward to the political and economic structure of society" while Proust "looked inward to the psychological and intellectual structure of the self."[47] But what they had in common is more fundamental, that is, their belief that writing is a form of action, of critical intervention in problems of general human interest. In the fourth chapter of his study, Thomas discusses "paradigms of explanation" in which one discovers surprising similarities with respect to the "scientific" claims of both authors and their understanding of literature as a means with which to search out the hidden "laws" of social, sexual, and moral life. Shaw provides "historical explanations" while Proust offers "psychological explanations," but each in his separate sphere is a truth-seeker who defies

---

[45] Wilson190.

[46] Wayne C. Booth, Foreword, The Writer Writing--Philosophic Acts in Literature, by Francis-Noël Thomas (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) xiii.

[47] Thomas 13.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

existing social conventions.

Before examining Michael Sprinker's History and Ideology in Proust- À la Recherche du temps perdu and the Third French Republic, the most resolutely Marxist reading of Proust produced in the English-speaking world over the past four to five decades, a brief look at two other works influenced by Marxist perspectives, Seth. L. Wolitz's The Proustian Community and Robert Sayre's Solitude in Society--A Sociological Study in French Literature, is in order.

A noteworthy aspect of Wolitz's book is its effort to evaluate Proust's writing in historical perspective, which involves a discussion of class relations and conflict in France, the impact of the Dreyfus Affair on the moral imaginations of French intellectuals, the nature of salon society, and Proust's education, which unfolded in the context of rapidly changing mores, class alignments and political loyalties.

Wolitz then discusses the origins and development of Proust's conception of literature, which derived from a body of work not at all exclusively French but European and cosmopolitan, stretching from Saint-Simon to Thackeray, from Nerval to Tolstoy. This discussion is followed by an analysis of the world view conveyed by Proust's fictional works, but the discussion does not look deeply into this except for the notion of interiority. The book's last two chapters focus on "the social institutions" within which Proust formed his conception of life and which he incorporated into his writing, and with the Jewish presence in Proust's social and intellectual milieu.

The institutions Wolitz talks about are not the major political and economic institutions of the time but rather the salons, the summer resorts, the theatres, and the fashionable cafés and restaurants frequented by the Parisian

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

upper crust. Wolitz is unwilling to make the kind of bold connections that Sprinker makes among history, class and literature, because unlike Sprinker he prefers mainly to remain within Proust's fictional world rather than stand outside of it and judge it from a more detached theoretical perspective. But working from within the text, he does do a good job of tracing the evolution of class relations depicted by Proust from beginning to end of the Recherche. As for the Jewish theme, Wolitz is far more daring than in his treatment of institutions, declaring unhesitatingly that "The Dreyfus Affair marked a point in Jewish history that is as significant as the second destruction of the Temple or the expulsion of the Jews from Spain."[48] What is most useful about this point of view, considered apart from its historical veracity, is that it allows Wolitz to explore the intertwined themes of culture and heredity in Proust's writing and his notions about French social hierarchies and affiliations, where Jews, with their uncertain identities and status in nineteenth century Europe, played an important role. Concerning the force of heredity in Proust's belief system, Wolitz argues that despite his idealist philosophical convictions, Proust was also, contradictorily, a "determinist more subtle than Zola but from the same school."[49] This observation has merit, and will be discussed later.

An intriguing and unusual feature of Sayre's Solitude in Society, which is dedicated "to the memory of George Lukács and Lucien Goldmann," is that its point of departure is a highly personal one, Sayre's own struggle to transcend human alienation and his slowly evolving concept of human community which began to take form as an outgrowth of his participation in militant left-wing social movements. He does not conceal himself behind the customary facade of so-called academic objectivity, but instead sees the critical

---

[48] Seth L. Wolitz, The Proustian Community (New York: New York University Press, 1971)151.
[49] Wolitz169.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

enterprise as at once a collective and a partisan one to which the individual scholar contributes according to his or her personal abilities and preferences.

The theoretical premise of Sayre's study is that works of literature are comprehensible only as part of a larger "totality," not autonomously or as responses to isolated events. He thus enters the great debate about literary texts conceived either as autotelic entities, in line with the assumptions of critical formalism, or as parts and expressions of a socio-historical reality. For Sayre, Proust, together with Malraux, Bernanos, Camus, and Sarraute, is a writer for whom it was axiomatic that estrangement and alienation were immanent in the human condition, a belief whose corollary is that each individual self is "unknowable" by others. Proust, Sayre maintains, was shaped as a thinker by a powerful current of philosophical thought extending from Descartes through Berkeley to Kant which places in doubt the reality and form of the world external to the subject. More particularly, Sayre believes, Proust was influenced by later offshoots of philosophical idealism, especially the thought of Schopenhauer and Bergson. He tends to separate Proust from his roots in the literature, culture and philosophy of the nineteenth century--a questionable move in my opinion--in order to make a case for seeing the Recherche as "the first of the great twentieth-century novels that are products of a universally fragmented society, that reflect and protest the failure of community and communication."[50] The words "products" and "reflect" may betray a drift towards determinism and reductionism on Sayre's part.

To follow Michael Sprinker's line of critical inquiry in History and Ideology in Proust, one must be prepared to think about the specifically Marxist concepts of "base and superstructure," "class and class struggle," "ideology,"

---

50 Robert Sayre, Solitude in Society--A Sociological Study in French Literature (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) 93.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and "revolution,"[51] which are the titles of the book's four chapters and constitute the intellectual framework within which the author builds his analysis. One must be willing not only to reflect on the validity of a socio-historical and class-oriented reading of the Recherche but also to allegorize and generalize about the leading characters and events in terms of their class affiliations and their significance in the unfolding of French history from the 1870s to World War I. Sprinker acknowledges his debts to earlier Marxist and historically sensitive interpreters of Proust, notably Walter Benjamin, Alfred Cobban, P.-V. Zima,[52] and Seth L. Wolitz, but clearly his book is in a class by itself in terms of its rigorous adherence to Marxist theory.

Sprinker wants to "recover some of the historical specificity that permeates" the Recherche, and to do so without betraying the literariness of Proust's "portrait of French society." Here lies the difficulty of his undertaking, for the successful execution of such a critical strategy requires constant attention to the ways in which history and its literary reconstruction are at once mutually permeable yet also distinct and, in the literary sphere, subject to all sorts of subjective and idiosyncratic reflections and creative distortions in the mind of the author, not to speak of questions of personal style and narrative method, which in Proust's case were highly original. In this sense, Sprinker tends to throw the weight of his analysis more in the direction of the historical and less toward the specifically literary, so that one occasionally feels that some of the

---

[51] As articulated especially by Marx and Engels in their Critique of Modern German Philosophy according to its Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner, popularly known as The German Ideology. See the English translation of this work in Karl Marx/Frederick Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1976) 21-530.

[52] Unfortunately, I became aware of Zima's work--Le Désir du mythe--une lecture sociologique de Marcel Proust (Paris: Libriaiie A-G. Nizet, 1973)--too late for inclusion in this section of my study. However, I have included some brief commentary on his work in chapter twelve, where I attempt to link Proust to broad currents of French and European Romanticism, a move which Zima's work, along with that of Anne Henry and some others, artfully anticipated.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

essential virtues of Proust's writing are pushed to the margins within the book's historico-theoretical framework. But this is a pitfall of all historically and ideologically grounded literary study, one which I think is well worth risking, even at the cost of erring on the side of excessive historicising.

In chapter one, "Base and Superstructure," Sprinker takes note of various forms of inter-class collaboration in France in the early decades of the Third Republic, dwelling on class compromises, the birth of the mass press, the ideological role of the salons, and the sense conveyed subtly yet persuasively by Proust of the ever more rapid erosion of long-established social hierarchies in France up to World War I. In chapter one he does a useful review of the ideological positions taken by different characters and, reflecting an Althusserian influence, of the "principal state apparatuses portrayed in the novel": the military, the police, the schools, the diplomatic corps, and the salons, the last of which Sprinker sees as "the quintessential institution for ideological elaboration and social stratification in the Recherche."[53]

In chapters two and three, "Class and Class Struggle" and "Ideology," Sprinker focuses on the Recherche as a "monumental funerary edifice" to the aristocratic world Proust so much revered and whose deserved loss of prestige and ideological hegemony after the Dreyfus Affair he felt compelled to acknowledge. The burden of Sprinker's analysis in these two parts falls on the principle of allegorization, according to which each of the important characters is made to represent or typify widely diffused attitudes and mentalities. Thus, for Sprinker, Swann's jealous love for Odette is an allegorical figure for "the chronic social and political instability over the first two decades of the Republic's life." The love affair between Swann and Odette "is not merely

---

[53] Michael Sprinker, History and Ideology in Proust--À la recherche du temps perdu and the Third French Republic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 47.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

about sex and gender relations, it is at the same time a story of class relations, or more properly, class struggles." Swann's incapacity to control Odette, his jealousy over her infidelity, can be construed, Sprinker maintains, in "straightforwardly political and historical terms to indicate the bourgeoisie's tenuous hold over governmental--and to some extent social--power." [54]

In chapter three, "Ideology," Sprinker makes some interesting observations about the politics and culture of Proust's social world and about the psycho-sexual aspects of his depiction of character. He leans on Althusser in this chapter, while taking issue, it seems, with the unhistorical way in which he feels Malcolm Bowie and Paul De Man interpret the theme of jealousy in the Recherche, namely as a permanent existential category of existence. But there are theoretical differences alluded to here which are treated rather perfunctorily.

In chapter four, "Revolution," Sprinker makes an argument whose point of departure is historical rather than literary; that is, he takes his understanding of the historical facts and claims that the Recherche "presents an image of French society that is broadly in line with the historical record of class struggles during the period 1871-1914."[55] Controversy about that history is implicitly obscured by such a blanket statement. Is literature to be evaluated only in terms of its adherence to a particular intepretation of history? Fredric Jameson argues that "history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious." [56] While this statement does assume that, in the final analysis, "all literature must be read as

---

[54] Sprinker 77-79.

[55] Sprinker 156.

[56] Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious--Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981) 35.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community,"[57] it does so in a manner very different from that of Sprinker, in whose formulation the complex mediated relationship between history and literature seems almost to disappear.

Sprinker talks in the book's final section about Proust's dim consciousness of the working-class movement and comments, allegorically once again, on Robert de Saint-Loups's death, together with Charlus's decline, as marking the demise of the French aristocracy as a whole. The "revolution" depicted in the Recherche is therefore the definitive triumph of the bourgeois revolution, which began in 1789 and ended almost one hundred years later, culminating in the birth of the Third Republic.

This is an appropriate moment to look at two works of critical reflection in which Proust figures in a rather significant way: Jean-Paul Sartre's Qu'est-ce que la littérature?, which mentions or alludes to Proust only a few times but some of whose views on literature and society are relevant to him in several ways, and Nathalie Sarraute's L'Ère du soupçon.[58] Both are "engaged" writings in that what they have to say about literary questions has implications that go well beyond the literary realm to touch on broad philosophical and sociological problems.

Qu'est-ce que la littérature? was published in 1947, a moment of extreme tension in France and the world when the alliances formed during World War II were being replaced by the renewed hostility between the western powers and the Soviet Union. This abrupt shift in political relations was accompanied by a hardening of positions on the cultural front. Many writers felt that they would have to declare their loyalties and take sides in the great

---

[57] Jameson 70.

[58] I shall be quoting from passages that I have translated directly from French editions of both works: Jean-Paul Sartre, Qu'est-ce que la littérature? (Paris: Gallimard, 1948) and Nathalie Sarraute, L'Ère du soupçon (Paris: Gallimard, 1956).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

debates of the incipient Cold War. Sartre was among the not very large number of writers and thinkers in the West who refused to go along with this call to arms, insisting instead that the basic existential questions facing writers in 1947 could not be adequately answered within the framework of an ideology that demonized the opposing side. Literature, for Sartre, transcended such narrowness of perspective because what mattered for the individual writer was his or her concrete "situation," his or her existential choices, his or her conception of what writing really meant in the larger scheme of humanity's struggle to liberate itself. Viewed from this angle of vision, writing was a decisive form of action with the power to translate states of consciousness into the living embodiments of fiction and poetry.

The idea of "situation" is of key importance in Sartre's scheme of things. He was leery of abstract moralizing, impatient with those who would establish preliminary conditions for the attainment of a desired "purity" of literary intent. What he remarked about Richard Wright, for example, while not mentioning Proust, could be read as an implicit critique of one aspect of Proust's conception of literature, which hinged on an unbreakable link between the written word in fictional form and the realm of Truth and Beauty. "Let's take the case of the great black writer Richard Wright," Sartre said:

> If we consider only his condition as a *man*, that is to say as a "Negro" of the southern United States transported to the North,we will understand at once that he can write only about Blacks and Whites *as seen by the eyes of Blacks*. Can one suppose an instant that he would accept spending his life in the contemplation of the True, the Beautiful and the eternal Good, when 90 percent of the Negroes of the South are practically deprived of their right to vote? And if one speaks here of the "treason of the clerks," I answer that there are no clerks among the oppressed. The clerks are necessarilly the parasites of the classes and races that oppress.[59]

[59] Sartre 85. The word "clerks" is a reference to Julien Benda's La Trahison des clercs, which appeared in 1927. The book accused many European intellectuals of having abandoned reason and rational discernment in their rush to embrace totalitarian ideologies.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The notion that a writer's stance vis-à-vis the great struggle between oppressors and oppressed is what gives his or her writing its distinctive character was not, in Sartre, primarily of Marxist origin. It was rather a reaction against the widespread passivity and moral complacency he had noted in French society before and especially during World War II. It was in this context that he issued his own call to arms in Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?, a summons to make of writing the most serious and engaged of human occupations. The questions he sought to answer in his treatise were at once old ones yet perennially new: What is writing? Why write? For whom does one write? Unless one asked these questions, it was impossible to free oneself from the confinements of formalist and abstract categories.

Where Proust fit, retroactively speaking, in this scheme was not directly addressed by Sartre. However, on the basis of what we know about Proust's general orientation toward life and letters in the period that primarily concerns us in this study, the late 1880s and 1890s, we can say with virtual certainty that what Sartre observed about the relations between literature and society in France at the end of the nineteenth century was meant to apply to Proust as much as to other writers of the time who found refuge in the idea of literature as a spiritual commitment requiring "solitude" and "withdrawal into one's inner self." While we know, Sartre asserted in the third section of his treatise, "that literature, ordinarily, represents in society an integral and militant function,"

> . . . .bourgeois society, at the end of the nineteenth century, offers this unprecedented spectacle: a hard-working collectivity and gathered around the flag of production, from which emanates a literature that, far from reflecting it, never speaks to it about what interests it, takes a position contrary to its ideology, relates the Beautiful to the unproductive, refuses to let itself be integrated, doesn't even want to be read and nevertheless, within the bosom of its revolt, still reflects the ruling classes in its deepest structures

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and in its "style."[60]

To this characterization of the late nineteenth-century avant-garde, Sartre immediately added a qualifying judgment that revealed his deeply ambivalent attitude toward writers such as Proust:

> We must not blame the authors of this period: they did what they could and we find among them some of our greatest and purest writers.

Despite Sartre's implicit rejection of the way Proust and his contemporaries conceived of the literary vocation, he nonetheless articulates a concept of literary "autonomy" in relation to what he called "the temporal powers" of the world that is reminiscent of Proust's views on the issue. Sartre finds common ground with Proust in his bedrock understanding of literature as having its source in the ideas of freedom and "renewal" of the world:

> I say that the literature of a particular period is alienated when it has not arrived at an explicit consciousness of its autonomy and when it subjects itself to the temporal powers or to an ideology, in a word when it considers itself as a means and not as an unconditioned end.[61]

With Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute was a major theorist and practitioner of "the new novel" in which almost all of the premises of the traditional novel were vigorously challenged. The essays gathered in L'Ère du soupçon were written between 1947 and 1956. Thus there is a chronological link between her reflections and those of Sartre. Philosophically speaking, Sarraute's point of view was probably more subversive of accepted theories of literature than Sartre's, although there were similarities between Sartre's notion of absurdity and Sarraute's insistence on the illogical disorder of human life.

Sarraute sees Proust, with Gide, Sartre, Céline and several

---

[60] Sartre 150.

[61] Sartre 156.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

others, as "precursors" of the "new novel" in that they already glimpsed a truth concerning techniques of characterization she deigned suitable for an era in which "the novelist no longer believes in the solidity of his creations." Today's heroes, she said, are merely "a reflection of the author himself. . .They are no longer anything but visions, dreams, nightmares, illusions, reflections, modalities of this omnipotent 'I'." In this sense, she said, "we have entered the age of suspicion."[62] We no longer believe in the old-fashioned protagonists of fiction, because they have "the soft consistency and the tastelessness of food that has already been chewed." The reader of today, she continued, "mistrusts the type of plot which, encircling a character like a little band, gives it, at the same time as an appearance of cohesion, the rigidity of mummies." In this regard, Sarraute credits Proust with having anticipated a key insight of the new novel, namely that fictional characters should be pried loose from the constrictive claim made by traditional novelists to reproduce something called objective truth. This was the only way that they could become part of "the infinite complexity of life" that, at the very most, can be revealed only through the evocation of "little true facts" of ordinary life. Moreover, Proust had understood that fictional characters are believable only when created on the assumption that life means perpetual change, constant metamorphosis. There can be no assurance that a given literary character is or is not the same today as he was the day before, nor can objects be reliably described as if they were necessarily part of a single reality, fixed and stabilized forever.

Nevertheless, in an essay of 1956 called "Conversation et sous-conversation,"[63] Sarraute judged Proust, Joyce and other avatars of modernism to be "witnesses of a bygone era." Despite Proust's effort to "separate the

---

[62] Nathalie Sarraute, L'Ère du soupçon, (Paris: Gallimard, 1956) 62-63.
[63] Sarraute 83-122.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

impalpable substance of his characters into minute particles, no sooner does one close his books than these particles stick to each other and become amalgamated into a coherent whole by an irresistible movement of attraction." A little further on in this essay, Sarraute praises Proust for the profundity of his writing, but notes at the same time that he never "contents himself so to speak with simple descriptions and only rarely abandons dialogue to the free interpretation of readers." What this amounts to is Sarraute's opinion that, in the final analysis, Proust observed his world from "a great distance" in the manner of the omniscient and omnipotent narrator of earlier times whose account of experience was designed to give readers the feeling that they have been part of an "objective" narration of events. In Sarraute's view, dialogue, not description or action as conventionally understood, is the repository of "those subterranean movements at once impatient and fearful" that lie beneath the spoken words of characters and chiefly constitute the basic reality for the new novelists. Proust, she thought, had only partially glimpsed this core element of the new novel.

Two works from the 1960s, Germaine Brée's The World of Marcel Proust and Emilien Carassus's Le Snobisme et les lettres françaises, de Paul Bourget à Marcel Proust, 1884-1914, and three from the 1980s, Anne Henry's Marcel Proust-Théories pour une esthétique and Antoine Compagnon's La Troisième République des lettres and Proust entre deux siècles, will conclude this summary review of Proust studies in which historical, social, and ideological questions are treated as integral to the task of literary criticism.

A strong feature of Brée's The World of Marcel Proust is that it delivers what it promises in its title, a balanced consideration of the literary groups and movements, social milieus, and network of personal associations in which Proust established his identity and gradually elaborated his vision of life.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

She stresses the importance of the "specific social and historical setting" from the 1880s to World War I which nourished Proust's highly individual search for artistic fulfillment; the salon society in which he moved; the relationships that linked him to a family, to other people, and, perhaps most importantly in terms of his literary self-image, to "a collective past and future" that made sense to him. This side of Proust's personality, his need for a feeling of attachment to the French soil and nation, and to certain values--family solidarity, patriotism, a community of intellectual and political concerns--has not always received the attention it deserves. Brée contributes to our understanding of this Proust, the "national-popular" Proust, to use Gramscian terminology, far more thoroughly than most. Echoing Brée in this respect, Emilien Carassus notes that the family cook Françoise on the one hand, and the heroic (even if deeply flawed) Saint-Loup on the other, were for Proust characters who embodied the most authentic and enduring qualities of the French peasantry and aristocracy. In this sense, Sprinker was on target in his allegorizations in that there was an emblematic story implicit in Proust's portraits of these two characters in the Recherche, a story of enduring loyalty and resistance to the encroachments of a rampaging "materialism."

The World of Marcel Proust also contains one of the first attempts to deal with Pleasures and Days from an historical as well as aesthetic point of view, but her analysis of this work will be better left for inclusion in Part Three, where I will consider her views together with other critical commentaries. Suffice it to say at this point that penetrating observations such as the one I am about to cite make Brée's short chapter on Pleasures and Days (13 pages) a milestone in Proust criticism. This book, Brée wrote,

> . . . already shows Proust's concern with art as preserver of the transitory, as mirroring the spiritual quality of human experience.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Hence the central position and the importance of the portraits of artists, countering by their very presence the apparent frivolity of Proust's socialites. [64]

Emilien Carassus's philologically and sociologically dense study of snobbery in the writings of French novelists from the 1880s to 1914, which includes a chapter on Proust entitled "Proust or Snobbery Surpassed," is massive in size, comprehensive in its treatment of the subject, and full of useful hints and remarks about Proust's personal value system as reflected in his writing. In the context of this survey, I can only summarize in a cursory and schematic way the peculiar usefulness of this work to an ideological and historical approach to Proust.

Carassus looks at "the situation of the aristocracy" as it changed and mutated during the period covered, stopping long enough to consider the attitudes towards this social class of various writers, chiefly Bourget and Proust. For his main sources he does not use the fictional writings but rather the "chronicles" Proust wrote in his youth on the doings of the Parisian nobility that were published in some of the fashionable newspapers of the day. He provides a fascinating account of the origins of the word snob and its various types and usages in Britain, where it was apparently first used by Thackeray and then quickly spread to France and the rest of the continent. Carassus points out the subtle semantic differences that distinguish the word snob, not all of which had a negative connotation, especially in its literary use in the works of Balzac and Barbey d'Aurevilly. But in the main it was quickly turned to satirical purposes, as in the "worldly novels" of Abel Hermant and Paul Hervieu and in the early writings of Proust where, as in the Recherche, it is a major symptom of what Proust thought was ailing French bourgeois and high society.

---

[64] Germaine Brée, The World of Marcel Proust (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1966) 43.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Carasssus's study includes an excellent analysis of the salon culture in which Proust was a longtime participant. Carassus does not limit himself to the superficial aspects of salon society. He probes and exemplifies the concrete ways in which it effectively circumscribed and dominated the lives of the Parisian intelligentsia during Proust's lifetime, with their parties, dinners, theatrical presentations, poetry readings, and political, literary, and social involvements, which resulted in clear lines of demarcation between salons that basically defended the old conservative and aristocratic order, and those that urged the spread of republican and radical democratic ideas. This division manifested itself, of course, during and after the Dreyfus Affair, in which Proust played a leading role as a champion of the Dreyfusards, and as a result made himself the target of slander and vilification.

In a section entitled "Enthusiasm and Neuroses," Carassus reviews the various fads of the day, the *toquades* of fashionable society, which went from anarchism to mysticism, from "musicmania" to a particular sort of "snobbery" attached to homosexuality, of which the Count Robert de Montesquiou, a mentor to Proust, was a prime exponent. For Montesquiou, as Carassus explains it, far from being a "curse" or a biological necessity (as Proust tended to think of it), homosexuality was a sign of distinction and manifested a noble refusal to participate in the "vulgar and ordinary" forms of heterosexuality based on conjugal boredom and lazy social convention. In short, it was a mark of superiority with a strong flavor of aesthetic pride mixed in to the formula. A cult of hermaphroditism celebrated by Joseph Péladan in La Gynandre (1891) was another feature of homosexual or bi-sexual superiority.[65]

Finally, after a review of the "worldly novel" of the 1880s and 90s,

---

65 Emilien Carassus, Le Snobisme et les lettres françaises, de Paul Bourget à Marcel Proust, 1884-1914 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1966) 423-428.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Carassus devotes a long chapter to Proust who, in his view, both embraced and transcended the values of a snob-ridden society. Like Brée, Carassus offers a critique of Pleasures and Days which ranges from acute observations about Proust's social world to excessive praise of him for having renounced the glitter of fashionable society in favor of a life consecrated to reflection, solitude, and literary creation; excessive because it is not clear why Proust's reasons for satirizing the French aristocracy were any more morally praiseworthy than those of other "worldly" writers of the time, especially as Proust never recovered from his life-long infatuation with what Carassus calls the "ancestral" allure of French noble surnames, and Carasssus's reasonable conjecture that what Proust most admired in life were "the solid realities of race and soil in both nobles and peasants." [66]

The singular distinction of Anne Henry's Marcel Proust--Théories pour une esthétique [67] is that it mixes a thorough analysis of the philosophical foundations of Proust's ideas, especially concerning the nature and purposes of art and literature, with a series of critically independent judgments that effectively demystify much of what had passed up to then for Proust's absolute originality and transcendent genius. In her hands, Proust returns definitively to the fold of French writers at the turn of the century who shared intellectual interests, political and moral concerns, and literary aspirations. In an earlier essay on Pleasures and Days, she had discovered "troubling resemblances" between some of Proust's stories and prose-poetic evocations and those of other writers of the time, among whom she singled out Tolstoy to document what she felt amounted to "plagiary" on Proust's part, instances where he had "pillaged" motifs and devices from the great Russian novelist and short-story

---

[66] Carassus 579.

[67] Anne Henry, Théories pour une esthétique (Paris: Klincksiek, 1983).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

writer.[68]

In Théories pour une esthétique, only a small part of which will be dealt with here, Henry resumes her inquiry into the armamentarium of philosophical notions on the basis of which, she argues, Proust built his world view and produced his fictional universe. These notions turn out to be those of the entire European Romantic heritage, which drew copiously from German thinkers, especially from aesthetic and moral philosophers such as Schelling and Schopenhauer. Proust was also shaped, philosophically speaking, by Slavic influences,Tolstoy and Dostoievsky, and of course by French philosophers, from his own philosophy instructor Alphonse Darlu to Darlu's mentors, Gabriel Séailles, Jules Lachelier and Émile Boutroux. It is entirely possible that Darlu, in addition to inculcating into his responsive student a reverence for truth-seeking at all costs, was also responsible for sensitizing him to French social questions, as seen from a radical-socialist point of view.[69] It was Darlu as well who exposed Proust to the thought of Immanuel Kant, whom he regarded as "the Himalaya" of moral philosophy.[70]

Proust derived his interest in the "unconscious" not from Freud, Henry tells us, of whom Proust seems to have been unaware, but from Karl von Hartmann, whose The Philosophy of the Unconscious, published in 1869, was a source of Proust's and many other writers' pessimism about man's rational powers and of their corresponding acknowledgment of "unconscious" forces in the human personality that absorb, transcend and reunite the primal division of reason and will. Proust did not take Hartmann's pessimism as far as some

---

[68] See Anne Henry, "Les Plaisirs et les Jours: chronologie et métempsychose," Etudes proustiennes I, in Cahiers Marcel Proust, Gallimard, No. 6, 1973, 69-93. I discuss these "plagaries" in chapter ten.

[69] Henri Bonnet, Alphonse Darlu-maître de philosophie de Marcel Proust (Paris: Nizet, 1961) 46, 57, 68.

[70] Bonnet 34.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

others did, yet it may very well be that his view of love as inevitably "illusory" and even pathological in nature, and his recourse to art as the sole means with which to redeem an otherwise bleak and unfulfilling life, stemmed in considerable measure from Hartmann. I would think, however, that in this realm, Proust was probably the interpeter of his own life experience, for which he then found confirmation in philosophy and psychology.

Henry makes much, but with rather slight evidence, of a turn or shift towards aesthetics in Proust's thinking in the mid to late years of the 1890s. The evidence for this turn are three articles, the first on the liberating power of music, which he regarded as the queen of the muses, the second on symbolism, where he seemed to be challenging no less a poetic authority than Stéphane Mallarmé, and the third on Chardin and Rembrandt. It should be noted that in these three articles,[71] Proust was performing an intellectual exercise that paralleled the approach he took in Pleasures and Days, where music, poetry, and painting join forces thematically and even typographically in a tribute to the sisterhood of the muses. What one finds in these three articles is an effort to raise the arts to a spiritual, a sacred level. Henry connects this sudden exaltation of art with a frequently mentioned letter he wrote in September of 1893 to his father, where he humbly yet proudly declared himself to be unfit for anything in life except philosophy and literature, and with the lectures given by Emile Boutroux on modern philosophy which Proust attended at the Sorbonne in 1894-95. It was in this state of mind, Henry maintains, that Proust read and was marked forever by Schelling's System of Transcendental Idealism and by the thought of Schelling's French disciple, Gabriel Séailles.

---

[71] The three articles were published in the volume Contre Sainte-Beuve, ed. Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), entitled "Un Dimanche au Conservatoire," 367-372, "Chardin et Rembrandt," 372-382, and "Contre l'obscurité," 390-395. They will be discussed in Part Three.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Henry treats Proust's philosophical formation with deep seriousness, and for this reason makes an important contribution to our understanding of his emerging world outlook. The only problem in her approach is that her focus on intellectual history is so intense that she loses sight of a broader historical contextualization which would have given her analysis of Proust's ideas more connections with the practical experiential world.

To do justice to Antoine Compagnon's writings on Proust one would have to reevaluate the critical legacies of formalism and historicism in order to see how at least some exponents of both methodologies, despite their theoretical incompatibility, eventually found that they needed one another. This task lies far beyond my purposes, but it is important to appreciate Compagnon's self-revelatory remarks about his formalist training and his intention in La Troisième République des lettres to rethink the long historical debate, going back to the time of Sainte-Beuve, Brunetière and Lanson, between practitioners of the two methodologies.

In his opening "Avant-propos," Compagnon identifies Flaubert and Proust--the two writers to whom the book is devoted--as the embodiments of two different approaches to literary study, the one, Proust, for whom criticism is still regarded as literature, not yet given over to history, the other, Flaubert, as marking the transition of criticism to history. In this sense, Compagnon argues, the Third Republic of letters situated itself somewhere between the two novelists. But he acknowledges that these terms are insufficient to capture the nuances of difference implicit in them. In any event, as here presented, Proust becomes the precursor of critical formalism, while Flaubert, often associated with a nineteenth century formalism, foreshadows a later turn to a historicising criticism.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Compagnon asks himself, and the reader, the question why literary history must itself be historicised. His answer is that "literary history has no other determinant but an historical one, and is not separable from the circumstances of its advent." But the key point here is the next step in Compagnon's argument, namely his claim that literary history is itself an ideology, because it incorporates the idea of a "national literature," and such an ideology must be grasped historically. The "new criticism" as represented by Roland Barthes, Compagnon believes, had failed to take into account the "old old criticism" (Sainte-Beuve, Taine, Brunetière) and the inception of the "old criticism" (Lanson), a neglect which had come at the price of repeating the past rather than transcending it. Compagnon wishes to avoid "the surreptitious return of the old old criticism in the new, the eternal perpetuation of traditional literary history." In this sense, he argues, the beginnings of theThird Republic, far from being irrelevant to current debates, are urgently necessary to know and to understand.[72]

Compagnon clarifies Barthes's distinction between two types of literary study, the one devoted to the study of literature as an institution, where historical inquiry is necessary, and the other to literature as "creation," the realm of the subjective and the psychological, where historical categories are to be rigorously excluded. But Barthes thought of history in positivist rather than dialectical terms, and for this reason felt that literary history would have to be limited to areas of "sociological" and "institutional" interest such as sources, influences, functions, programs and manifestoes, in short what Lucien Febvre called the collective and supraindividual side of literary production. The "individual" core of literature must remain in a sphere apart from all "historical"

---

[72] Antoine Compagnon, La Troisième République des lettres (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1983) 8-17.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

contaminations. In this regard, it is not entirely clear where Compagnon himself stands, that is, his position concerning the concept of history that understands literature primarily in empirical terms, according to the positivist model, and the historical materialist or Marxist concept, where in the final analysis, at least as formulated by "the philosophy of praxis" in the Gramscian and Bakhtinian senses, the notion of a "total" historical process incorporates all forms of "ideological creation," including the literary, but does so in such a manner that the peculiarly literary forms retain their specificity and uniqueness.

In a section of the book entitled "Captatio," Compagnon characterizes Proust as "the incarnation of literariness," but at the same time--and here the advantages of a "history of literary history" proves its merits--he also displayed many traits which identify him as a conservative thinker on social and intellectual issues. Yet paradoxically, in his literary practice, instead of being just another exponent of the "Third Republic of letters," he was really a part of the literary avant-garde, whose adepts did not believe in a "national" literature but were convinced rather that "literariness depends on universality."[73] Thus Proust's relationship with the critical currents of his time was complex, a point which Compagnon further demonstrates by noting that, in certain respects, there were elements of agreement in the thought of Proust and that of a figure such as Gustave Lanson, who in his history of French literature and studies of individual writers insisted on "clarity, good sense, and intelligence" against "mystery" and "incomprehensibility," as Proust also insisted in his 1896 essay "Against Obscurity."

But again, Compagnon also notes that the difference between Proust and Lanson was radical, that the Recherche was conceived as much against Lanson as against Sainte-Beuve in its call for a literature that inquires

[73] Compagnon, La Troisième République des lettres, 216.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

into the soul, leaving "faddish" concerns such as nationalism, populism and class struggle to the propagandists. The pages on Proust in this section touch on various facets of his thinking as they affected his literary practice, such as his ambivalent attitude toward "reading" and "erudition," his dislike of libraries, which he felt hindered rather than abetted the "spiritual" appreciation of literature, his analysis of artistic fetishism and idolatry (as shown for example in Swann's way of appropriating the iconography and imagery of certain paintings), and his views on rendering the thought of others, as he himself had done in his translations of John Ruskin. When he began the Recherche, Compagnon observes, Proust ceased translating Ruskin in order to "translate himself."

In his exegeses of passages where these facets of Proust's intellectual and creative life are of paramount importance, Compagnon adds significantly to the reader's historical as well as textual grasp of Proust's writings. His primary contribution is to textual analysis, but it is highly problem-oriented; that is, its points of departure are motivated by contemporary concerns reaching "outside the text" in which such concepts as "genetic" criticism, terms such as "androgyny," and questions such as Proust's place in the history of modern culture both mirror the debates of the 1970s and 80s and prefigure the interests Compagnon was to manifest in Proust entre deux siècles, published in 1989.

The title of this work is itself a token of Compagnon's sensitivity to a powerful emerging current of thought which rejects all traditional forms of disciplinarity, all conventional lines of demarcation between this or that behavior, this or that mode of literary or sexual expression in favor of an attitude which allows for much more porous boundaries between different behaviors,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

much more intimate interrelations between seemingly disparate phenomena. Thus the words "entre deux" in the title, which allude literally to the chronology of Proust's life (1871-1922), is also meant to designate various aspects of his conception of life and literature. The true "entre-deux" of the Recherche, Compagnon argues, is to be found in the Sodom and Gomorrah section, where one discovers, with the narrator, that the Baron de Charlus's sexual "inversion" and "the discussion of the 'the race of men-women' announces with a flourish the end of the Guermantes cycle and the new direction of the novel."[74]

But the words "entre-deux" are even more significantly pertinent to Proust in the structure of the Recherche and its various languages, which reveal it to be a "mixed, hybrid, intermediary" work that occupies a space between the novel and criticism, between literature and philosophy. Although Proust's aesthetic theories belonged to the nineteenth century, Compagnon continues, his work was also prophetic. He was the last writer of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth. Thus, having been born between two centuries was but one of many ambiguous features of Proust's life and work, another of which was androgyny. From these observations, mixed with remarks about the relevance of historical context to an adequate understanding of Proust's writing, one can grasp the importance Compagnon attributes to "genetic criticism" aimed at showing how the Recherche emerged out of essays written in the early 1900s and gathered in the volume Contre Sainte-Beuve. In all important respects, Compagnon places Proust in an "in between" state, which has the effect of bringing him close in spirit to the kind of thinking one finds today in "queer theory" and "cultural studies," where the ordinary categories of differentiated description and analysis become merely signposts along a continuum of much more broadly inclusive methods of study.

---

[74] Antoine Compagnon, Proust entre deux siècles (Paris: Editions du Seuil,1989) 11.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Among the most valuable pages of the early sections of Compagnon's work are those devoted to an exploration of the ways in which Proust was attached to Racine, Baudelaire, Huysmans and the painter Gustave Moreau by reason of his need to place his own psycho-sexual and literary insights in a context of aesthetic theory and practice. What these pages accomplish is a kind of literary and cultural history which, while stopping short of broader socio-historical contextualization, illuminates Proust's poetics as a product of a certain cultural milieu where the devices of "disguise" and "dissimulation," and the theory of the "enigmatic" sexuality of the artist make him a representative of the "decadent" movement in fin-de-siècle Europe.

In the book's last section, Compagnon returns to the conspicuous place of sexual "inversion" in Proust's thought, showing that while sharing many of the views and prejudices of his time, he eventually integrated his ideas into a rather nebulous theory according to which the "woman" hidden in the Baron de Charlus "is not just any woman: she is an ancestor, she is the voice of the tribe, the secret of blood, the reincarnated race."[75] As Compagnon sees it, Proust's conception of the artist's deep sexual ambiguity was evidenced in his portrait of Charlus, which revealed an inextricably reciprocal connection between "perversity" and "artistic creativity." How original all of this was in Proust's time remains uncertain. It would seem that such a connection was a common feature of "decadent" thinking about the interdependence of art and "madness" which had its antecedents in Plato's conception of the poet, reappeared in certain strands of Renaissance thought, and later found a congenial environment in some Romantic notions about artistic creativity.

Compagnon ends his study with a refreshingly demystifying observation concerning Proust's failure to subject the narrator of the Recherche

[75] Compagnon, Proust entre deux siècles 270.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to the same stringent moral standard he applied to Mlle Vinteuil and her lesbian friend, to Saint-Loup and his first lover, the actress and ex-prostitute Rachel, and to Charlus and Jupien, who are shown doing duplicitous and harmful things.The narrator never questions himself about the meaning of his own "repeated voyeurism," in other words, he is treated with an indulgence not granted to other characters. "The narrator lies," Compagnon avers, "he covers up the hero instead of exposing his 'vices.' Because the narrator is vicious, because the narrator conceals it from the reader, the novel is based on a lie. The search for truth is a disguise imposed on the reader: it is the major transposition of the novel." [76]

Compagnon's concluding remarks are also directed at the question of where Proust belongs in the history of modernism. I share his belief that we should read the Recherche as a modern work with some avant-garde elements, but not as a "modernist" one in line with the artistic avant-garde of the twentieth century, "from Apollinaire to surrealism and the *nouveau roman.* "

I shall have occasion in the next three parts of this study to return now and then to the body of critical work that I have just reviewed. Although comprising only a small part of the immense critical literature on Proust, it fulfills an important purpose, that of helping us to situate Proust's writing in its socio-historical context. In doing so, it suggests that while innovative and original, Proust's writing was not disruptive, not deeply subversive of established models and norms. His literary practices paralleled his "ideological" commitment to defend what was valuable in France's classical heritage while at the same time using and shaping that heritage for a task of psychological, philosophical, and spiritual inquiry into the conditions of modernity.

---

[76] Compagnon, Proust entre deux siècles 278-279.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Part Two

The Socio-Literary World of the Young Proust

Ch. 3 Eros and Friendship at the Lycée Condorcet

Ch. 4 Three Parisian "Little Magazines" in the 1890s: Le Mensuel, Le Banquet, and La Revue Blanche

Ch. 5 With Reynaldo Hahn in Town and Country

Ch. 6 Young Proust, Robert de Montesquiou, and the World of the Parisian Salons

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter Three

Eros and Friendship at the Lycée Condorcet

Proust's early education in the bosom of his family and his seven years of schooling at the Lycée Condorcet[77] on rue Caumartin in Paris (1882-1889) appears to have engendered in him intense devotion to three interrelated concepts.

The first was the idea of patriotism, the notion that transcending all divisiveness and egoistic self-interest there existed a sacred union of people belonging to all classes who shared a committment to the defense, honor, and glory of France. Patriotism for young Proust had nothing to do with economic or narrowly political aims; it was the living expression of a spiritual and cultural consensus, a natural organic connection between people rooted in their common memories, struggles, aspirations, defeats and victories. Nor did patriotism have anything but certain external features in common with the new French nationalism, which assumed that the salvation of France, in an era dominated by a degenerate middle class republicanism, could come only from a revival of faith in God, the Monarchy, and the Church, all three seen as

---

[77] Proust was admitted to level five of the Lycée Condorcet (still called the lycée Fontanes in 1882, but renamed the Condorcet in 1883) in October 1882, as a non resident day-scholar because his poor health required that he live at home. Health problems made it necessary for him to repeat level two, since he was absent for almost the entire year. He received his *bachelier de philosophie* in July 1889.

Jean Béraud, a close friend of Proust and one of his two seconds in a duel with Jean Lorrain in 1897, was a cosmopolitan painter of Parisian life. One of his paintings, "La sortie du lycée Condorcet" (1902-1903), captures the privileged milieu of the Condorcet: well-dressed boys, atttended by their elegantly attired fathers and mothers, the fathers in top hats, emerge happily from the school ready to get into the carriages that await them. No doubt an idealized picture, the painting conveys a mood of self-satisfaction and an air of affluence that seems emblematic, if looked at from the point of view of Paris's upper classes, of *la belle époque*. This milieu and the areas of Paris associated with it have been described and illustrated recently by Henri Raczymov, Le Paris littéraire et intime de Marcel Proust, photographies de Martine Mouchy (Paris: Editions Parigramme, 1997).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

bulwarks against further encroachments by a corrupt egalitarianism. Proust's family was republican, and he supported the Republic throughout his life, [78] with the possible exception of a brief flirtation with Boulangism.[79]

A second concept in the emerging world view of young Proust is the heroic ideal with which he came into contact in his classical studies and especially in his readings of the tragedians Racine and Corneille under the tutelage of Maxime Gaucher and several other respected professors. From these readings he drew a conviction that personal honor must always take precedence over mere material self-interest. Proust's early literary exercises formed part of an educational curriculum designed not only to form character (which was the primary aim, apparently, of Proust's favorite instructor, the philosopher Alphonse Darlu)[80] but also to sharpen a young person's critical faculties so that he or she could build an argument from different points of view, with appropriate rhetorical strategies. For this reason we cannot be sure when the budding writer was being truthful to his own personal viewpoint and when

---

[78] Relatively little has been written about Proust' s politics in a strict sense. In her study Proust et la politique (Paris: Librairie A.-G. Nizet, 1986), which despite its superficiality and tendency to attribute too much importance to characters and episodes from Proust's novels, especially Jean Santeuil, has some interesting things to say, Jeanne Canavaggia speaks of Proust's early and short-lived interest in socialism and even anarchism. One of his most memorable characters in the Recherche, for example, Robert de Saint Loup, has socialist leanings, although Canavaggia points out that his views are quite close to what Marx characterized in the Communist Manifesto as "feudal socialism." More relevant to our purposes in this study is Proust's lifelong fascination with the trappings and panache of the French military tradition. Canavaggia calls Proust a "militarist." But the word is misleading. For Proust, the French Army was the one institution in the country that was unselfishly devoted to the integrity and independence of the nation. This is why it is so significant that he was able to transcend these loyalties when he learned of the dishonest machinations in the ranks of the Army that led to the trial and imprisonment of Alfred Dreyfus. It should be noted, with respect to Proust's admiration for the French military, that on November 11, 1889, despite his asthmatic condition, he joined the Army as a volunteer and served for about a year with the 76th Infantry regiment in Orléans.

[79] As evidenced in some of the materials in Proust et la politique, it was in the late 1880s that Proust evinced a certain attraction to the nationalist revanchism of General Boulanger.

[80] Ferré, 221-230. Ferré attributes Proust's "obsessive moral concerns" in part to Darlu's teaching, and to his reading of French moralists: Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, and Montesquieu.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

he was simply performing a rhetorical exercise. Nevertheless the prevalence in his early writing of this heroic ideal, along with his compassion for the downtrodden, the forgotten victims of human indifference and cruelty, are evidence of the extent to which he incorporated his readings into a deeply felt value system. Literary studies, thought young Proust, "teach us to disdain death, to elevate ourselves above the things of the earth by speaking to us of things of the spirit."[81]

Young Proust thought of Corneille's Le Cid as one of the most eloquent dramatic representations of moral truths existing in French literature. Although he was later to look upon Racine as a more important predecessor than Corneille in terms of his own literary aspirations, in his teens Proust placed the two playwrights on a par, each with his individuality and "temperament" intact. To love Corneille and Racine, he wrote at about age sixteen, means "to love in the latter the most tender, the most sorrowful, the most sincere intuitive understanding of so many charming and martyred lives, just as to love Corneille passionately is to love in all its integral beauty, in its unalterable dignity, the highest realization of the heroic ideal."[82]

A third component of young Proust's conceptual universe has been touched upon quite often by scholars and historians of the *belle époque* in France, namely the tendency to transfer to the realm of the aesthetic the impulses and ideals customarily associated with religion or with politics. The "religion of beauty" that characterized the belief systems of large sectors of

---

[81] Marcel Proust, "Composition française," Contre Sainte-Beuve, ed. Pierre Cairac and Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard, 1971) 322-325. Unless otherwise indicated, English translations in this chapter are mine.

[82] Marcel Proust, "Dissertation française," CSB 329-332. Another expression of this heroic ideal can be found in "L'Eclipse," 325-327, written in the mid 1880s, a tribute to the heroic courage of Christopher Columbus, whom Proust depicts during his last voyage West delivering a speech to angry islanders about their failure to honor their ruler, the King of Spain.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

French intellectual and literary society in the 1880s and 90s certainly had in Proust an ardent advocate. For Proust, the existence of beauty in all its forms was a permanent rebuttal to materialist conceptions of life. His early repudiation of materialism remained firm throughout his life, which helps to explain how it was that he never once, in all his voluminous writings, makes explicit reference to Marx, and that he makes only one perfunctory reference to Freud[83]. The impact on Proust of this one-sidedly idealist orientation cannot be overestimated. In fact, one could argue that the totality of his literary and critical work is one vast "idealist" response to the challenge of materialist thought.[84]

One catches a first glimpse of Proust's intensely spiritual conception of art in the 1880s in a description he wrote for La Revue lilas, a literary review he founded with his friends at the Lycée Condorcet. What distinguishes this brief description is the perception that the ordinary things he sees around him in his room at home derive their beauty and mystery from the qualities he invests in them rather than from any intrinsic qualities they may possess themselves. Like the seer in earlier times who infused the ordinary world of things with his transforming and luminous vision, he, young Marcel Proust, endowed the objects in his room with an ethereal and magical charm:

> My lamp next to my bed on a little table, amidst glasses, little bottles, fresh drinks, small preciously bound books, letters of friendship and of love, dimly illuminates my bookcase in the

---

[83] The reference appears in a letter to Roger Allard, in early September 1921, where he assured Allard that "I am profoundly touched to see that you have applied such a profoundly curious intelligence to my writings. If I did not understand the sentence on Freud it is because I have not read his books; in these conditions it can make one suppose that there was an unkind intention. But such an intention is impossible since the sentence is yours." Proust, Correspondance, ed. Kolb, t. XII (Plon: 1992) 447. One other reference to Freud in Proust's correspondence appears in a letter to him from Gide, who recommended in a letter of May 13, 1921 that he read an article by Freud on "the origin and development of psychoanalysis." Proust, Correspondance, ed. Kolb, t. XXI (Plon, 1993) 161-163.

[84] This difficult problem in Proust's intellectual development will be discussed at various points further on in this study.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> background. The divine hour! Usual things, like nature, I have made sacred, being unable to conquer them. I have adorned them with my soul and with intimate or splendid images. I live in a sanctuary, in the midst of a spectacle. I am the center of things and each one causes me sensations and feelings that are magnificent or melancholy, which give me pleasure. I have splendid visions before my eyes. It is sweet in this bed. . .I fall asleep.[85]

Faith in art and beauty did not entirely supplant conventional religious belief in Proust's case, as we shall see in some of the guilt-obsessed stories of PJ, where one finds a full panoply of Catholic philosophical and theological concerns built into the lives of his characters. Nevertheless, it was not the fine points of Catholic doctrine and liturgy that won his early allegiance but rather its core belief that there is a spiritual essence in each human being called the soul that lives not only through ritualized religious practices but also in works of art, in philosophy, in myriad forms of creative expression. Young Proust had no difficulty whatever in translating religious experience into aesthetic terms, and vice versa.

If we make due allowance for subsequent modifications of his beliefs occasioned by experience and reflection, the concepts briefly discussed above formed the bases on which Proust established certain of the foundational principles of his world view. Indeed, the social world of which he was a part gave him no reason to question them. They were the underlying ideological assumptions which he shared, *grosso modo*, with the Parisian social elite he was bent on conquering. Yet there were other components of young Proust's personality and outlook that emerged during his teenage years which we need to look at now in the context of his experiences and relationships at the Lycée Condorcet.

The prevalent image of Proust as a recluse ensconced in his cork-

---

[85] Marcel Proust, "La Revue lilas," CSB 334.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

lined room feverishly writing his masterpiece while coping with a serious asthmatic condition, is true, up to a point, of his life after 1908-1909, when he finally settled down to writing his great novel, but has very little (excepting the asthma, whch was a life-long affliction) to do with the period treated in this study. From his teens to his late twenties, he was part of at least four overlapping but fairly distinct groups: 1) his immediate family; 2) his friends and professors at the Condorcet; 3) the social world composed of both aristocrats and wealthy bourgeois who frequented the trendy Paris salons, cafés, concert halls, theatres; and 4) the literary and artistic intelligentsia, the intellectuals who gravitated around numerous "little magazines" and occasionally took positions on public issues of the day.

Young Proust's indebtedness to his country's political, cultural and literary heritage was no doubt influenced by the unusual attributes he received from both of his parents.[86] On his father's side, Proust biographers have found documentation showing that the Proust family was deeply rooted in French provincial society since the late sixteenth century, in the town of Illiers, about fifteen miles south of Chartres.[87] But in a passage from a letter of 1913, Proust himself said that he had recently been emotionally affected by reading archival documents that bore the Proust name dating back to the fourteenth century.[88] In any case, the important thing to know is that for centuries the Proust clan had done the town's administrative work, managed small retail businesses, and pursued modest careers as priests, bailiffs, and court

---

[86] Unless otherwise noted, biographical material in this chapter has been drawn from George D. Painter, Proust--The Early Years (Boston: Little Brown, 1960), André Maurois, Le Monde de Marcel Proust (Paris: Hachette, 1960), and Jean-Yves Tadié, Marcel Proust (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).

[87] Archival documents assembled in Marcel Proust, Usuels de la Réserve (Paris, 1965), show that among Proust's male ancestors Robert, Gilles, Jean, and Michel Proust were active in local politics and administration since the late sixteenth century.

[88] Marcel Proust, Correspondance, t. XII,. 209.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

recorders, always maintaining a solid if never especially brilliant level of attainment until the arrival of Proust's father, Adrien, who was born in 1834 and became the first member of his family to leave the Beauce region.[89] It was Adrien who gave a sudden boost to his family's status when, instead of choosing the priesthood, as his parents had hoped, he opted for a career in medicine, becoming one of France's most esteemed epidemiologists.[90] His approximately twenty books, the best known of which, La Défense de l'Europe contre la peste (1897) is regarded as a classic work in the history of modern epidemiology, placed him at the vanguard of the new experimental science whose strict empiricism somehow coexisted in him with an old-fashioned adherence to the religious faith of his ancestors. He was quite literally a self-made man who, in 1870, at the age of thirty-six, lacked only significant wealth to make him a fully acepted member of Paris's upper middle class. This he obtained by marrying Jeanne-Clémence Weil, the attractive twenty-one year-old daughter of Nathé Weil, a Jewish stock broker who offered Adrien a dowery of 200,000 francs. While Adrien's education was primarily practical and scientific, Jeanne excelled in the humanities. She had a good reading knowledge of Latin and classical Greek, spoke German and English, was widely read in French literature, and was also musically cultivated. She was a loving but often possessive and authoritarian figure in Proust's life, and there can be little doubt that her "enveloping" presence was at once troublesome and seductive to him. Her attitude toward sex, especially its less conventional forms such as homosexualty, was that it should be controlled and transcended, never indulged.

---

[89] Anne Borrel, Alain Senderens, Jean-Bernard Naudin, Dining with Proust (New York: Random House, 1992) 19.

[90] Adrien Proust was awarded the Legion of Honor for his work on cholera.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The marriage of these two rather exceptional scions of their respective families on September 3, 1870, and their subsequent move to an expensively if somberly furnished apartment in Paris's fashionable 8th arrondissement, at 9, blvd. Malesherbes, where they lived for more than thirty years, consolidated a substantial heritage of cultural and finance capital, which they successfully managed for the rest of their lives. Upon the death of his mother in 1905, Marcel received a substantial inheritance that allowed him to live rather comfortably for the rest of his life, although he experienced all of the fear and turmoil that marks the amateur investor in the stock market. His fortune has been estimated to have ranged in the several millions of dollars.

The Weils were Reform Jews who moved to Paris from the town of Niederwille in the Moselle region of Alsace-Lorraine in the late eighteenth century.[91] Their ancestors had previously emigrated to France from Wurtemburg, Germany. Although attached to Jewish custom and culture, they did not practice their religion, and apparently had no problem with Jeanne marrying outside the faith. Adrien on the other hand wanted his family to follow his religion, but he did not demand that Jeanne convert, and she never did so. Marcel and his younger brother Robert were raised as Catholics; despite Jewish law, they did not regard themselves as Jews. However, for reasons having to do with the times and with the circumstances of the milieux in which the Proust family tended to move, many of young Proust's closest friends were Jewish or half Jewish, and several of the salons he began frequenting in the late 1880s were presided over by Jewish women, notably that of Geneviève Straus.

The prodigious technological innovations of the mid to late nineteenth century, the rise of a powerful labor and socialist movement, the

[91] Marcel Proust, Usuels de la Réserve, 5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

reforms enacted by sucessive liberal and radical governments, the expanding ambitions of French colonialism, and the definitive shift of real power from the old landed aristocracy to the new urban bourgeois class, leave at most rather faint traces in Proust's writings of the 1880s and 90s. Where he was keenly sensitive to change, however, and to the clash of opposing viewpoints and strategies, was in what we may call generically the intellectual and cultural spheres, where the underlying material forces competing for dominance were articulated in literary and philosophical terms.

We need to consider here how young Proust comported himself with regard to the ever more imperious demands of his burgeoning libido, which assumed what I think was a primarily homosexual character in his fifteenth or sixteenth year, early enough at any rate to add elements of acute desire and pain to his fledgling efforts as a writer and thinker. The pain was not initially the result of guilt or self-doubt. On the contrary, in his teenage years Marcel Proust displayed a truly remarkable self-confidence in the realm of sexual and erotic feelings, and never wavered, at least in the letters that express these feelings, from a conviction that boy to boy love was just as natural and just as pleasurable as boy to girl love. His feeling of strangeness derived not from his own instincts but from the sometimes disdainful and almost always mocking reactions of schoolmates he regarded as his trusted friends at the Lycée Condorcet: Jacques Bizet, Daniel Halévy, Robert Dreyfus, Fernand Gregh,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Robert de Flers, Louis de La Salle.[92] Like Proust, these young men were part of a social elite--Anne Borrel thinks of them as members of a "bourgeois aristocracy of the right bank"[93] -- able to afford the reasonable but still, for most families, prohibitive cost of a lycée education: only about 2.50 percent of French children attended lycées in the late nineteenth century. Less than one seventh were girls, due not to financial restrictions but to the well-documented sexual prejudices of the time.

The excerpts cited below from two love letters Proust wrote to Jacques Bizet and to Daniel Halévy are the aspiring writer's first conscious steps in a life-long process of struggle toward seeing his homosexuality not as an aberration or a mental disease but rather as an expression of what Carolyn Heilbrun has called "an androgynous vision" of life. In his 1980 study Proust and the Art of Love, Julius Edwin Rivers, whose English translations of the letters in question I shall cite here, argues persuasively that if we fail to grasp the centrality of Proust's androgynous vision to everything he wrote--

---

92 Bizet, Halévy, Gregh, de Flers, and Dreyfus were among the many accomplished graduates of the Lycée Condorcet. Jacques Bizet was the son of the composer and of Geneviève Halévy, who, after the composer's death, married Emile Straus. He studied medicine but eventually owned and managed a fleet of taxis. He committed suicide in 1922. Daniel Halévy (1872-1962), son of the playwright and librettist Ludovic Halévy, was an essayist, a collaborator with Charles Péguy on the Cahiers de la Quinzaine, an ardent Dreyfusard, and author of many books on French labor and political history. Fernand Gregh (1873-1960), was an author of biographical and critical studies of Victor Hugo and of studies on French theatre and poetry. Marquis Robert de Flers (1872-1927), was a playwright and essayist, and author of numerous books on travel and theatre criticism. Robert Dreyfus (1873-1939) was the author of.Quarante-huit: essai d'histoire contemporaine (1907); Alexandre Weill: ou, le prophète du faubourg Saint-Denis (1908); Monsieur Thiers contre l'empire, la guerre, la commune, 1869-1871 (1928), and of several books on Proust, the best known of which is Souvenirs sur Marcel Proust, avec des lettres inédites (1926).

93 Anne Borrel, avant-propos to Marcel Proust, Ecrits de jeunesse, 1887-1895 (Paris: Institut Marcel Proust International, 1991) 11.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

culminating in the so-called "sexual transpositions"[94] of the Recherche, where we are at first rather astonished to find that many of the characters we had thought were heterosexual turn out to be bi- or mainly homosexual--we risk missing a key component of the Proustian ideological universe. What Proust hoped to achieve, writes Rivers, was a "transcendent unity"[95] in which previously polarized and mutually hostile forms of psycho-sexual life would be reconciled. In developing this idea, Proust used his own insights, supported by copious reading of all kinds of texts, from Plato's Symposium to contemporary medical treatises. He often vacillated in his attitude toward homosexuality, at one moment relegating it to the realm of "nervous disorders" and at another folding it into an essentially bi--sexualized conception of human life, but I think Rivers is right in saying that his basic impulse remained what it was when he was sixteen years old, one aspect of which he expounded a few years later in the short story "Before the Night," but from a tragic rather than hopeful point of view.

The first letter, which was evidently a response to Jacques Bizet's rejection of Proust's recent sexual advance, reads as follows:

> I have just read your letter at frightened and breakneck speed, under the watchful eye of M. Choublier. I admire your circumspection but also regret it. Your reasons are excellent, and I am glad to see how alert and strong, lively and penetrating your mind is becoming. But the heart--or the body--has reasons of which Reason is scarcely aware. I therefore accept with admiration for you (I mean for your mind, and not for the matter you refuse, for I am not [vain] enough to think my body is such a precious treasure

---

94 For a critical examination of misleading and erroneous aspects of "transposition theory" as applied to Proust's treatment of male and female homosexuality in the Recherche, especially his "fantasy of feminine sexuality," see Elizabeth Ladenson's study Proust's Lesbianism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). Ladenson believes that Proust mistakenly transferred a defensible if inadequate theory of male homosexuality to lesbianism. The more persuasive part of Proust's conception of human sexuality rested on the notion of androgyny as transcending the conventional polarities of maleness and femaleness.

95 Rivers 229.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> that one needs great will power to do without it) but also with sadness the superb yet cruel yoke you impose on me. Perhaps you are right. However, I still think it is unfortunate not to pick the delightful flower which very soon we shall no longer be able to pick. Because by that time it will have turned into. . .forbidden fruit. I realize that even now you think of it as a poisonous flower. So let's not think about it or talk about it any more: prove to me through a very long and very affectionate friendship--as will be, I hope, mine for you--that you were right.[96]

Young Proust was clearly saying in this letter that the sexual desire he felt for Bizet was not a poisonous flower but rather a beautiful and "delightful" one that promised joy to those able to pick it. He attributes the prohibitions of society to a notion of guilt about homosexual love that youth has no reason to share. Bizet seems to have felt that he and Proust could continue to be friends only if they renounced indulgence in Proust's fantasy of a homosexual garden of delights.

The larger issue at stake in this letter to Bizet is that young Proust was struggling to overcome what could easily become a crippling self-consciousness about his "difference" from his friends. He was intent on feeling whole, on integrating in his self-image emotions that could otherwise carry him to paroxysms of frustration and anger.

The letter to Halévy was written in Proust's last year at the Lycée Condorcet, when he was studying under the tutelage of his philosophy instructor, Alphonse Darlu. It makes a frank defense of erotic and sensual pleasure that may have embarrassed its recipient but that perfectly expressed its author's admirable effort to attain an integrated, joyful acceptance of his own sexuality. The difficulty of such a struggle in the1880s, and its still troublesome aspects at the end of the twentieth century, are evident in Proust's need, on the one hand, to assert the naturalness of his sexual feelings for his friend, and on

---

[96] Rivers 57.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the other to deny that what he felt should be categorized as "homosexual" since, as he argued also in the letter to Bizet, one had to distinguish between the natural expansiveness of adolecent sexual energy, which could flow in various directions, and the habits and relationships of adult male homosexuals often driven by boredom with the women in their lives as much as by true desire. After asserting his "ethical beliefs" that allowed him "to believe that sensual pleasure is a very good thing," Proust went on to compose a flowery love letter that the guardians of Proust's literary estate did not approve for publication until 1970. Rivers is correct: the letter to Halévy "is a testimony to the philosophical and aesthetic importance Proust attached to homosexual love even at this early stage of his life:"

> You take me for a blasé, worn-out person, but you are wrong. If you are delightful, if you have clear, beautiful eyes, which reflect the fine grace of your mind so purely that it seems to me that I do not love your mind completely unless I also kiss your eyes, if your body and your eyes are, like your mind, so graceful and supple that it seems to me that I can mingle better with your mind while sitting on your lap, if, finally, it seems to me that the charm of your you, the you in which I cannot separate your lively mind from your nimble body, would refine for me, by increasing it, "the sweet joy of love," there is nothing in all that which causes me to deserve these contemptuous phrases which would be more properly addressed to a man tired of women and seeking new pleasures in pederasty. I know some very intelligent boys of--and I pride myself on this--a high moral refinement, who once had a good time with another boy they knew. That was when they were very young. Later they turned back to women. If that was their end what--great gods!--do you think they are, and what do you think I am, and especially what do you think I will be if I have already finished with love pure and simple! I will gladly speak to you of two Masters possessed of refined wisdom who all their lives picked only "the flower," Socrates and Montaigne. They allow very young men to "have a good time" in order to gain a little familiarity with every kind of pleasure and to find release for the fullness of their affection. They believed that friendships which are at once sensual and intellectual are better than relations with stupid and corrupt women when one is young and yet also has an acute awareness of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> beauty and also of the senses. I think that these old Masters were mistaken, and I'll explain why later. But I retain only the general character of their advice. So don't treat me like a homosexual, that causes me pain. Morally, I try, if only by means of elegant conduct, to remain pure. You can ask M. Straus what kind of influence I have had on Jacques [Bizet]. And it is by one's influence that one's morality should be judged.[97]

While young Proust's views on great questions such as patriotism, honor and tradition may have been perfectly consonant with the dominant philosophy of his social class, his views on sexuality placed him in a small minority which spoke an oppositional and subversive language.[98] The argument he outlined in the letter to Halévy followed a rather circuitous path, seeming to yield ground on one point only to reassert itself on another. Rivers and others who have studied Proust's theory of homosexuality make it clear that he never fully resolved its contradictions, as seen, for example, in the opening section of Sodom and Gomorrhah, where one is hard-pressed to determine exactly what Proust thought were the distinguishing traits of homosexuality. Yet what is key to the two letters cited above and to the opening section of Sodom and Gomorrah is the strongly assertive posture it assumed towards basically natural impulses which were depicted under such a distorting light by the mores of contemporary society. It was thus in the sexual realm that Proust first experienced his "difference" with the kind of self-confidence and intellectual acuity that were to mark other controversial aspects of his life as a writer and thinker. It is fair to say that he discovered his literary vocation at the same time that he fully acknowledged his sexual sensibilities and identity.

But the notion of identity needs to be clarified, since the term has connotations of separateness and exclusiveness that do not apply at all to

---

97 Rivers 57-58.

98 For a sampling of Proust's early poetic efforts to express his homosexual feelings and his passions for Bizet and Halé vy, see Écrits de jeunesse 121-151.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Proust's way of thinking at this or any other time in his life. To cite Rivers once again, "in order to grasp the complexity of Proust's sexuality, we need only to discard the burdensome and misleading idea that heterosexuality and homosexuality are antagonistic and mutually exclusive."[99] In answer to two of the questions put to him when he was nineteen years old by a friend, Antoinette Faure, "What is the quality that I desire in a man," and "What is the quality that I prefer in a woman," Proust replied to the first, "Feminine charms," and to the second, "manly virtues and sincerity in friendship."[100] Proust's natural tendency was to wander away from or transgress outright many of the conventional boundaries and distinctions that one associates, for example, with literary genres. He had an unruly imagination. Beneath his externally elegant and refined manner, there were the mind and vision of an eccentric, of someone who was bent on finding his own singular path through life. Rigid antinomies never had any place in his scheme of things. It was precisely this lack of discriminatory boundaries between ideas and literary genres that gave him the freedom to move, within one and the same work, on many different thematic and stylistic levels. Just as "manliness" did not preclude feminine charms, so a designated literary genre did not rule out long meandering digressions from the formal requirements of that genre.

What this means from a broadly ideological point of view is that Proust's early response to the privileged social and intellectual milieu he frequented was marked, on the one hand, by acceptance of established models, and on the other hand by a defiance of boundaries and by the courage to be different. The educational and social "ideological apparatuses" of which Louis Althusser speaks steered him towards an acceptance of authority, a

---

99 Rivers 53.

100 "Marcel Proust par lui-même," CSB , 336.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

willing submission to established norms, yet his personal proclivities and preferences impelled him in other directions, towards unchartered territories. Breaking free of certain of the strictures of his society gave Proust the crucial critical perspective he needed to find his own voice and his own vision. Is it an accident that he was among the very first of his group to come to the support of Alfred Dreyfus, even if it were to cost him, as it did, many valuable connections in Parisian high society? I think not, because if Proust was able to comprehend the arguments put forward by the advocates of French national honor, he was still more responsive to the cause of a man to whom the French Army had done grievous harm. One can say also that it was Proust's ready acceptance of ambiguity and his refusal to make blanket categorical judgments of this or that social class, that allowed him to be simultaneously appreciative and deeply critical of the aristocratic and bourgeois classes. He was not bound by narrowly conceived ideological formulas.

Proust's intellectual and literary superiority was freely granted by all of his friends at the Lycée Condorcet,[101] but their attitude toward him, as recorded in their memoirs, also bordered at times on dislike and even ridicule for what they saw as his "strangeness," his cloying politeness and affected mannerisms, his extreme sensitivity, and his need for what another boyhood friend, the painter Jacques-Emile Blanche, called "tyrannical and total possession" of a friend's affections.[102] The mixture of admiration and discomfort comes through, for example, in Daniel Halévy's portrait of the teenage Proust:

> Dear Proust, so wise. . .but already mixing with his wisdom. . . a nascent and painful strangeness. . .He appeared among us to

[101] Despite poor health and long absences, Proust was already on the honor roll at the age of fourteen, as indicated on a "bulletin d'inscription au tableau d'honneur du lycée Condorcet" dated February 14, 1885, one of the documents in the Rare Book and Manuscript room of the Library of the University of Illinois, File name "Proust 102."

[102] Jacques-Emile Blanche, Mes Modèles--Barrès, Hardy, Proust, James, Gide, Moore (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1928) 96.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> be a sort of restless and disturbing archangel. We loved him dearly, we admired him, yet we remained astonished, troubled, by our sense of a difference, a distance, of a real and invisible incommensurability between us. . .[103]

Halévy notes in his memoirs of the years he spent at the Lycée Condorcet that, despite the embarrassment caused by Proust's personal manners and mannerisms, when it came to matters literary and philosophical, no one ever doubted that it was he, Proust, who persuaded the others to go beyond the classics to embrace the poets and novelists of modernity--Shelley, Baudelaire, France, Nerval, Poe, Verlaine, Mallarmé etc--the writers who had opened up new ways of exploring the human soul through richly and highly personal symbolic language that broke free of the constraints imposed by academic models of excellence. According to Halévy, a sort of pleasant anarchy reigned at the Condorcet, an atmosphere of discovery based on only one common point of agreement: a rejection of naturalism, of whose triumphs they were unaware or to whose virtues they were indifferent, and an openness to originality. In literary matters, as in painting and the other arts, Halévy recalls, "our teacher, our professor of taste in this lycée filled with functionaries was Marcel Proust."[104]

The lesson that young Proust imparted, by common consensus, was a belief in individualism in all matters having to do with the arts and philosophy. He demanded that each of his friends express his own "unique voice," whose authenticity depended in turn on finding one's own truth, independently, no matter how difficult or painful such a search might be. Received truths, he warned, were worthless unless earned by its recipient; they might originate outside oneself, but their assimilation and expression had to be

---

[103] Daniel Halévy, Pays parisien (Paris: Grasset, 1932) 121-122.

[104] Halévy 118. In 1888 Proust won first prize for French composition, and at the end of his last year, 1888-1889, he won first prize in philosophy.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the creation of the individual writer or thinker. In the same vein, Proust was an eclectic; he never liked isms and schools, always insisting on the composite nature of truth whenever a fellow student or colleague seemed to be leaning too far in the direction of intellectual or sectarian exclusiveness.

Fernand Gregh[105] recalls that Proust had a number of less than admirable traits. He could be snobbish and sycophantic when trying to impress someone of higher social station, especially someone with an aristocratic title, and his wonderful gift for humor and mimicry had its cruel side. This was the fashionable Proust, the man about town, the Proust that Blanche captures so well in his portrait of Proust at age twenty-one, the dandy with a flower in his buttonhole, the perfectly parted hair, the elegantly tailored jacket. But Gregh also recalls his friend's exceptional generosity and his spontaneous enthusiasm which overflowed whatever psychological boundaries that his often very formal attire might suggest. When it came to pursuing a life in literature, Gregh and others agree, Proust established only two criteria for writing about something: that it convey an impression of "poetic enchantment," and that it lend itself to the formulation of a general truth. Such was the deeply personal code by which Proust began to live even before he had won his *bachelier ès lettres* in the summer of 1889. It was a code quite in harmony with the tenets of symbolism which were coming into renown precisely in the mid-1880s, when Proust was beginning to think seriously about becoming a professional writer.

But there was a price to pay for his difference, and for his first groping attempts to work out a theory of sexuality and of personal identity that avoided the pitfalls of conventional psychological and ideological dichotomies. The price was a growing pessimism about the nature of both love and

---

105 Fernand Gregh, L'Age d'or--souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse (Paris: Grasset, 1947), and Mon Amitié avec Marcel Proust--souvenirs et lettres (Paris: Grasset, 1958).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

friendship, which characterizes his writing almost from the beginning of his literary career. It is difficult not to attribute at least some aspects of Proust's alienated conception of love to his early sexual pain and disappointments, and to the less than sympathetic responses he had elicited from his friends to what he considered to be perfectly natural feelings. Moreover, coming from a privileged, over-protective, cossetted family environment, where his parents and numerous domestic servants ministered to his every need, fearful lest his asthma and generally delicate constitution lead to life-threatening health crises, Proust was often subject to agonizing episodes of insecurity not only about his literary ambitions but also about the integrity of his spiritual as well as his physical self. On the second day of his philosophy course under Alphonse Darlu, on October 2, 1888, seventeen-year-old Proust wrote a letter to his philosophy professor asking for help in understanding and resolving a sense of being two separate individuals, the one who reacted spontaneously to experiences, and the other who dissected and analysed them to the point of vitiating his enjoyment of them. His critical faculties, he said, had destroyed even the pleasure which at other times had been his "supreme joy, works of literature."[106] This, he said, had caused him to suffer intensely.

Eventually, young Proust was to overcome this split, what he called this *dédoublement* of his personality, in a satisfactory manner, and no doubt he owed his recovery to a variety of factors, not the least of which was his growing circle of literary friends and acquaintances which, by the time he graduated from the Condorcet, included one of the elder statesmen of French letters, Anatole France. When he left the Lycée Condorcet and soon thereafter began a year of military service in Orléans, young Proust had completed a significant period in his life, a period of self-discovery and self-definition whose

[106] Marcel Proust, Correspondance t.1, 1880-1895, ed. Philip Kolb (Paris: Plon, 1970) 121-122.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

impact on his literary sensibilities cannot be over-estimated.

Nothing that happened to Proust in his student days, no loss or disappointment, not even the disillusionment he had experienced concerning love and friendship, are of sufficient magnitude to warrant our thinking of him as being in any way an "alienated" writer and intellectual comparable, for example, to James Joyce and Henry James, both of whose early years were marked by ruptures with home and country. Proust found sustenance in the literary and philosophical traditions of his native country. He belonged to the elite Parisian intelligentsia by reason of birth and intellectual attainments, and had a strong sense of affiliation not only with people who shared his concerns and passions, but with certain representatives of France's working and peasant classes as well. If there was sadness in his life, and constant fear of death, he was able to surmount these emotional difficulties without sacrificing what was most essential in his nature.

That his allegiance to an established way of life involved a significant degree of compliance with rules on his part cannot be denied. But his was a critical compliance, a voluntary but always alert submission of himself to literary and cultural values which he was able to assimilate and utilize in original ways. Proust was neither a rebel nor a conformist, neither an avant-garde exponent of the new nor a conservative defender of the old. His was an "ideology," a world view, that reflected what was at once strongest and most in need of questioning in the bourgeois heritage.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter Four

Three Parisian Literary Reviews of the 1890s: Le Mensuel, Le Banquet, and La Revue Blanche

Upon his return in the fall of 1890 from a year's tour of duty in the Army, Proust had to give serious attention for the first time in his life to the issue of earning a living. But rather than deal immediately with this problem, he embarked on five years of professional study at the end of which, in March 1895, after obtaining a degree in law, he completed another course leading to a degree in philosophy at the Sorbonne. Proust touched on his state of mind during this period in a much cited letter he wrote to his father in September 1893, where he declared himself unfit for anything in life other than literature and philosophy.[107] This declaration did not save him from subsequent anguished if desultory efforts to situate himself in a practical way, in order to satisfy his parents' wish that he apply himself to remunerative work of some sort. Despite good intentions, however, Proust apparently convinced his family that he was born to think and to write. He continued to live with his parents at 8, boulevard Malesherbes and, after 1900, at 45, rue de Courcelles until the inheritance left by his father, who died in 1904, and his mother's death two years later, freed him permanently from concerns about supporting himself.

Not much has been written about Proust's intellectual experiences at the Faculty of Political Science and Law in the early 1890s and, in 1895, at the Sorbonne. The paucity of documents about these years may explain the relatively little attention given to them. But enough is known to warrant three generalizations. One is that the years of study he devoted at the Faculty of

---

[107] Marcel Proust, Correspondance avec sa mère, 1887-1905, ed. Philip Kolb (Paris: Plon, 1952) 52-54.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Political Science to law, politics, sociology, history and diplomacy strengthened a tendency he had probably assimilated from his father, namely that of seeking the objective "laws" and "logical" unfolding of events that lay behind the apparent chaos of history. During these years he became interested in what Tadié calls "the collective and hereditary impulses" that drive the historical process.[108] He developed the habit of comparing different periods and civilizations, and of noting their characteristic features and their similarities. He acquired at least the rudiments of a philosophy of history that subsequently expressed itself in the tableaux of the Recherche. Secondly, his study of philosophy led him to the teachings of Emile Boutroux, for whom the moral and spiritual sides of human being, while rooted in the same physical realities that govern the natural world, were also what endowed each individual person with his or her subjective identity and unity. Third, as evidenced by some of the notes he took in a sociology course,[109] Proust was exposed, possibly for the first time, to the idea that society could be studied scientifically, in terms of its informal and formal networks and relationships, and not only in terms of its great personalities..The role of "genius" was always to be given its due importance in the course of human affairs, yet from time immemorial human beings had organized themselves into families, groups and eventually into national communities by virtue of collective intelligence. Language itself was the product of an entire society, not the invention of exceptional individuals. Such concepts were something of a corrective to the excesses of subjective idealism which Proust, like so many writers of his generation, took virtually for granted as being the essential principle on which all creative life was based.

---

[108] Tadié 139.

[109] Four-page manuscript in Proust's hand titled "Notes de cours de sociologie au crayon" at the Rare Book and Manuscript room of the Library of the University of Illinois in Urbana, the first of twenty-five items listed under the file name Proust 100, "divers fragments autographes."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Nevertheless, while he became receptive to certain of the social scientific methods underlying the teaching of history, sociology, and law at the time, young Proust remained, philosophically speaking, in the idealist camp. This becomes clear when we begin to evaluate his critical and fictional writings during these still formative years in relation to some of the leading literary personalities and movements of the time, such as.Parnassianism, decadentism, symbolism, and naturalism, as well as movements in the figurative arts, principally impressionism and post-impressionism, and in music, where composers such as Fauré, Debussy, Saint-Saens and Wagner were eliciting an almost cultish enthusiasm.

Symbolism, still enjoying considerable reknown in the early 1890s, needs to be looked at not only as a literary movement but, more broadly considered, as one of the most significant manifestations of an idealist reaction to the prevalent scientism that had characterized the mentality of the previous several generations. Two of the apostles of modern scientific realism, Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) and Emile Zola (1840-1902), were by the early 1890s entering the last years of their productive lives. Zola was still amazingly active, completing the last of the twenty volumes comprising the Rougon-Macquart series in June 1893, but despite (or perhaps because of) his fame and immense popularity, his rough canvases were viewed by the coteries to which young Proust belonged as incompatible with the essential aims of literary expression, one of which was to adapt French prose to the suggestive harmonies and metaphorical correspondences of symbolist poetry.

Proust shared his friends' distaste for Zola's documentary realism, a distaste which was rampant in French literary circles of the 1880s and 90s. It grew in part out of a hunger for spiritual redemption in a moment marked by vast

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

alienating changes in the realms of industry, technology and commerce, of which Zola's cycle of novels was felt to be the literary counterpart. It also grew out of a desire to explore areas of life which naturalism had either rejected or been unable to confront: everything that was allusive and elusive in life, everything that suggested the presence of a mystery at the core of human existence, everything that was magical in the sound as well as the sense of language. Huysmans put it well when, in 1903, thinking back to his 1884 novel À Rebours, he recalled his feeling in the mid 1880s that naturalism "was out of breath, its heroes deprived of soul, ruled by impulses and instincts," and his equally strong conviction that a new novel of "artifice and illusion" should replace the "vulgar reality" of Zola's fictions.[110] The fact that Huysmans had chosen a wealthy aristocrat as protagonist of À Rebours, whom he named Jean de Floressas des Esseintes, signalled an urgent desire to remove himself as much as possible from workaday existence as depicted by Zolian naturalism. One wonders whether Proust's choice of world-weary blue bloods as the protagonists of most of his stories in the 1890s might have reflected the influence of such novelists as Huysmans and D'Annunzio.

In Proust's own immmediate literary circle, both of his older mentors, Count Robert Montesquiou de Fezensac (1855-1921), the principal real-life model for Des Esseintes, and Anatole France (1844-1924), looked askance at naturalism as a ruling philosophy and literary school. Montesquiou was the classic *fin-de-siècle* aesthete, enamoured of beauty, a believer in realms of the spirit inaccessible to ordinary mortals, a man who epitomized the rarefied and exotic atmosphere pervading the work of one of his favorite painters, Gustave Moreau. But even more than Montesquiou, it was Anarole

---

110 From Huysmans's 1903 "Préface écrite vingt ans après le roman" to À Rebours (Paris: René Fasquelle éditeur, 1920) i-xxi..

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

France who, for young Proust, established a standard of literary excellence that excluded naturalistic indulgence in scenes of physical and spiritual degradation. France's reaction to Zola's seminal novel of rural life, La Terre, published in 1887, was typical of a generation educated along classical lines who believed in good taste, skeptical restraint, a carefully controlled irony, and avoidance of descriptive detail about subjects such as sex and violence that might offend readers looking for spiritual sustenance from their reading matter. He accused Zola of having created "a heap of filth. That is his monument, the greatness of which no one can contest. Never has a man made such an effort to vilify humanity, to insult every aspect of beauty and love, to deny all that is good and decent." [111]

Proust was eventually to reject France's strictures against depictions of degraded sexuality, but in the 1890s he shared his mentor's classical ideals and penchant for ironic commentary on the follies and foibles of contemporary well-born society.

A curious coincidence highlights the gap between the literary worlds of Zola and young Proust, namely that the village whose life Zola recreated in La Terre was in the very same region of France, the Beauce, along the river Loir, which runs through Illiers via Cloyes and Vendôme, that Proust was to immortalize in the first volume of the Recherche, but from a completely different point of view, and with other literary purposes. This coincidence points up the difference in sensibility and outlook between two generations of French writers and artists. Zola was a man driven by the cause of social justice, which he pursued with painstaking attention to detail and zealous commitment to telling the truth of human misery and exploitation. He was a crusader bent on

---

[111] Alan Schom, Emile Zola--A Bourgeois Rebel (London: Macdonald Queen Anne Press, 1987) 117.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

removing, or at least diminishing, some of the social ills of his country. Proust, although not indifferent to Zola's concerns, conceived of writing as a much more intimate and personal task, one that depended for its lasting significance on the writer's investigation of himself and on the ability to evoke a mood, a tone of voice, a moment of spiritual crisis, a physical place where revelations can happen that have more to do with the revisitations of memory than with the stark confrontation of immediate present realities. Zola's novels were "studies" of various social, psychological, and political problems; for Proust, the word "study" had an entirely different connotation, one somewhere between a composition designed as an "exercise" and a musical or visual impression.

Another way to think about Proust's literary values in the early 1890s is to consider the importance that Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) had in the artistic life of his generation. Proust's early writings are filled with Baudelairian tropes and images: the sea, sunlight, clouds, urban scenes of beauty and desolation. What Proust and many others of his generation admired with almost religious awe in Baudelaire was his intense spirituality and his disciplined mastery of poetic structure and form that allowed him to be at once a profoundly original lyrical poet and a remarkable critical intelligence who had grasped all of the essential features of modernity. Unlike Zola's outcasts and misfits, the human beings who people Baudelaire's poetic universe experience evil primarily as a metaphysical rather than as a social reality. As for Mallarmé, his elevation of poetry to supreme status in the hierarchy of human expression gave to the literary life that character of religious transcendence which Proust was seeking in a moment of European history dominated by material progress, by technological and industrial expansion, and by market-driven forces. Mallarmé's notion of poetry as

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the repository of "ideal, timeless, absolute" being within which language functioned as a means of transporting the reader to domains of insight beyond those available to mere representational reproduction, formed part of an exalted conception of art and literature to which Proust wanted to consecrate himself. The fact that Proust was later to take a position against the "obscurity" of Mallarmean symbolism does not mean that he moved completely outside the symbolist orbit in the late 1890s, merely that he was sometimes impatient with language whose excessively idiosyncratic features risked removing it from a potentially universal intelligibility.

Aestheticism and idealism were for young Proust ways of overcoming the flux and dispersion of daily existence, of giving permanence to ephemeral phenomena in a manner comparable to what the still new and vivifying impressionist painters had been able to achieve in their realm. The impressionists inhabited a Heraclitean universe[112] in which everything stable and coherent was dissolved into ceaseless metamorphosis, but their outlook on this universe and their ecstatic visions of light, sea and air, made the transitory and the evanescent into something that would endure. If to this world of artistic and literary expression we add the influence of writer-philosophers such as Rémy de Gourmont and Gabriele D'Annunzio, both of whom called for a new lyrical novel situated between narrative and poetic modes of discourse, we begin to see the outlines of young Proust's literary value system emerge more or less distinctly.

The relations between writers, painters and composers was never closer than during the 1880s and 90s, and Proust was no exception to this widespread trend. In this he and Zola would have had a meeting of minds: the

---

[112] For a learned discussion of this aspect of Impressionism see Meyer Schapiro, Impressionism--Reflections and Perceptions (New York: George Braziller, 1997), passim.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

founder and major theorist of naturalism, and the rising star of literary psychologism and impressionism, shared a life-long devotion to the new painting. Zola's L'Œuvre, of 1886, was much appreciated by Claude Monet, and Zola and the Goncourt brothers were important for Van Gogh. Debussy set Mallarmé's L'Après-midi d'un faune to music, while Gauguin enjoyed a fruitful relationship with Paul Verlaine. Nor were these interactions limited to the European continent. Baudelaire's intense admiration for Edgar Allan Poe is well known. The 1890s was a time of cosmopolitan cross-fertilization of the arts, a notable example of which was Van Gogh's affinity for the poetry of Walt Whitman. The Dutch painter was attracted by "the American poet's rugged, inspired conception of nature, and by his gospel of universal love and brotherhood." One scholar of the French symbolist movement in the 1880s, Sven Loevgren, considers "Le Rhône. Nuit étoilée," with its lyrical overtones, a "pure Whitman illustration."[113]

Let's look now at the character of the literary reviews in which Proust published his first fictions and critical commentaries, limiting ourselves to those of his early writings that did not appear in Les Plaisirs et les jours, which will be examined in Part Three.

The first of the reviews under consideration here[114] is Le Mensuel, a typically short-lived literary enterprise which managed to appear twelve times, from October 1890 to September 1891, in issues of ten pages. Its editorial and administrative office was at 45 rue de Lisbonne, the home of the review's editor,

---

[113] Sven Loevgren, The Genesis of Modernism--Seurat, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and French Symbolism in the 1880s (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971) 180.

[114] An important fictional work by Proust written in 1894 that did not appear in any of the three reviews mentioned in the title of this chapter is the short story "L'Indifférent," which appeared in La Vie contemporaine et revue parisienne réunies, March 1, 1896, 428. It will be discussed briefly in chapter ten.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Otto Bouwens Van der Boijin.[115]

The review offered a sort of hodgepodge of news summaries, amusing lists of chronologically topsy turvy historical events and birthdates,[116] special features devoted to fashion, theatre, and the arts, as well as short stories, essays, and prose poems. Occasionally, the review published appreciative notes on artists and philosophers such as the one in Issue 4 of January 1891 on Schopenhauer, by an anonymous writer.[117] The essay propounds an interpretation of Schopenhauer's philosophy of music which attracted the young generation of aesthetes, Proust among them, who conceptualized music as the only muse that existed in an absolutely pure state of its own, utterly free of all worldly contaminations and in this sense supremely independent. Music was a universal language in no need of vulgar accompaniments drawn from the other arts: dance, verbal text, elaborate stagecraft etc. This conflicted with the new Wagnerian concept of a "total work of art" culiminating in modern opera, yet young Proust and others like him were able to accommodate these diverse aesthetic judgments by reason of their intellectual flexibility and rigorous search for new forms of artistic expression. Thus, as an expression of Schopenhauer's notion of "will," music expressed only the primal emotions of joy or pain; it did not express "facts" of any kind, and had nothing to say to the mind, as descriptive music is supposed to have. Yet it was because of popular inability to accept music in all its purity that this sovereign of the arts had been compelled to join forces with written texts in the form of Wagnerian "musical drama" where a fusion of the arts took place that

---

115 Jean-Yves Tadié, Marcel Proust (Paris: Gallimard, 1996) 144-145. I have drawn some of the factual information concerning Le Mensuel and Le Banquet from Tadié's biography.

116 For example: 1870 death of Alexandre Dumas; 1797 Napoleon and Campo Formio; 1799 death of George Washington; 800 Charlemagne crowned emperor.

117 "Variétés," Le Mensuel, No. 4, January 1891, 4-5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

constituted the creation of a new art. Such a viewpoint was consonant with Proust's evolving conception of music as superior to all other forms of creative expression. Whether he agreed with the author of this essay that "modern music" was misguided because of its lack of melodic line and its susceptibility to non-musical interventions, cannot be ascertained. But it is fair to say that he was already, at age nineteen, very susceptible to the appeals of Schopenhauerian aestheticism.

Three pieces in Le Mensuel, an essay on contemporary criticism, a prose poem entitled "Choses normandes," and a short story, "Souvenir," that prefigures certain themes of "Avant la nuit," can be positively identified as written by Proust. "Pierre De Touche," the pseudonymous author of "Souvenir," was in reality Proust, while the other two pieces are signed "M.P." and "Marcel Proust."

In the essay, entitled "During Lent,"[118] Proust displayed the ability to mix humorous commentary on current trends in criticism with a highly spiritualized attitude toward art, which he distinguished radically from science. He took advantage of, or more probably chose somewhat arbitrarily to accentuate, a recent shift of serious critical writing in France towards light fare such as vaudeville and music hall performances. He cited as an example of this trend a series of five lectures given a few weeks earlier by Hugues Le Roux in the Théâtre d'Application. Like Jules Lemaître, who had become increasingly tentative and cautious in his judgments of literary masterpieces yet quite "dogmatic" and sure of himself in what he had to say about café-style music, Roux had worked out complex sociological theories to account for the phenomenon of the music hall. Proust attributed this tendency to a neo-

[118] M.P., "Pendant le Carême--À propos de l'ingénuité fin de siècle et Mlle Yvette Giulbert, cinq conférences au Théâtre d'Application, par M. Hugues Le Roux," Le Mensuel, No. 5, February 1891, 4-5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

naturalistic, social scientific predilection for aspects of art that could be classified with "law-like" precision, which fit very well for music-hall comedy and song, but which was lamentably inadequate to deal with art's "highest creations." Things that could be reduced to formulas, to objective "laws," he said, because they were "the most physical, the most material manifestations of art," had nothing to do with true art, which "escapes absolutely, through its quasi divine essence, scientific invesigation." Proust borrowed from Pascal to express his own conviction that "The Heart and aesthetic Thought have reasons that Reason does not know at all."

"During Lent" was dedicated to Horace Finaly, a future director of the Bank of France who was to become Proust's personal securities investment advisor, while "Choses normandes" was dedicated to Paul Grünebaum-Ballin, whom Proust had known at the Lycée Condorcet and met again at the University of Paris's Free School of Political Science. Such dedications, which characterize almost all of the many short pieces Proust published in reviews during the first part of the 1890s, were more than mere perfunctory acknowledgments. They reflected a need for intellectual community on young Proust's part, a desire to belong to a world where his idealism would be understood and appreciated. There was nothing in Proust's early writing that suggested a wish to reach a large popular audience. He remained focused on himself, on his sensations and impressions, on his memories, which formed a mosaic of lyrical fragments, moments wrested from the maw of time. The world of public affairs, of great events, of clashing political and material interests, seems remote and irrelevant to the emotions that Proust was seeking to evoke.

In "Choses normandes,"[119] Proust lyrically expressed his delight as he contemplated or recalled the seashore and the countryside of Normandy.

[119] Marcel Proust, "Choses normandes," Le Mensuel, No. 12, September 1891, 5-7.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

He invoked its many moods, pausing to consider, in a manner reminiscent of the impressionist painters, the interpenetration of sky and sea.

More significant than "Choses normandes" is the story "Souvenir,"[120] in its sad and tender recollection of a journey back to a friend's home in the Normandy countryside where the first-person narrator tells us that he had once spent the happiest days of his life. In the opening paragraphs, Proust drew a contrast between the physical features and natural setting of the home, which had remained unchanged, and the people in it, who had changed profoundly: the story's protagonist, Odette, who has suffered a terrible illness, her mother, who has died, her father, who does not recognize the narrator when he presents himself, and Odette's younger brother and sister, who live in their own worlds. Neither of the two siblings is depicted as being in any way responsive to the narrator's arrival.

Seated on the terrace with Odette, the narrator comments (to the reader) on how much the young woman had changed in just a few years as a result of the illness which now threatens her life. Indeed, he says, he would not have recognized her had he seen her elsewhere. Her once vibrant beauty has faded, her once lithe, athletic body has been reduced to contemplating the sea. Reading has replaced the vigorous tennis games she had once played with her visitor and other friends. In sum, everything evoked in this scene reminds one of Dante's Francesca da Rimini, who tells the visiting pilgrim through the nether world that "Nessun maggior dolore/che ricordarsi del tempo felice/nella miseria" (There is no greater sorrow than remembering a happy time in present misery).[121] The type of reading Odette now prefers is lyrical poetry, for "it is the music of the verses that evokes in me the sweetest memories and makes my

---

[120] Pierre de Touche, "Souvenir," Le Mensuel, No. 12, September 1891, 7-9.

[121] Dante, Inf. Canto V, verses121-123.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

entire being vibrate." As she speaks of these readings, and of her memories, the narrator notes that for an instant the young woman becomes animated, she loses her "cadaverous color" and becomes pretty again. The story closes with the narrator's departure, his eyes filled with tears, his heart made heavy by his impossible wish to take the young woman in his arms. He walks along the seashore, thinking of Odette. The sea is "indifferent and calm," the sun has disappeared behind the horizon, but is still "splashing the sky with its purple rays."

"Souvenir" is an early example of Proustian memory designed to convey the mutability and fragmentariness of human experience amidst the permanence of nature, whose enduring beauty highlights what is charming but also what is transitory in friendship and love. Memories are filtered through a vision that tries to conjoin change and permanence through a prose-poetic transfiguration of ordinary experience into something mysterious and strange. Nowhere in Proust's early writing is the impact of impressionism on his mind and imagination more vivid than in this story of what had once been and could be no more. What was missing from his use of memory in "Souvenir" was the involuntary, epiphanic quality that was to crystallize definitively in the Recherche.

More is known about Le Banquet than about Le Mensuel, because the former was a genuinely collective enterprise launched by Proust and his friends who had attended the Lycée Condorcet together and because it eventually merged with the prestigious review La Revue Blanche in 1893. Le Banquet appeared only eight times, from March 1892 to March 1893. It counted among its contributors two stellar figures in the history of French socialism and communism, Léon Blum and Henri Barbusse, as well as the core group of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Condorcet, Jacques Bizet, Robert Dreyfus, Robert de Flers, Horace Finaly, Fernand Gregh, Daniel Halévy, Louis de La Salle, Henri Rabaud, and Proust. It was an all-male group, reflecting among other things the strict separation between boys and girls in French lycées.

The new review"s editors[122] made sure in their opening number that readers would not identify it with any of the current intellectual fashions, and that in literary matters they professed "the most subversive anarchist doctrines."[123] This meant essentially that they had no doctrine at all to profess, and that they preferred to be rigorously eclectic. Intellectual eclecticism, like political liberalism, were ways to distinguish Le Banquet from other widely known and established reviews, such as La Plume, Le Mercure de France, La Revue des Deux Mondes and others which were generally associated with one or two individual writers and with more or less dictinct political and cultural identities. Proust and his group also intended to "let people in France know more about foreign art and literature." Hence the critical essays on Nietzsche, Swinburne, Rossetti, Tennyson, Tolstoy and others.

The name of the review was borrowed from Plato, an already nostalgic allusion, perhaps, to Alphonse Darlu's lectures on the Greek philosopher. That the name was also intended to recall Plato's famous discussion of Greek homosexuality is probable, at least as far as Proust was concerned. Roger Shattuck associates the name with *la belle époque*, hence the title of his 1961 study The Banquet Years, although he was focusing more on some of the avant-garde writers and composers who came on the scene a

---

122 A card identifying Proust as an editor of Le Banquet was issued to him in 1892 by the journal's secretary, Jacques Bizet. The card is among the manuscripts and other materials at the Rare Book and Mansucript room of the Library of the University of Illinois in Urbana, with file name "Proust 101."

123 "Au lecteur," Le Banquet, No. 1, March 1892, 5; reprinted in Le Banquet 1892-1893 (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1971).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

bit later than Proust.

The initial decision to launch the new review was taken at the home of Mme. Geneviève Straus,[124] but the principal meeting place of the new review's editorial group was one made famous by Ferdinand Céline's Mort à crédit, the Passage Choiseul, around the corner from the Paris National Library. On the first floor of Number 71, in the Librairie Rouquette, obtained through the good graces and with the financial help of Jacques Bizet's friend, Henri de Rothschild , the group could gather in a room "magnificently surrounded by green and crimson rows of rare books in glass-fronted bookcases."[125] Proust was accompanied to the first meetings by Jacques Bizet, but it was Fernand Gregh who remembered twenty-year old Proust most vividly, as "a very pretty young man, with a regular oval-shaped face, cheeks in bloom, eyelids lowered on black eyes that seemed to see from the side. He coquettishly lamented a slight bump in the middle of his nose. . ."[126] Vanity was among the traits that Gregh rather disliked in Proust, but he describes himself as one of Proust's most loyal friends.

An annual subscription to Le Banquet cost the rather steep price of 10 francs, and mass distribution was out of the question. On the other hand, for a review founded and managed by neophytes, the printing run of 400 copies per issue was respectable. Fernand Gregh recalls affectionately that "the literary public went to the great church of the Mercure de France and neglected our little chapel."[127] But of course such elitism is implicit in an enterprise of this sort, and one gets the impression that the youthful editors wore it as a badge of honor.

---

[124] Madame Straus owned paintings by Monet, Moreau, and Pissarro. It is believed that she played a role in Proust's early interest in impressionist and modernist painting (Marcel Proust, Usuels de la Réserve, 57.)

[125] George D. Painter, Vol. 1 Proust--the Early Years (Boston: Little Brown, 1959) 141.

[126] Gregh, Mon Amitié avec Marcel Proust-souvenirs et lettres 32- 33.

[127] Gregh, L'Âge d'or--souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse 153.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

All of Proust's fictional pieces in Le Banquet were later published in PJ, and will be discussed in Part Three. His critical writings in the new review, on the other hand, were not anthologized until the Pléiade edition of 1971 and merit attention here. They open a window on to certain aspects of his "liberal conservative" political views and on his continuing struggle against what he felt were the ravages of positivist materialism in France.

One of Proust's articles in Le Banquet on contemporary politics was entitled "The Irreligion of the State." If looked at together with another essay, on Tolstoy's "The Christian Spirit and Patriotism," written sometime in 1894 but not published until after Proust's death, they reveal a fairly consistent pattern of thought. Proust was troubled by the assault against Christianity which took the form of a secularized politics and culture in France, beginning with the series of reforms enacted by radical-democratic governments from 1881 to 1886 that made primary education (meaning children between ages six and twelve) free and mandatory, and effectively forbiding religious teaching in the schools.

Proust's point in "The Irreligion of the State"[128] was that, like Robert Greslou, the young protagonist of Paul Bourget's novel Le Disciple (1889), who had borne the full deadly weight of his materialist professor's teachings, the French people as a national collectivity was now being undermined in its most intimate beliefs by a government of radicals and socialists as guilty of fanaticism and intolerance as their religiously inspired predecessors. What had occurred, Proust said, was a substitution of state irreligion for the previous state-authorized religion. But the spiritual beliefs that had always formed the substratum of thought within both the Christian and the

[128] "L'Irréligion d'État," Le Banquet, No. 3, May 1892, 91-92. But readers should note that this article is signed "Laurence," and although several knowledgeable people have attributed it to Proust, doubts about its authorship remain.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

idealist philosophical traditions were in themselves living testimony to the need for a transcendence of materialist conceptions of reality. Proust credited Christianity with having inspired through the centuries all of the country's literary masterpieces, as well as its noblest expressions in the realm of speculative philosophy. He concluded by blaming the socialists for disseminating a philosophy of "destruction and death," which he illustrated with another literary reference, to Flaubert's radically minded pharmacist, M. Homais, whom educated readers would readily associate with a simplistic ideological adherence to "materialism."

Proust spoke in this article as a defender of tradition, as a writer and thinker loath to cast away the beliefs and values that had sustained the French people since the early emergence of a distinct national culture. It is evident that his one-sidedly idealist education did not equip him to separate himself from radicals and socialists in any way other than to spring to the defense of established religious and moral practices. Not that Proust had suddenly converted to orthodox Catholicism. What animated him rather was the tradition of Christian thought embodied in the writings of such figures as Descartes and Pascal. They were among the thinkers who provided young Proust with some of the ideological concepts that underlay many of the fictional writings he included in PJ. Proust was not especially interested in the Church as an institution. He cared about its core princples, however, as seen in several of the other short essays he published in Le Banquet.

Another side of Proust's personality, a cool skepticism regarding people who liked to present themselves as political pundits without however accepting full responsibility for their ideas, is quite evident in his report on a make-believe "parliamentary assembly" organized by a group of university

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

professors and students.[129] Without being hostile, he offered some light satirical commentary not on the honesty of the organizers of this mock assembly, but rather on their "ability [to harbor] illusions" which they expressed with a "slightly comical and very touching phraseology." Here again, Proust was looking at the behavior, the language, and the "pretensions" of France's liberal and radical democratic adepts. His perspective was critical, lightly satirical in tone, and aimed at correcting habits of mind and speech which he felt were having a destructive effect on the quality of French life.

Proust's strong belief in the natural origins of patriotism is evident in his short comment on Tolstoy's treatise Patriotism and the Christian Spirit,[130] in which the Russian novelist and philosopher had assumed a completely negative attitude toward patriotism, blaming it for the narrowness and self-interested zeal with which nations pursued their respective goals. Tolstoy also spoke admiringly of the fact that, despite governmental repression, socialism was attracting the same masses of workers and peasants who remained indifferent to "the patriotism artificially excited by their governments." But Proust disagreed with this argument, saying that workers and peasants were attracted to socialism not by ideal or altruistic motives but instead by naked self-interest, while people of the upper classes who supported socialism were the ones moved by genuine concern for their fellow human beings, since socialism was materially inimical to their interests. He had no patience with the sentimental idealization of the poor and the downtrodden, who in the strictly political sphere were focused exclusively on their own welfare. It was in this regard that Proust made the claim for patriotism that informs his little essay, namely that like the

---

[129] Marcel Proust, "La Conférence parlementaire de la rue Serpente," Le Banquet, No. 7, February 1893, 220-222.
[130] Reprinted in CSB, 365-366.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

feeling of family solidarity, patriotism was what gave to a nation its sense of togetherness; it was what inspired the people in war, whose successful prosecution depended not on selfish aims but on commitment to a cause larger than that of particular individuals and groups. The concluding paragraph is worth citing in its entirety, since it articulates an ideological position that was to undergird much of what Proust expressed in fictional form throughout the 1890s:

> In the world of matter and of force one can destroy in order to create, use evil [tactics], avail oneself of contrary ideas, subordinate means to end. That isn't the case in the world of Justice and Love. The anarchists who imagine that after they have conquered the world by injustice they will make Justice reign, who think that they can make Charity triumph through violence, misunderstand the meaning of the words justice and charity and the nature of these virtues. All [personal] wealth could be equally distributed by force. In that event never will Justice be further from ruling in the world. Anti-semites by being violent, slanderous, intolerant will be able to convert the world to Catholicism by force. On that day the world will be deChristianized, since Christianity means an interior God, truth desired by the heart, and approved by conscience. Let us never subordinate a precise and immediate duty of justice and charity to a duty that is obscure, remote and uncertain.

At the very moment in which some of his co-editors and friends were showing interest in the thought of Nietzsche, in socialism, in anarchism, in the labor movement, Proust stood firm--with such thinkers as Pascal as his reference point--on behalf of the values to which he had been exposed by some of his professors at the Lycée Condorcet, values which necessarily colored his writings in other domains, principally the literary and the philosophical.

For Proust, the word "thought" had a deeply personal significance. It did not mean a set of organized ideas or concepts deriving from study alone but rather perceptions or insights gained as a result of meditation, self-scrutiny,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and the establishment of imaginative links between the historically contingent and the projection of an ideal transcending the contingent. Thought was what animated literature in a literal sense, it was the spiritual source and foundation of all genuine artistic endeavor. As such, it was closely related for Proust to the notion of vision.[131] That is why it is important to be aware of what he had to say in writings that fall under the category of cultural and socio-political criticism, which cannot, in his case, be detached from the values that animate his fictional and poetic writings. They are part of one and the same world view, of one and the same "ideology" as understood in a Gramscian sense, as a "conception of the world." Nor can we justifiably remove Proust's thought from all considerations of class. It is not by accident that he chose his characters and his themes mainly from aristocratic and middle class worlds, where the situations and crises in which he was interested were amenable to consideration on their own account, independently of ordinary human concerns such as work and survival. We move from the gritty backdrops of Zola's novels to the parties, salons and entertainments of Proust's fictions. He gives us the distillation of his own life experience in relation to recognizable figures drawn from France's ruling elites.

In March 1893 the eighth and final issue of Le Banquet marked the end of a financially strapped enterprise. But only two months later, most of its writers agreed to merge their forces with a much more solidly financed and widely distributed literary review, La Revue Blanche, which in its first two years or so of activity was published in Liéges, Belgium (where it continued to maintain an office managed by Auguste Jeunhomme) but which in October 1891, because of the preponderance of French writers among its regular contributors, decided to move to Paris.The original editorial office was located

[131] Deleuze, Proust et les signes 115-124.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

first at 49, Champs Elysées, the home of Paul Leclercq, then at 19, rue des Martyrs; in January 1893 the review moved again to somewhat larger quarters next door, at 15-17, rue des Martyrs. The review appeared regularly until April, 1903, at which point many of its writers split off to form new groups of literary intellectuals. Several affiliated a few years later with La Nouvelle Revue Française, attracted by the quality of NRF's founders, one of whom was André Gide who, incidentally, was La Revue Blanche's prose fiction editor from 1900 to 1903.[132]

The three Natanson brothers, Louis-Alfred, Thadée, and Alexandre, the sons of a wealthy Polish Jew who had emigrated to France, helped to finance the new review and to pay its rent. They established the price of a single issue at 60 centimes, and decided on two types of annual subscriptions, one in deluxe paper and format costing 20 francs a year, the other an ordinary edition at 7 francs a year. The Natanson brothers also had a strong interest in the figurative arts, which accounts in part for the reviews's many articles on contemporary painting, and Alexandre Natanson, who had literary ability as well as business acumen, became the review's director in October 1891, when it began to appear monthly in issues of 48 pages.[133] In January 1894 it increased to 100 pages. Its average printing run in the first few years was 1300 copies, but at the end of 1891 it jumped to 2500 copies. It had many retail outlets all over Paris, in other French cities, and in Belgium. Through Thadée Natanson, La Revue Blanche attracted the painters Pierre Bonnard, Édouard Vuillard, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Ker-Roussel and many others,

---

[132] I have drawn most of the factual material and some interpretive judgments concerning La Revue Blanche from Anne B. Jackson, La Revue Blanche (1889-1903--origine, influence, bibliographie (Paris: M.J. Minard-Lettres Modernes, 1960).

[133] Jackson, La Revue Blanche, and Evelyn Nattier-Natanson, Les Amitiés de la Revue Blanche et quelques autres (Vincennes: Les Editions du Donjon, 1959).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

some of whom created drawings, prints and engravings that appeared frequently in the new review. Another artistic boon for the review was provided by Louis-Alfred Natanson, who was the owner of an important art gallery, the Durand-Ruel, on rue Royale, where innovative and experimental painting was welcomed.

Several features of La Revue Blanche stand out as one scans the review during its first four to five years of activity, features that had a natural appeal for a young writer like Proust. Its main pool of writers had cosmopolitan tastes and interests, and the review opened its pages to writings by and about novelists, poets, composers, essayists and painters from various countries, such as Chekhov, Gorky, Alexander Herzen, Knut Hamsun, Nietzsche, Max Nordau, Strindberg, Tolstoy, Mark Twain and Oscar Wilde. From the mid 1890s to 1903, the French and Belgian contingents included such innovative figures as Apollinaire, Gide, Jammes, Mallarmé, Maeterlinck, Moréas, Verhaeren, and Verlaine. It included two women on its editorial group, Marthe Mellot and Misia Godebska. It stayed abreast of work undertaken by other literary and cultural reviews--Mercure de France, Ecrits pour l'Art, La Revue Indépendante, Ermitage, La Plume, La Revue Moderne etc.--magnanimously publishing their names and addresses for the convenience of its readers. It took a lively interest in the intellectual foundations of movements such as symbolism and naturalism, and avoided being identified with any one school or trend, although most people seem to have thought of it as being symbolist in orientation.

Two other aspects of La Revue Blanche that merit comment are its responsiveness to new trends in music and painting (with a decided preference for impressionist composers and painters, such as Debussy and Monet) as well as in literature, and its commitment to an extreme form of philosophical as well

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

as aesthetic individualism, what Anne B. Jackson has called its "cult of the individual personality."[134] There were ample literary sources for such a concept in the culture of the time. Maurice Barrès's trilogy Le Culte du moi (1888-1891) and, a little later in the decade, Gide's Nourritures terrestres (1897), come to mind. But while Gide was an exponent of individual difference (sexual, political, literary) and the cultivation of one's own spiritual resources, Barrès was soon to become a leading theorist of political culture rooted in a people's native "blood and soil" and an advocate of the sort of traditionalism that was to characterize the right wing movement L'Action Française founded soon after the turn of the century by Charles Maurras. An essay by Barrès in the February 1892 issue[135] expounded a form of individualism so solipsistic and irrational in character that one wonders whether he was writing with tongue in cheek or whether the review's editors had somehow hoped to expose the author to ridicule. Speaking as a confirmed "subjectivist" against all believers in "objective knowledge" and in the reality of the external world, Barrès asserted that "action is to want to act on the external world, and if that world does not exist, then we can only act on our selves." Any other conception of reality was false and illusory. He recommended the third novel of his cycle, Le Jardin de Bérénice, to his readers because, he said, in that work, he felt he had moved much closer than in the preceding volumes towards attaining a "Unity, making possible a potential resolution of the contradictions of the Universe and of the Self that creates it."

Lucien Muhlfeld, the review's editor-in-chief, was not a solipsist in the Barresian mould but rather an avowed elitist, arguing that the present "crisis in the relationship between writers and readers" made unavoidable a "public art" for the masses and a "mandarin art" for the select few able to breathe in the

---

[134] Jackson 23 and 141.

[135] Maurice Barrès, "Lettre à un lecteur facile," La Revue Blanche, No. 5, February 1892, 65-69.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

effluvia of superior creative minds, whom he called the "mandarins" charged with the responsibility of "safeguarding the disinterested artistic tradition."[136] One suspects a Schopenhauerian influence in Muhlfeld's emphasis on the "disinterested" nature of artists and their creations. Rémy de Gourmont seconded Muhlfeld in claiming for the contemporary symbolist movement a poetic practice based on the poet's own singular conceptualization of a symbolic universe (as in Maeterlinck's work) very different in nature from the "universal symbolic systems" of earlier historical periods.

As for the overall tone and content of the writings in La Revue Blanche, both prose and poetry, one is struck by their sadness and pessimism; by their frequent lyrical retreats to the realms of dream and fantasy; by their constant use of the word "soul" to designate what could only be satisfied by spiritual nourishment; by their preference for the imagery of dawn and twilight (the crepuscular atmosphere of the poetry is pervasive); by a very strong stress on "interiority" as the distinguishing mark of great creative personalities (Gabriel Séailles spoke of this in an excellent essay on the psychological profundity of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper"); and by their contemplative attitude toward nature and artistic beauty.

As far as I can determine, of the pieces Proust published in La Revue Blanche, only two, the short story "Before the Night" and a controversial essay on the language of symbolism called "Against Obscurity," did not appear in PJ. The essay will be discussed mainly in chapter eleven, where I shall discuss more systematically Proust's literary critical views. The story, Proust's first published work dealing with homosexuality and lesbianism, calls for immediate commentary.

---

[136] Lucien Muhlfeld, "Chronique," La Revue Blanche, No. 4, January 1892, 53-61.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Before the Night"[137] is reminiscent in some respects of "Souvenir" (See p.) in that it concerns a relationship between a young man and a young woman who have been close friends but not lovers. The woman, Françoise, is dangerously weak physically, while the young man, Leslie, the narrator, does his best to comfort and reassure her as she undergoes a painful crisis. Like "Souvenir," the two friends are seated on a terrace overlooking the sea. The time of day, virtually *de rigueur* among the writers of La Revue Blanche, is twilight; the setting sun casts its last rays through the branches of nearby apple and poplar trees. Proust once again treats us to a serene but melancholy Normandy landscape that forms a backdrop to the guilt-wracked confessional impulses of the young woman.

The confessional mode plays an important part in several of Proust's early short stories; in this case Françoise feels an overwhelming need to tell Leslie that it had been his sage opinion expressed some years ago concerning lesbian sexuality that had precipitated her engaging in sexual relations with another woman. This revelation accompanies another, that she had tried to kill herself, unsuccessfully, but that because the bullet could not be safely extracted, causing other complications, she would soon die.

The story's emotional content derives from the retrospective revelation of mutual esteem and love that the two young people had always felt for each other. On Leslie's part, he had always looked upon their chaste relationship as infinitely superior to any conceivable sexual liaison with her; indeed, he had always thought of her "as supernatural as a madonna, as sweet as a wet-nurse, I adored you and you cradled me." He speaks of her "maternal hands," reassuring her over and over again that her sense that she had given

[137] The story appeared in La Revue Blanche, No. 26, December 1893, 381-385. I have used the text published in Marcel Proust, Les Plaisirs et les jours suivi de l'Indifférent et autres textes, ed. Thierry Laget (Paris: Gallimard, 1993) 247-252.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

him very little of herself was untrue. Françoise is tormented by a lapse in her normal heterosexual behavior that had taken place not long after she lost her husband at age twenty. She reveals as well that it had been precisely Leslie's non-judgmental attitude toward homosexuality and lesbianism that had pushed her over the edge into the act or acts the memory of which was now afflicting her. Thus by reliving what they had shared in the past and comforting each other in the present, the two young people undergo a sort of cleansing process.

The story has three features that raise what could ordinarily seem like a potboiler to a fairly high level of literary art: the painterly imagery with which Proust evokes the natural surroundings; the delicacy of his psychological analysis as Leslie follows the ebb and flow of Françoise's feelings; and the little disquisition on homosexuality which Proust provides by having Françoise repeat what Leslie had once said to her in defense of a form of love caused by "a nervous disorder that is too exclusively present to warrant a moral content." It was the persuasiveness of his argument that had caused her to risk her sexual adventure with another woman. Ironically, therefore, her best friend led her to do something for which she later was to feel so guilt-ridden that she had tried to take her own life.

The little disquisition begins with an allusion to the practices permitted by Socrates, then stops briefly to consider the medical side of homosexuality, and concludes with an aesthetically based argument, to wit that "in truly artistic natures physical attraction or repulsion is modified by the contemplation of the beautiful." The beautiful can assume both masculine and feminine forms, and there is no reason, Leslie had argued, why some people should not find someone of their own sex as beautiful as someone of the opposite sex.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The passage in which Françoise repeats verbatim what Leslie had said to her is typical of Proust's writing almost from the beginning of his literary activity. One could argue that these little treatises vitiate the lyrical and narrative force of the story, but Proust was of another opinion. He felt that the "thought" encapsulated in such passages enriches the narrative by heightening and elucidating its principal conflicts. It is true that this and countless other similar passages in Proust's fictions could virtually stand on their own, outside the framework of the story, as learned commentaries on various questions. Proust had a much broader view of the relationship between descriptive and analytical writing, between dramatic action and critical reflection. He did not feel bound by the usual constraints of genre and stylistic consistency. This openness to what Raymond Williams calls "the multiplicity of writing" is, in my view, one of the most intriguing aspects of Proust's stories and of his great novel.

It is the Christian concept of moral and physical purity, and possible redemption through confession, that one finds at the heart of "Before the Night," literally meaning before nightfall, and symbolically before death. Both Leslie and Françoise see their friendship as untainted by the "normal" vicissitudes of human relationships in which sexual impulses play a central role. Leslie tells us that he worships and adores Françoise, and Françoise fears that his admiration will be affected by her confession. Resolution at the end comes through their sharing a common emotional and philosophical attitude. Proust focuses on this process of illumination through which the two characters move from ignorance and misperception to some sort of personal truth. It is a truth gained at the price of many tears, and the sense that never before this twilight enounter had their friendship been marked "by so much bad and so much good."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

La Revue Blanche generally preferred not to become embroiled in political issues. One exception to this was the reaction of many of its writers to the first explosive accusations made against Alfred Dreyfus in October 1894 that led in December to his conviction and imprisonment on Devils Island. Like many others in France, Proust may have accepted the guilty verdict.[138] But two years later, when stories of trumped up charges began to leak in the press, he too had doubts about Dreyfus's guilt, doubts that were confirmed by the campaign to retry Dreyfus begnning in 1897 in which he was among the leaders of the revisionists. Proust was also among the approximately fifty signers (together with most of his friends from the Lycée Condorcet) of the "Protest" against "the violation of juridical forms at the trial of 1894" that appeared on the first page of the newspaper L'Aurore on January 14, 1898, the day after the same newspaper published Zola's "J'accuse!". Anne B. Jackson describes La Revue Blanche, supported by the salon of Mme Straus, as "a rallying point of writers, artists, intellectuals convinced of Dreyfus's innocence and against the 1894 sentence."[139] To that extent, Proust was part of a struggle that split French society into two warring camps, the one intent on defending the honor of the French Army, and ready to use whatever ideological weapons were available, especially anti-Semitism, the other those who, with Georges Clemenceau, believed that "there can be no patriotism without justice. . .The true patriots are we who fight to obtain justice and to liberate France from the yoke of gold-braided infallibilty."[140]

---

138 Claude Francis and Fernande Gontier claim that Proust and his brother Robert were both Dreyfusards since 1894, in Marcel Proust et les siens (Paris: Plon, 1981) 87.

139 Jackson 88.

140 Clemenceau is cited by Barbara Tuchman, The Proud Tower-A Portrait of the World before the War 1890-1914 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966) 189.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter Five

With Reynaldo Hahn in Town and Country

Eros and friendship were both important in the relationship between Proust and Reynaldo Hahn. Their sexual intimacy lasted for approximately a year, from June 1894, when they met at the Paris residence of Madeleine Lemaire, to the summer of 1895, when mutual jealousy and resentment led to their breakup as lovers. Hahn's place was quickly taken by seventeen-year-old Lucien Daudet.[141] However, the friendship between Proust and Hahn endured until the former's death in 1922. The two men shared many interests, collaborated artistically in various ways, stimulated each other intellectually, enjoyed touring the countryside and the seaside together, and had a whole social world in common, the world of the Parisian salons, cafés, concert halls, museums, art galleries, theatres and opera houses. They also complemented each other in an artistically productive way. In a letter of May 1895 to Suzette Lemaire, Madeleine's daughter, Proust spoke of this aspect of their relationship. While he, primarily a man of letters, believed that music was in essence "infinite" in its ability to touch the soul, and that it existed in an autonomous and superior realm of its own, Hahn conceived of music as an adjunct to the word, to thought; for him music was the handmaiden to poetry, or

---

141 In his introduction and notes to Marcel Proust, Mon cher petit-lettres à Lucien Daudet, Michel Bonduelle informs us that Proust was introduced to Lucien by Hahn in the winter of 1894, at one of Alphone Daudet's "Thursday salons." During the following year, Proust's romantic attachment to Hahn began to cool, making it possible for him to develop "assiduous" relations with Lucien in November 1895. By the summer of 1896, Proust wrote to his new young lover: "I am not sure of anything--except that I love you, my little Lucien, with all my heart." (Mon cher petit, 88). But Proust's relations with Daudet were no smoother than those with Hahn, despite many common interests. :Lucien was a talented painter and budding writer, with whom Proust also enjoyed attending political debates from time to time at the Chamber of Deputies. Their love affair (but not their friendship) was over by the spring of 1897.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

more generally to feelings and thoughts as articulated by the human voice. In other words, Proust concluded, Hahn was a "literary musician," while he, Proust, tried to infuse something of the "infinite" power of music into literary expression.[142] It was because of this complementarity that Proust gladly entrusted Hahn with the task of writing piano accompaniments to poems he wrote on four composers and four painters, the scores of which were published, along with the poems, in the original 1896 edition of PJ.

Hahn was four years younger than Proust, having been born in Caracas, Venezuela, on August 9, 1875.[143] His father, Carlos, of Dutch Jewish origin, decided for political reasons to return to his native Europe in 1878 with his wife Elena Maria Echnagucia, with whom he had twelve children. They settled in Paris, at 6, rue du Cirque. Already fluent in Spanish, Reynaldo quickly mastered French and, more remarkably, was so precociously gifted in music that at age six he made his piano "début" at the Princesse Mathilde's[144] home on the rue de Berri, where he played and sang melodies from several of Offenbach's opéras bouffes. At ten he began attending the Paris Conservatory of Music, and at age thirteen, while studying composition under Jules Massenet, he wrote the song based on Victor Hugo's poem "Si mes vers avaient des ailes" for which he is perhaps most affectionately remembered. One of his few competitors in the field of musical composition inspired by poetry, and as a much sought after figure at musical soirées and fancy dress parties, was Léon

---

142 Marcel Proust, Correspondance, t.1 , 388-391.

143 Biographical information on Hahn has been gleaned mainly from Bernard Gavoty, Reynaldo Hahn le musicien de la Belle Époque (Paris: Editions Buchet/Chastel, 1976), and from three musical reference works: The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians (1956); Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians (1978); and The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (1980).

144 Tadié, Marcel Proust160 identifies her as the daughter of Jérôme Bonaparte, and the cousin of Napoleon III.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Delafosse, with whom Proust also collaborated in 1895. Proust's poem "Mensonges" was one of six poems set to music by Delafosse that appeared in a folio of sheet music published in 1895, one poem each by Paul Bourget, Proust, Pierre Quillard, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, and two by Robert de Montesquiou.[145] Such partnerships were very much in fashion in the 1890s, due to a widespread feeling that all of the arts benefited from close interaction with their sister muses, and to the influence of Richard Wagner's concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art embracing all forms of artistic expression.[146] A partial list of writers whose poems Hahn either set to music or for which he wrote piano accompaniments includes Théodore de Banville, François Coppée, Alphonse Daudet, Théophile Gautier, Heinrich Heine, Victor Hugo, Jean Lahor, Leconte de Lisle, Pierre Loti, Alfred Musset, Jean Racine, and Paul Verlaine.[147] His melodies inspired by Verlaine's Chansons grises (1891-1892) brought him considerable notoreity. His tastes were therefore strongly in harmony with the poetic sensibilities of the nineteenth century, Racine being the only poet belonging to another era.

In addition to his reputation as a talented composer of art songs, young Hahn also achieved a place for himself in the field of light opera, with such works as L'Ile du rêve, based on a story by Pierre Loti, which was produced in 1898 at the Opéra Comique, and received favorable reviews. Yet

---

145 Léon Delafosse, Six mélodies, Department of Music, BN, Paris, vol. 7-122117

146 Baudelaire obviously played a leading role, posthumously, in effecting this intimate alliance between the arts in the 1880s and 1890s. See Baudelaire's "Lettre à Wagner" and his 1861 article "Richard Wagner et Tannhauser" in Charles Baudelaire, L'Art romantique, ed. Lloyd James Austin (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1968) 263-300. In his introduction to this volume, Austin notes that "The great article on Richard Wagner is one of those that bring the most honor to Baudelaire the critic. Not only does he define the essential character of Wagner's art, but he discusses the problem of the relations between music and poetry in terms that were to be taken up again by the symbolist generation in France, and above all by Mallarmé." (p.27)

147 Le Ménestrel--Journal du Monde Musical, published by Heugel, Paris, beginning in 1834. (Periodical section of the Department of Music of the BN).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

he never attained the renown of a Fauré, a Bizet, a Debussy, a Gounod, a Franck, a Saint-Saëns, or even a Meyerbeer or a Delibes. The reason may lie in the fact that Hahn's music was perceived as intimate and conversational, appropriate for the drawing room, melodic and charming, but rather facile, lacking depth and strong originality. His signal accomplishment, by general consensus, were his songs, written for the most part when he was a conservatory student, before he was twenty-one.

Hahn was known as a "capitvating" performer in the fashionable salons of the day, where he used his attractive light tenor voice[148] and accompanied himself at the piano with a casual finesse that always won over his audiences. His concert style was a highly artificial and studied one which made free use of mezza voce and falsetto.[149] He sang "conversationally," almost always with a cigarette dangling from his lips, and a glass of wine at his side, which he sipped judiciously and elegantly between numbers. He wore a flower in his lapel, but he did not come to his recitals thus adorned; the flower was always one that he picked from his host or hostess's vase as he approached the piano. In sum, he had the the cool demeanor and aplomb of a polished performer, even at an extremely young age; he possessed what the sixteenth century courtier Baldassarre Castiglione called *disinvoltura*, the ability to make a difficult task seem effortless, thus putting his audiences at their ease and virtually guaranteeing himself several encores and repeat performances.

A caricature of Hahn drawn many years later by Jean Cocteau shows him at the piano, a cane on his left arm, dresssed in formal attire and top hat, smoking a cigarette and looking quite dandyish. Henri de Régnier began a

---

148 Roger Delage, "Reynaldo Hahn (1875-1947) et Marcel Proust," Bulletin de la Société des Amis de Marcel Proust, No. 26, 1976, 229-246.

149 Richard Barker, Marcel Proust--A Biography (New York: Criterion Books, 1958) 55.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

little poem on Hahn with the words "Reynaldo, vous chantez, cigarette à la bouche,/Des airs vénitiens langoureux et troublants,"[150] (Reynaldo, you sing, with a cigarette in your mouth, languorous and disquieting Venetian airs) and Mallarmé composed the following skillfully rhymed quatrain, no doubt inspired by one of Hahn's engaging recitals:

> Le pleur qui chante au langage
> Du poète, Reynaldo
> Hahn tendrement le dégage
> Comme en l'allée un jet d'eau.[151]

Hahn's writings, apart from his music criticism, include a diary, Notes--Journal d'un musicien, and several volumes of lectures he gave at various points in his career, one of the most interesting of which was on the art and science of singing. The published parts of the diary, from which Hahn readily admitted he had excised many pages that were "too intimate" for public scrutiny, show him to be highly literate, conversant with current trends in the arts, widely traveled, and sensitive to many of the same images and motifs as Proust. Like Proust, he was obsessed by sunlight, and by shades and nuances of light, which made him responsive to the paintings of Monet. His observations about Jean Chardin recall Proust's views on the eighteenth-century painter, in that he preferred Chardin's humble still-lifes and domestic interiors to the grandly classical paintings of a Poussin, which he viewed at the Louvre and at London's National Gallery. One tires of the allegories and poetic episodes depicted by a Poussin or a Philippe de Champaigne, he wrote, "while one takes pleasure and even feels exalted looking at a piece of bread and a carafe by Chardin: there is more poetry in these images than in all the fantasies of his

---

[150] Jeanine Huas, L'Homosexualité au temps de Proust (Dinard: Editions Danclau, 1992) 104.
[151] Gavoty. 159. A rough unrhymed translation: The tears that sing in poetic mode,/ Reynaldo Hahn tenderly releases/ like a stream of water on a side street.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

contemporaries (I except certain of the charming visions of Watteau)."[152] There are several entries in the diary referring to his visits to the Louvre with Proust and other friends. A long appreciative entry on the universality and profundity of Leonardo also reminds us of Proust's reaction to the great Italian painter and scientist.

Two features of the diary that recall analogous elements of Proust's world view are Hahn's cynicism about love ("The pleasure that love gives isn't really worth the happiness it destroys"),[153] and his belief in the virtue of work, which he tried to integrate into a rather pessimistic conception of life:

> One must remain free, nothing is good but work, no matter how much pain it gives. Love very little, make oneself useful if one can, resign oneself to sadness, which is inevitably the daily bread of every intelligent being and, finally, "look higher in order not to lose patience," as Mme de Sévigné says.[154]

Literary references are sprinkled throughout the diary, as are comments on the dinners he shared with writers of the ilk of Mallarmé, Rodenbach, and Léon Daudet.

The lectures on singing, Du chant, expound Hahn's fundamental credo that the beauty and reason for being of song "is the combination, the mixture, the indissoluble union of sound and thought."[155] This beauty depended on "the mysterious alliance of the voice that sings and that speaks, of melody and word." But in this alliance, the dominant partner, in Hahn's view, was the word, involving a necessary "submission" of music to the word. The failure to understand the way in which music supports and enhances thought was what kept many aspiring vocal artists from attaining the excellence they vainly

---

[152] Reynaldo Hahn, Notes--Journal d'un musicien (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1933?) 72.
[153] Hahn, Journal18.
[154] Hahn, Journal.25.
[155] Reynaldo Hahn, Du chant--pour la musique, (Paris: Gallimard 1957, 2d ed.) 17.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

pursued.

The relationship between Proust and Hahn was so close for several years, and intermingled so many different facets of their lives that it is difficult to determine where the thought and feelings of one leave off and those of the other begin. The centrality of Hahn in Proust's life, at least during the 1890s, is evidenced in the humorous tribute which Proust paid to Hahn in PJ, where he earns a distinguished place among contemporary French composers simply by provoking the displeasure of the two pretentious imbeciles Bouvard and Pécuchet[156] for reasons that have to do with his modernity and his admiration for Verlaine. It can be seen more significantly in the fact that the protagonist's inseparable friend in the novel Jean Santeuil, Henri de Réveillon, is in very large measure modeled on Hahn. One notes the reversal of the letters R and H in the given and surnames of Reynaldo Hahn and Henri de Réveillon. Proust enjoyed such reversals of letters and anagrammatic rearrangements to highlight the affections and connections between his characters. Proust began writing Jean Santeuil in the summer of 1895, when he was vacationing with Hahn in Brittany, after spending ten days with him at another of Madeleine Lemaire's summer residences, this one on the Normandy coast near Dieppe.

There are traces of Hahn's presence and influence in various aspects of Proust's personality and world view. The original title which Proust had decided upon for the volume that was eventually titled Les Plaisirs et les jours was Le Château de Réveillon, in honor of the name Madeleine Lemaire gave to her estate in the department of Seine-et-Marne, east of Paris, where Proust and Hahn spent a month in August of 1894, at the height of their passion

[156] These were the two Flaubert characters whose names, and something of whose manner of expression, Proust borrowed freely in one of the many *pastiches* that characterize PJ.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

for each other.[157] In a letter to his cousin Marie Nordlinger written during that memorable month Hahn was delighted to observe that Proust responded to music like an "Aeolian harp," while Proust began fully to appreciate Hahn's acute literary intelligence. It was a time of mutual discovery, which subsequent travels together and "interminable conversations about free verse, metaphors, symbolism and Gothic cathedrals"[158] confirmed and strengthened. Proust felt very free at Madeleine Lemaire's country estate, which may explain the nickname that Hahn gave to him that month, "Poney," one of many affectionate sobriquets (Binibuls, Bibuls, Bichnibuls) the two men used with each other in person and especially in their written correspondence. The habit of using such bizarre neologisms was Hahn's, to which Proust adapted himself, always with the fear, however, that if their letters were to fall into the hands of a third party, even the most benevolent friend, nothing would save them from ridicule.[159]

Rivers speaks of Hahn as "a presiding genius of [Proust's] art" not only during the years of their sexual relationship but throughout Proust's career.[160] The strongly autobiographical cast of Jean Santeuil, revealed in its

---

157 In his biography of Proust, vol. 1, 227 Painter describes the castle of Réveillon as "a 17th century country house, with towers, moats and vast flower-beds surrounded by thick woods. The interior décor, where natural flowers from the garden alternated with flowers painted by the mistress of the house, resembles that of Raspelière, at Mme Verdurin's home." In a letter to his cousin Marie Nordlinger, cited in Gavoty, 89, Hahn described his impressions of the estate: "Réveillon, an old house, interesting and artistic; exquisite company; Mme Lemaire smiling, her daughter Suzette affable and obliging; Ernesta pompous; Delafosse svelte; Proust ecstatic and day-dreaming, a young man of the first order, a musician vibrating like an Aeolian harp to all the surrounding harmonies; me laughing. Delectable and refined cuisine. I am working very little and day-dreaming alot--day-dreaming being the only real pleasure in life."

158 Gavoty108.. Marie Nordlinger and Frederico de Madrazo often joined them in these conversations.

159 Marcel Proust, Lettres à Reynaldo Hahn, ed. Philip Kolb, preface by Emmanuel Berl , 9th ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1956) 20.

160 Rivers. 71.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

epigraph,[161] owes much to the relationship with Hahn, in relation to whom Proust experienced emotions ranging from extreme devotion to jealous torment bordering on hatred. Of his affair with Hahn, Proust once wrote in a manner that recalls the oscillation of Swann's emotions during his tragi-comic courtship of Odette: "To wait for the little one, to lose him, to find him again, to love him twice as much in seeing that he has come back with Flavie[162] to pick me up, to hope for his arrival for two minutes or to make him wait five minutes, that is for me the real tragedy, a palpitating and profound one, which I shall write one day perhaps. . ."[163]

A perusal of the letters Proust wrote to Hahn during the early part of their affair provides some subtle hints as to the nature of their relationship. In September 1894, Hahn was the one to whom Proust first communicated his excitement about a short story he was in the process of writing, "The Death of Baldassare Silvande, Viscount of Sylvania," whose protagonist Proust made a musician, possibly thinking of Hahn.[164] In this same letter Proust expresses his love for Hahn, hoping with trepidation that he would accept his invitation to spend some time with him at the Hôtel des Roches Noires, in Trouville, where he was staying at the time.

In a letter to Hahn written three days later Proust alludes to a contretemps that, he felt, might have aroused suspicions in theStraus family--who were staying in Trouville--concerning their sexual relationship. Proust had

---

161 Marcel Proust, Jean Santeuil, trans. Gerard Hopkins, preface by André Maurois (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956) xxv. In Hopkins's translation, the epigraph reads as follows: "Should I call this book a novel? It is something less, and yet much more, the very essence of my life, with nothing extraneous added, as it developed through a long period of wretchedness. This book of mine has not been manufactured: it has been gleaned."

162 Flavie was the marquise de Casa-Fuerte, née Flavie de Balsoram.

163 Cited by Huas 102-103.

164 But the characteristically "decadent" habits and predilections of the protagonist are more reminiscent of someone like Robert de Montesquiou than of Hahn.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

left for Paris before a telegram from Hahn arrived, and Mme Straus, having been given it by the hotel management, forwarded it to Proust in Paris without opening it. Somehow, Proust feared that not opening the telegram was a sign that Mme Straus understood the nature of their relationship. "For the first time in my life since I've been playing the comedy I did not succeed and that will serve as a good lesson," whose moral, he said, was "Turpe est mentiri, it is wicked to lie."[165] Proust was referring of course to the furtive and sometimes hazardous schemes the two young men, like most homosexual couples who did not live with each other, had to devise in order to hide what, in effect, most people who knew them were aware of or suspected anyhow. But the taboo against frank acknowledgment of homosexual attachments was so strong that it was necessary to keep up a front of "normalcy" and hence to "playact" for the sake of allowing others as well as themselves to pretend not to know the truth. One wonders whether it was this aspect of their relationship that led rather quickly to Proust's growing impatience and disillusionment concerning the purity of their feeling for each other. The fact is that in their reflections on love both men were prone to a deep pessimism. The extent to which this pessimism is attributable to the ups and downs of their affair is impossible to determine, but certainly the contrast between devotion and resentment that marked their interaction throughout 1895 must have had its effect. Writing sometime in 1895 to Hahn, Proust expressed a wish to "be master of everything that you desire on the earth in order to be able to bring it to you--the author of everything you admire in art in order to dedicate it to you."[166] Yet at more or less the same time, Proust was alarmed by Hahn's apparent indifference to him at a recent dinner party at a

---

165 Marcel Proust, Correspondance, t. 1, 337.

166 Correspondance 442. Kolb was unable to be more specific about the date of this letter other than to place it in 1895.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

friend's house, when Hahn apparently preferred to remain at the party rather than leave with him at an hour agreed upon beforehand. Such independence was incompatible with Proust's concept of love as total devotion to the happiness of the beloved person. The upshot of this and other misunderstandings was a surprisingly angry letter from Proust to Hahn that seems to have signalled the definitive end to their relationship as lovers in July 1896:

> The history of our friendship gives me the duty to make you touch with your finger the errors of your pride. You do not understand that by inspiring in me the image of a Reynaldo who no longer fears causing me pain, you remove the obstacles which oppose themselves to my desires. Therefore, nothing can stop me any longer. Dare I say that I am worth more than you?" [167]

Lest one conclude that this letter is all that Proust had to say to Hahn at that moment, another letter written at more or less the same time, on July 3 or 4, 1896, should put that thought to rest. Proust was inconstant and unpredictable, forever making statements about his undying affection or love for someone, only to turn cool and detached whenever things did not work out exactly as he had planned. Thus he could say to Hahn, at the same time he was beginning another love affair, that "You are truly the person who with Mother I love the most in the world."[168] Moreover, the letters Proust wrote to Hahn later on that same year show no lessening of affection and esteem for him.

Hahn also had a strong penchant for pessimism in matters of the heart, which spilled over at times into other areas of his life, such as his attitude toward the arts, the very source of his lifeblood yet one he readily dismissed--in accord with the perversely puristic aesthetics of the time--as totally useless, thus claiming for his life's work a superiority that most others considered irrelevant.

---

[167] Gavoty108.

[168] Delage, 231.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Regarding this idea, he made the following observation in a letter to the pianist Edouard Risler:

> We have to say one thing to ourselves: art is not necessary in this life. What is beautiful in art is that it is totally useless and that we fasten ourselves--you, me, him, them--with ardor and despair to the croup of a dazzling chimera, the mastery of which has no useful purpose to anyone.[169]

In a similar vein, he wrote:

> The artist, like Icarus, climbs to the heaven of his dream and comes back to earth, crushed. I am no exception to the rule. Let's take consolation from a forthcoming flight. But I see quite well, right now, that it is the same with art as with love. One soars, joyously, towards the conquest of the good: sometimes, one is wounded, one is always disappointed.[170]

With the help of several scholars who have studied the relationship between Proust and Hahn, mainly Roger Delage, and with the additional evidence of a little essay that Proust wrote on Hahn many years after their love affair had ended, let me attempt here to summarize or slightly expand several of the things said in this chapter with a view to clarifying with reasonable certainty the nature of Hahn's impact on Proust's aesthetic and sexual sensibilities.

Hahn's influence can be felt chiefly in Proust's evolving aesthetic philosophy, and specifically in the part that both music and painting played in its formation. Several clues point to the rising importance of music in Proust's life. First, at Le Réveillon in the summer of 1894, one of the first projects the new lovers decided on together was a biography of Chopin, which did not materialize but whose significance is nonetheless considerable, since it belongs to a period in Proust's life when he was beginning to strive consciously

---

[169] Gavoty 61. Some previously unpublished letters from Hahn to Risler appeared in "Reynaldo Hahn: douze lettres à Edouard Risler (1873-1929)," BSAP No. 43, 1993, 37-57.
[170] Gavoty 63.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

for a blending of the arts[171] that was to become one of the most characteristic thematic and stylistic features of the Recherche and that already manifested itself in the preface, written in July 1894, to PJ. At the end of his dedicatory preface to that volume, Proust alluded to "his true friend" (Hahn) and "to the Master" (Anatole France) who, with the philosopher Alphonse Darlu, made up the triumvirate of individuals in his life who had contributed most to his conception of literature and art; Hahn, because he had inspired him with "the poetry of his music," and France, who had offered him "the music of his incomparable poetry."

A second example of this new emphasis on the role of music in literary creation shows itself in the project Proust and Hahn carried to successful completion in the important middle section of the 1896 edition of PJ where, as already noted, Proust's poems on four composers and four painters appear together with the piano music Hahn composed for each of these poems. The four composers, Chopin, Gluck, Schumann and Mozart, were favorites of both Proust and Hahn, as were the four painters whom they commemorated in PJ, Albert Cuyp, Paulus Potter, Antoine Watteau, and Anton Van Dyck.[172] The precise character of these poems and their musical backgrounds will be discussed in Part Three. It is sufficient to note here the centrality of music in the conceptual framework of PJ, due at least in part, I think, to Hahn's influence. I should also point out that several of the little essays, prose poems and meditations included in the section "Regrets, Reveries, Changing Skies" are

---

[171] Loevgren, 33 cites a passage from Jean Moréas's Philosophy of Composition where one finds an extreme expression of what Proust, faithful to the Zeitgeist, was aiming for in his writing: we are striving to create an art, Moréas said, "which would be vaguely poetry, painting, music, but not simply painting, or poetry,--something like a concert of colors, a painting of musical notes,--a willed fusion of genres."

[172] The four poems on painters were recited by Simone Le Bargy, with the piano accompaniment of Edouard Risler playing Hahn's musical settings, on May 28, 1895 at the Paris home of Madeleine Lemaire.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

musical in their titles and evocations: "Family Listening to Music," "Moonlight Sonata," and "In Praise of Bad Music." Even more essentially musical in its inspiration is the prose poem "The Sea," at the end of which Proust compares the sea to music in that "it enchants us like music, which, unlike language, bears no trace of material things, which never speaks to us of men but imitates the movements of our soul."[173]

Another expression of music in Proust's creative life is the above-mentioned story "The Death of Baldassare Silvande, Viscount of Sylvania," which, when it first appeared separately in La Revue Hebdomadaire on October 29, 1895, Proust dedicated "to Reynaldo Hahn poet, singer and musician."[174] Proust had no difficulty in attributing the qualities of a poet to Hahn, just as he liked to think of himself as a writer attuned to the sonorities and evocative expressiveness of music.

Delage argues convincingly, I believe, that it is not only because Baldassare is a musician that one can speak of this story as a "transposition of real elements" but also "because in it one hears the distinct rustling of memories tied to Reynaldo, one finds barely transposed in it the ocean views and landscapes which are those of Trouville and Normandy where Proust wrote it, and that insinuated in it is the theme of remorse which the lovers experience, the lovers who, to love each other, are obliged to hide--like Marcel and Reynaldo--to betray the trust of a dear person-- Marcel's mother--, a theme that will be expanded until it becomes that of the "cursed race" [in section one of the

---

[173] Marcel Proust, Pleasures and Days and other Writings, ed. F.W.Dupee, trans. by Louise Varese, Gerard Hopkins, and Barbara Dupee (New York: Doubleday, 1957) 139.

[174] None of the dedications which accompanied Proust's writings when they were first published in newspapers and reviews were included in PJ. We are thus deprived in the book of one important means of access to the social world within which these stories and prose poems were written.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Sodom and Gomorrah part of the Recherche]." [175] There is ample evidence of the guilt that his homosexuality sometimes stirred up in Proust, because he felt that it was a side of his personality that his mother did not and could not understand. Less is known about Hahn's attitude in this regard, but there are several pages of his diary that speak disparagingly of homosexuals and of a homosexual life style. Such a contradiction was far from uncommon in the1890s and is still today, although less commonly, a component of many homosexuals' self-image. Indeed, Proust never liked to formulate his identity in homosexual terms. For him, it was a preference, a taste, not a defining behavior. Yet it played an enormous role in the development of his vision of life, and contributed to his understanding of what made human beings so protean, fascinating, and complex. In any case, Delage's point here is that many features of this story, to which Proust attached considerable importance, reflect the presence of Reynaldo Hahn in Proust's life during these years. Both men enjoyed friendships with many women, for whom they expressed strong affections. Nevertheless, on the basis of available evidence, one is entitled to believe that these friendships were basically Platonic.[176]

A short essay Proust wrote about Hahn that was not published during Proust's lifetime and that the editors of his critical writings place between the years 1909 and 1914, when Hahn was music critic for the Journal, provides an additional piece of evidence in support of the view that the composer was an

---

[175] Delage 229.

[176] Among the many pieces of evidence reinforcing the conjecture that Proust had no sexual interest in women is the testimony of André Gide, who spoke with Proust about his sex life on several occasions. A frequently cited entry in his diary for May 21, 1921, written after spending some time the previous evening with Proust, says among other things: "Far from denying his homosexuality, he is open about it and exposes it, I could almost say he brags about it. He says that he has never loved women other than spiritually and that he has never experienced love except with men." Gide was rather startled at this meeting to hear Proust express certainty that Baudelaire was a "practicing" homosexual, for which the available evidence is at best faintly circumstantial. See André Gide, Journal 1889-1939 (Paris: Gallimard, 1951) 691-694.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

active force in the writer's creative life.

Proust began this short but deeply felt piece[177] by recalling the tributes paid to Hahn's musical genius during the 1890s, when he composed the music for his mentor Alphonse Daudet's play L'Obstacle, and attracted the serious scholarly attention of such figures as Mallarmé and Loti. Despite the nitpicking of several detractors, it was during those years, Proust said, that Hahn made his theatrical début and wrote the vocal and instrumental works which excited "the great admiration that the most refined artists of our time will always feel for his music."

He then pointed out "the errors of judgment" issuing from the minds of certain "amateurs" who evaluated avant-garde art in accordance with the degree of its adherence to whatever was believed to be the latest technical and formal innovations of the day. This notion of an avant-garde, Proust said, had nothing to do with what was genuinely new and revolutionary in works of art. He then moved to his concluding paragraph, where we discover a viewpoint that looms up very large in Proust's aesthetic philosophy and ideology as he had conceptualized it in the 1890s and reaffirmed some fifteen years later. It hinges on the notion of interiority, of "truth" as something "intimate and psychological" rather than objective and "veristic," as exponents of "neo-Italianism" thought of it. He was referring here to the operas of Leoncavallo, Mascagni, and Puccini, towards whom Hahn, and apparently Proust as well, felt a rather strong antipathy (thus revealing their serious underestimation of the best work produced by the three Italian composers). Hahn's music, Proust said, "is not that song of which Hugo speaks 'where nothing human remains.' It is the life itself of the soul, the internal substance of language, liberated, raising itself,

[177] Marcel Proust, "Reynaldo Hahn," CSB, 554-557. As indicated in this volume, 935n 5, the essay was published for the first time, with the title "Les œuvres de Reynaldo Hahn," in Conferencia, a supplement of the Annales politiques et littéraires, December 1, 1923.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

taking flight, that has become music."[178]

Whatever bitterness may have remained in Proust concerning his relationship with Hahn, it is clear from this essay that Hahn had a place in his personal pantheon of artists who penetrated the veil of appearances to the inner core of psychological and spiritual truth.

[178] CSB 556. The Hugo quote is taken from Hernani, Act V, scene II, v. 1964.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter Six

Young Proust, Robert de Montesquiou, and the World of the Parisian Salons

As a center of upper class fashion and taste in the Paris of the late nineteenth century, the salon provided both a site and an occasion for writers and artists to meet with their peers and with prominent representatives of the business, diplomatic, and professional intelligentsia. Even more than other institutions such as literary and political journals, academies, and learned societies, the salons offered an ambience where like-minded people with common intellectual and cultural interests could mix freely within the social guidelines established by their hostesses, and in accordance with established canons of etiquette and rank. Almost every salon had its leading personality, usually a man, whose weekly or bi-weekly presence would guarantee to the hostess a certain tone and cachet capable of attracting the people she wished to cultivate. Almost every salon also had its favorite activity: some were devoted to music and theatre, some to intellectual discussion, and some merely to socializing and refined gastronomic pleasures.

As far as social class was concerned, like their predecessors in the eighteenth century, when the salons initiated by such distingushed women as Mme de Lambert, an aristocrat, and Mme Du Deffand, a bourgeoise, tended (together with the new cafés and clubs) to replace the Court as the main fulcrum of cultural life, most of the Parisian salons in the second half of the nineteenth century accepted guests from diverse social backgrounds, as long as they met other criteria for inclusion such as intellectual or literary accomplishments, conversational brilliance, and influential connections. There were, however,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

some aristocratic salons that did exclude, or at least made extremely difficult, access to people of lower social station. This was true of the salons in the super-aristocratic Faubourg Saint-Germain, which remained closed to young Proust until his ultra blue-blooded friend and sponsor, Count Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, made it possible for him to gain entry to that circle. But even with Montesquiou's assistance, most people who have looked into this aspect of Proust's life seem to think that he was never fully accepted by the families who reigned in the Faubourg Saint-Germain during the years with which we are concerned in this study. At least one scholar, Bernadette Morand, has concluded that, despite his successful conquest of both aristocratic and upper bourgeois salons, Proust was never recognized and valued by them for what he was; that far from being a place of refuge, the salons were for him really "places of exile."[179] Nevertheless, he was able to penetrate these "alien" places sufficiently to grasp quite early that they had indeed become what Michael Sprinker calls "the quintessential institution for ideological elaboration and social stratification in the Recherche."[180] Moreover, there is ample evidence pointing to young Proust's need to define himself in terms of the values which certain of the most illustrious literary and social salons embodied. He hungered for acceptance by and was deeply attached to salon hostesses such as Mme Arman de Caillavet, Countess Laure de Chevigné, Duchess Elizabeth de Clermont-Tonnerre, Mme Alphonse Daudet, Countess Elizabeth Greffulhe, Mme Madeleine Lemaire, Countess Anna de Noailles, Mme Geneviève Straus and many others. He acquired the manners associated with graciousness and generosity: he gave expensive gifts to his hostesses, indulged in hand-kissing,

---

[179] Bernadette Morand, "L'Aristocratie chez Proust," Europe, special issue "Centenaire de Marcel Proust," August-September 1970, 37-46.
[180] Sprinker 47.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

excelled in charming repartee, and dressed in fashionable attire at all times.[181] He became known in the early to mid-1890s as a *soiriste*, a writer who specialized in describing the soirées, fêtes and parties that featured well known personalities in the arts and high society. I shall comment on two of these journalistic pieces later in this chapter.

Proust's exquisitely refined manners, his *politesse*, were proverbial among the cognoscenti. He was known affectionately as "little Proust" or "little Marcel,"[182] but the diminutive was not really meant to be condescending, since his company was eagerly sought after by reason of his effulgent wit, his talent for mimicry, his knowledge of literature and the arts, and his prodigious memory. He could cite page upon page of verse by his favorite poets and long passages from beloved playwrights. Yet at the same time, many people did regard him as an amateur, a drawing-room dilettante. He had the misfortune of being seen by some, even among his close friends, as the embodiment of the very foibles and vices which he wrote about in the early short stories collected in PJ, and which he later integrated into his great novel: snobbery, vanity, dandyism, social climbing, sycophancy, even hypocrisy. Some of these attributions were unfair, yet the image was not entirely undeserved. In any event, the face of the profoundly serious writer behind the social mask was not always visible even to his peers in the Parisian intelligentsia.

According to Emilien Carassus and Laure Rièse, both diligent researchers in late nineteenth century French social history, the three salons

---

[181] But the image of a "fashionably" dressed Proust must be modified by the Chaplinesque aspects of his appearance that Jacques-Emile Blanche recalls. Blanche noted that Proust wore somewhat "baggy trousers" and that "his top hats very soon took on the appearance of hedgehogs or Skye terriers as a result of being brushed the wrong way." As quoted in Brée 21.

[182] Elisabeth de Clermont-Tonnerre, Robert de Montesquiou et Marcel Proust (Paris: Flammarion, 1925) 9, and Ferré 205.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

that were most important in shaping young Proust's moral and intellectual sensibilities from about 1888 to 1893 were all governed by bourgeois hostesses, not aristocratic ones: Mme Geneviève Straus, to whose residence Proust gained access through his friendship with her son by her first marriage, Jacques Bizet; Madeleine Lemaire, whose passion for music attracted Reynaldo Hahn and other composers and performers; and Mme Arman de Caillavet, the long-time mistress of Anatole France. All three women had talents in their own right (as writers, linguists, and painters), and offered to their aspiring writer and socialite a rich assortment of cultural refinements and personal graces. Two were Jewish: Straus was the daughter of the composer Fromental Halévy; Caillavet's maiden name was Léontine Lippmann. At the same time, Carassus and Rièse credit Proust's rapid rise in the aristocratic salons to Lemaire, who introduced him to Robert de Montesquiou in March 1893, a meeting that, as previously mentioned, facilitated his acceptance by other blue-blooded salons, such as those of princess Mathilde Bonaparte, the marquise Julie de Roccagiovine, the countesses de Luynes and de Noailles, and the countess de Beaulincourt. Proust's ability to move easily and simultaneously in aristocratic and bourgeois circles was symbolized by the fact that the countess de Beaulincourt and Mme Straus both lived on rue de Miromesmil, the former at number 12, the latter at number 104, so that "to go from one salon to the other, Proust had only to walk up the block." [183]

But these details of Proust's social existence in the 1890s need to be considered in a broader context, one encompassing the historical background against which he pursued his literary and social goals. There is the issue of young Proust's attitude toward the three classes that were contending

---

183 Laure Rièse, Les Salons littéraires parisiens du second Empire à nos jours (Toulouse: Privat Editeur, 1962) 43.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

for power and authority in France (and in Europe generally) in the last decades of the century: the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, and the working class, the latter of which was taking shape under the leadership of Socialist and mainly Marxist-inspired political parties in close collaboration with a burgeoning labor movement. We need to consider what his letters and journalistic writings of the time tell us about how he saw the world . These help to define the fundamental ideological choices and class-based affiliations that he made at the time he was writing the portraits, sketches, short stories, and prose poems gathered in PJ.

As a young man (and probably throughout his life) Proust was unaware of or uninterested in Marxism, and his approach to the experimental sciences of his day did not suffice to consolidate in him an enduring intellectual bond with the principles of modern materialist thought and practice.[184] This is surprising in that the late 1880s and 1890s was a moment in which modern European civilization was passing through processes of vast practical and theoretical significance stemming from changes in the mode and relations of material production, and from the corresponding rise of the socialist and labor movements. But as we try to shed some light on these issues it will be necessary at the same time to look at some aspects of young Proust's personality and way of comporting himself in society that make whatever we might say about him at the very least somewhat problematic. One of these has to do with the concept of "entre-deux" as expounded by Antoine Compagnon in two of his Proust studies, the other concerns several caveats that must be

[184] Although in this as in all other aspects of Proust's life we need to be careful and to remember that Proust relied heavily on Darwin's teachings and generally on experimental science for his understanding of some human motivations and inherited traits. Among the works he read of this type were Hervey de Saint-Denis, Les Rêves ou les moyens de les diriger (1867); Alfred Binet, Etudes de psychologie expérimentale: le fétichisme dans l'amour (1888); and Pierre Janet, L'Automatisme psychologique (1889). Moreover, his brother was a physician and his father's scientific accomplishments gave young Proust ready access to the new experimentally based discoveries in medicine, psychology, and biology.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

heeded by anyone trying to make sense of Proust's ideological orientation at this juncture of his career.

To use Arno J. Mayer's phrase, Proust can be said to exemplify "the persistence of the old regime" in France well beyond the decade of the 1870s when, historians agree, the bourgeoisie finally ascended to a preeminent place in French political and economic life, while at the same time he stood on the threshold, and was himself a representative, of a new culture.

It is impossible to identify Proust unqualifiedly with a class or with a way of life, for he remained resolutely independent and was not at all uncomfortable with the need to straddle two worlds, to belong and yet not to belong, to fit in and not to fit in, according to the circumstances and requirements of the moment. He was *in* the social world of the aristocratic salons, but was he*of* it? Like Thomas Mann, he shared the middle class's commitment to work and to a vocation, and like Mann the form that his rejection of middle class values took was mainly aesthetic, or artistic; the supreme vocation of the individual who wanted to transcend the narrow views and perspectives of the bourgeoisie was that of writer, of poet, of artistic creator. It was through art and literature that Proust registered his idealist critique of both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, not through political or philosophical opposition (except for the Dreyfus Affair) to the existing order of things. Proust was at one in spirit with the "revolutionaries" in the arts, especially painting, and he stood with the republicans in defense of Dreyfus; but in the depths of his soul, he was also with pre-revolutionary France, including some of its aristocratic values and its classically based humanism. In this sense, he identified himself with the French aristocracy, and aspired to incorporate its code of honor, its generosity, even its naive devotion to ancestor worship, into his own value system. He recognized of course that the ceaseless

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

flux that characterized bourgeois society under an ever expanding capitalist system could not be reversed, yet he yearned for the stability of a pre-capitalist, pre-industrial social order, when the wheel of fortune did not spin as wildly as it did in the modern era. When he looked at and studied the faces of his aristocratic friends, he had the feeling that he was quite literally contemplating a bygone era that still lived in the present.

It should be remembered that the French nobility had its own distinctive way of life that lasted until and beyond the post World War I period, and that this class continued to supply the Army, the diplomatic corps, and even the Church hierarchy with some of their top personnel. In other words, while it is true that the struggle for hegemony in France, that is to say, with Gramsci, the struggle for "political and moral leadership" in French society, was being decisively won by the bourgeoisie, the old legitimist aristocracy retained its prestige and its luster to a considerable degree at the time Proust was entering the world of the salons.

If Proust was looking for an alternative scheme of things to that of his own class, he could find it either in the nascent working class movement, or in the aristocracy. His choice was never in doubt. His only contact with people of the working class was with representatives of its service sector: waiters and hotel personnel, carriage drivers, domestic servants, and the like. He enjoyed his contacts with the humble people whose labor allowed the privileged milieus he frequented to maintain their charm: for example, he spoke at length with Alphonse Daudet's Italian valet about Dante, and often engaged in lively exchanges with his own servants. But this did not amount to a personal identification with the working class per se. The truth seems to be that young Proust sympathized with the problems of ordinary working people, and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

appreciated their virtues and skills as individuals, but this had nothing to do with the kind of spiritual identification that marked his relations with the aristocrats.

Proust distinguished between the old pre-revolutionary legitimist nobility and the Bonapartist nobility, the latter of which had risen to the pinnacle of social rank during the Second Empire. But when the Second Empire came to an ignominious end in 1871, the nobility of the ancien régime regained its social and cultural primacy and was once again lionized by the fashionable circles which Proust frequented.[185]

The person who perhaps best epitomized the qualities and flaws of the legitimist aristocracy in France was Count Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, a man whose lineage on his father's side (his mother, Marie du Roux, was a bourgeois Genevan Protestant)[186] was virtually as old as the French nation itself[187] and whose unusual talents and personal traits made him, for almost four decades, the very incarnation of what was most alluring in the ancien régime. Poet, collector of antique furniture and modern paintings, specialist in interior decoration, extravagant host of innumerable parties, dinners, and fêtes, flamboyant, contentious, arrogant friend and mentor to numerous younger men, to whom he was drawn either by their sexual appeal or by their intellectual abilities, Montesquiou lived in an openly homosexual partnership with his personal secretary, Gabriel de Yturri, a relationship that, in his case, was more or less accepted as part of his thoroughly idiosyncratic life

---

185 Carassus 49.

186 Robert de Montesquiou, Les Pas effacés-mémoires (Paris: Emile-Paul Frères, 1923) 190.

187 Montesquiou discusses his ancestry in the first two chapters of Les Pas effacés. In the first volume of his Proust biography, Proust-The Early Years, 154, Painter says that among Montesquiou's undoubted ancestors were the crusader Raimond-Aimeri de Montesquiou (circa 1190), Blaise de Montluc (1502-1572), and Charles de Batz (1611-1673), the original of D'Artagnan in The Three Musketeers. Through marriages and alliances, he was connected with the greater part of the European aristocracy. Montesquiou's biographer, Philippe Jullian, claims that his family had "the longest geneaology in France," going back to the early 11th century.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

style. If Proust was dazzled by the nobility in his youth, and treasured his friendship with a group of aristocrats he called "the young dukes" whom he invited regularly to his home simply because they charmed him with their titles and relaxed acceptance of their social prestige, it was largely because of Montesquiou's seductive influence on his world view. Montesquiou gave Proust the chance to see and feel at first hand what it was like to carry within oneself the bloodline and the cultural heritage of France's most distinguished and oldest noble families. Proust counted many other aristocrats among his friends--the princes Antoine and Emmanuel Bibesco, Count Robert de Billy, Prince Constantin de Brancovan, Pierre de Chevilly, Bertrand de Fénelon, Marquis Robert de Flers, Gabriel de La Rochefoucauld, Georges de Lauris, Count Henri de Saussine, above all Viscount Clément de Maugny--but it was Montesquiou who set the tone and established the standards by which Proust learned to appreciate the unusual qualities, and to assess the notable deficiencies, of the French aristocracy.

The relationship between Proust and Montesquiou, who was sixteen years his senior, was not always a smooth one.[188] Proust's talent for mimicry was most advantageously on display in his imitations of the gestures and speech mannerisms of Montesquiou and Anatole France. France seems to have accepted it good-naturedly, but Montesquiou resented this playful persiflage and let Proust know more than once how he felt about it. He was the first to point out Proust's social gaffes, and during the height of controversy that surrounded the Dreyfus case, Montesquiou made fun of Proust's Jewish loyalties, refusing to credit him with motives that transcended mere "racial"

---

[188] Madeleine Lemaire seems to have anticipated the friction that was to characterize their relationship when she introduced Proust to Montesquiou with the words "This is my delicious page, Monsieur Marcel Proust, promise me that you will be kind to him." Cited in Patrick Chaleyssin, Robert de Montesquiou mécène et dandy (Paris: Editions d'art Somogy, 1992) 148.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

defensiveness. Proust replied quite honorably to these jibes, and on one occasion, in a letter sent shortly after a dinner at which Montesquiou and other guests had indulged in some anti-Semitic innuendos, Proust reminded his mentor that as the son of a Jewish mother, he had not been able that evening to take part in or enjoy the cutting remarks of his fellow guests.[189] Tadié attributes Montesquiou's "verbal sadism" to his need to find a "compensation" for the lack of "carnal relations" with various young men in his entourage.[190] There is no evidence that Proust was among his sexual conquests. He might well have been repelled by the Count's blackish teeth, which Montesquiou always covered with his hand when he smiled.

Montesquiou's qualities as a poet, although widely appreciated in his own time, have lost much of their original appeal,[191] which was due to his erudition, his gift for word play, his floral imagery (the rage in the 1890s), his mixing of pagan and Christian symbolism in his nature poems, and his frequent evocation of rural customs and fêtes, which conveyed to jaded urban readers the simplicity of a revered peasant way of life. Also attractive to many readers was his credo--as expounded in a sonnet titled "Ordinaire" that recalled Théophile Gautier--which he included in his 1896 book Les Hortensias bleus

---

189 This letter, which begins with the formal "Dear Sir," is tentatively dated by Philip Kolb May 19, 1896. It reads in part: "I did not reply yesterday to what you asked me about the Jews. This was for a very simple reason: If I am Catholic like my father and brother, on the other hand, my mother is Jewish. You understand that this is a very strong reason for my abstaining from this type of discussion. I thought it was more respectful to write this to you than to answer you in person in the presence of a third party." Marcel Proust, Correspondance, Tome II, 1896-1901, 66.

190 Tadié, Marcel Proust 226.

191 However, in his massive study Les Curiosités esthétiques de Robert de Montesquiou, 2 vols. (Genève: Droz, 1996), Antoine Bertrand has performed a sort of rehabilitation of Montesquiou, claiming for his subject a preeminent place among poets and cultural trend-setters of his time, and arguing that prejudices of various kinds had for too long prevented the French literary world from appreciating his real originality and intellectual brilliance. Montesquiou was not just a representative figure of the "Tout-Paris" of the 1890s, Bertrand believes, but rather a real innovator and a figure of extraordinary importance in shaping an entire era..

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

(Blue Hydranges),[192] that "Le singulier me touche et l'étrange me charme;/J'excuse le bizarre et me sens fort épris/Du rare. . ." (I am touched by the singular and charmed by the strange/ I excuse the bizarre and feel smitten/By the rare.) As a poet, he brought into play a curious blending of classicism, sensualism, and symbolism. One of his poetic traits that no doubt influenced Proust's inclusion of four poems on painters in PJ was his penchant for verbal descriptions of paintings, such as his "Pinacothèque" of November 1887, which describes works by Moreau, Burne-Jones, Degas, Manet and others,[193] his quatrains devoted to Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, whom he called "the modern Orcagna," his description of the Dutch interiors of Van Dyck and Quentin Metsys,[194] and his poem "La belle Olympia," after the famous painting by Manet, which he dedicated to Mallarmé.[195] Montesquiou was not only in fashion, he actually helped to form the tastes and topics of his time. It was no wonder that Proust, despite the blackish teeth, called Montesquiou "the professor of beauty."

Two of Proust's many letters to Montesquiou, one written in June 1893 several months after the two men met for the first time at a musical recital hosted by Madeleine Lemaire at her home on rue de Monceau, the other dated October 2, 1894, illustrate the nature of their literary relationship and the feeling of exalted ardor that seems to have descended on young Proust whenever he addressed himself to this representative of France's oldest nobility.

The letter of June 1893 mainly concerned Montesquiou's second published collection of poems, titled Le Chef des odeurs suaves (The Best of

---

[192] Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, Les Hortensias bleus (Paris: G. Charpentier and E. Fasquelle, 1896) 11-12.

[193] Montesquiou, Les Hortensias bleus 172-174.

[194] Montesquiou, Les Hortensias bleus 159-160.

[195] Montesquiou, Les Hortensias bleus181-183.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Sweet Odors) , which followed by a year his first collection, Les Chauves-souris (The Bats). The letter was written from somewhere in the countryside, at nighttime, while looking at the starlit sky, which may account for the fact that Proust seems to have been engulfed by feelings of reverence as he read the recently published book of poems. "I am too troubled to be able to compare this book with the Chauves-souris," he said, but

> for what is not the object of a reasoning process, because the divine reason that takes hold of it is freed from time, space and relations, for what is purely mysterious like music or faith, I think that there are more verses here [than in Chauves-souris] that give a presentiment of it, and that reveal it, in embodying it.[196]

After citing some of the verses which he felt exemplified this "presentiment" of what was beyond mere human reason to comprehend, Proust expressed his feeling that such poetry "makes the heart swoon, one doesn't know why." These were the kind of words that, thus far in his life, Proust had reserved for figures such as Racine and Baudelaire, but now Montesquiou joined the elect group of poets to whom one owed a priceless debt. He then compared the effect of Montesquiou's poems to those that "certain phrases of Wagner" and "certain expressions" of da Vinci paintings had on the listener or viewer, a strange "sweetness." "Your verses," he said, "are this mysterious honey whose rays have the sweetness of those of heaven." Then, after referring to a reading given the previous day by Montesquiou of some of his new poems, Proust closed what was in essence a kind of spiritual love letter by first telling his friend, in a postscript, how impatiently he was waiting for his photograph, and then by saying that if he were to send Montesquiou a literary review containing one of his own writings (probably in La Revue Blanche), Montesquiou should not dwell on the ridiculous side of such an exchange, a

[196] Marcel Proust, Correspondance, t. I, 1880-1895, 214-215.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ridicule that would befall Proust if there were "the absurd thought of an exchange of this earthworm with this starry firmament."

One would be entitled to attribute such smarmy words to a brief extreme infatuation, if it were not for the fact that Proust's passionate admiration for Montesquiou lasted not just a few weeks or months, as was his wont, but many years. The letter of October 2, 1894 is one of many heaping fulsome praise on Montesquiou, partly in tribute to his poetic "genius" and partly to convey the fascination that Montesquiou's name, lineage and breeding held for him.

This letter, like the previous one, mixes literary concerns with considerations of social rank and prestige. Basically, he wanted Montesquiou to accept a dedication to him of one of the short stories destined for inclusion in PJ, "La Confession d'une jeune fille" (A Young Girl's Confession). But such a request was not a simple matter, it had to be couched in terms that would please and flatter the great man. It is at least likely that Proust really meant what he said to Montesquiou in this letter (but see the caveats discussed below). Evidently Montesquiou had some reservations about lending his name to this story and about the other names that would appear with his in the preface, to which Proust responded in the following manner:

> As for [your reservations], I shall respond to your hesitations by removing for a few days (from my publisher when he will be able to release it, I think before a month) the manuscript or the proofsof the obscure short story to which you will be entreated to add the prestige of your name (the only one it will have), whose syllables, for every well born ear and well-educated imagination, are so rich in the past, the present and the future. You will judge whether this road is not too poorly constructed or too little frequented to inscribe on the wall a name that is so glorious and so dear to the world of letters.[197]

---

[197] Correspondance, t. I, 343-344.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The mixture of self-deprecation and boundless esteem for the man Proust was soon to address as "Mon Maître" or "Mon cher Maître"[198] was typical of young Proust's way of relating to people high up in society or in the literary establishment. To a late twentieth century ear at least his letters sound like sycophancy. But Proust would not have accepted such an evaluation, because he felt that his words were a necessary tribute to a social class, or better a caste, to which the French nation owed a great debt of gratitude. It was precisely for this reason that he reacted to the deficiencies of this class, as seen in both PJ and later in the Recherche, not by proposing or suggesting the possibility of an alternative to the existing socio-political order but rather by feeling deep disappointment that the class to which he looked for inspiration, the aristocracy, had compromised itself irrevocably by ceding an authority based on breeding and education to another class, the bourgeoisie, that owed its authority much more often to material wealth than to social and cultural accomplishments.

Proust's was a politics of disappointment, not of rebellion; and disappointment, when not accompanied by an impulse to remove its causes, can only lead to the kind of spiritual protest that one finds in several of the stories in PJ. Proust was simply incapable of envisioning a society fundamentally different from the one he knew. Unlike some of the philosophical reformers of the eighteenth century, and unlike some of the late nineteenth century ideologues who spoke for the popular and proletarian classes, Proust

---

[198] In a letter of June 9, 1895, Proust thanked Montesquiou for dedicating one of the poems in his Le Parcours du rêve au souvenir to him, with the following words: "My dear Master, With all the noblest souls you proclaim, by a dedication which is a beautiful act of spiritual charity, the equality of seraphs and cherubs, of those who know and who charm--and of those who only love, they know nothing else--you say it (with what majestic and touching familiarity) to the most obscure of disciples who is benevolently called by his name (at the coolest stopping point of the Parcours) in raising, with a gesture that can do so much, to the level of the best talents, of inaccessible graces, my mere good will whose obscure and violent expression I beg you to find here. Thank you." In a postscript, Proust attributed a feminine role to himself, as he did on various other occasions, that of a bride: "Here I am quite glorious for the future and, clothed now by you with a nuptial dress, I will be able to hide my deformities." Correspondance, t. I, 401.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

thought and wrote from within the existing order, hoping to amend its most serious defects, but not to replace it with something new. On this level of analysis, then, we can say with some confidence that the comparison he made between his story as an "earthworm" and Montesquiou's new book as a "starry firmament," between his "obscure" short story and the exalted writings of his "teacher," really reflected a historical judgment on Proust's part, and was not the expression of an exclusively personal and self-interested flattery.

There is another possible reason why Proust was so enamoured of Montesquiou, and that is his physical appearance, if we can take two portraits of him-- one painted by Elie Delaunay in 1878, when he was twenty-three, the other by Jean Boldini,[199] when he was in his forties--as faithful likenesses. They are both profiles, the younger one affording almost a three-quarters view of his face, the other more of a side view, where Montesquiou sports a handle bar moustache missing in the earlier portrait. Thick wavy hair over a high forehead, a thin angular face dominated by a prominent aquiline nose, a firm, sculpted chin, and attire featuring a clasped ribbon tie and long flowing frock coat with vest are the quite striking features of the twenty-three-year-old man. The portrait by Boldini shows Montesquiou at about age forty-five in a somewhat more dramatic pose, with gloves and an expensive looking, exceedingly long tapered cane in his right hand, and an unidentifiable object in his left, which draws one's attention to very long fingers and a general air of disdainful hauteur. Despite various illnesses that plagued him all his life, Montesquiou appears in both portraits as a man exuding poise and self-confidence.

At this point we need to take under consideration a few caveats concerning Proust's relationship with Montesquiou and others of his type,

---

[199] The 1878 Delaunay portrait appears in Tadié's biography of Proust; the Boldini portrait in André Maurois, Le Monde de Marcel Proust, 35.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

caveats which cast a rather long shadow of doubt on the precise nature of his attitude toward the rich and well-born, and of course towards himself.

Put plainly, the question is: Can we take Proust at his word?[200] Was he being entirely true to his real feelings when he addressed his "teacher" or "lord and master," as the case may be, with words of such extreme praise? We know that the enjoyment of humor was not merely an occasional tendency in Proust but rather a permanent trait, which expressed itself in several different ways: mimicry was one, which in literary terms became the delicious parodies and pastiches that appear in PJ and that characterized every phase of Proust's literary experience. Painter considers Proust's parodies to be "the funniest and most profound in the French language."[201] They are the equal, I think, of Joyce's superb parodies of various English writers in Ulysses. In fact, the comic spirit is never far from Proust's writing; it hovers around even the most tender moments in his fictions. Ironic jibes at his own foibles and those of friends and enemies was another aspect of his sense of humor; his infectious giggling and laughter at dinner parties, which could be set off by almost any revelation of gaucherie or pretense that struck him as funny, was legendary in the world of the Parisian salons.

Another question that presents itself is: why was Proust so dogged

---

200 Proust's housekeeper, Céleste Albaret, seems to confirm our doubts about Proust's sincerity in paying such extreme homage to his older illustrious friend. She recalls the first time Proust received a letter from Montesquiou, probably in the mid 1890s, in the following way: "I remember how he laughed, brimming over with joy, the first time he received a letter from Montesquiou where he called him 'My little Marcel.' It wasn't the fact that he had arrived at this familiarity with Montesquiou that enchanted him or flattered him. No, that went along with everything he was telling me about the count. It was an inward laugh. For him, this letter was on the contrary the proof that he been able to captivate Montesquiou, that he had become Montesquiou's master, that Montesquiou would one day become aware that "little Marcel" was superior to him--which is, alas for count Robert and for his mortification, what happened." Céleste Albaret, Monsieur Proust, souvenirs recueillis par Greorges Belmont (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1973) 376.

201 In vol. II of his biography, Proust-The Later Years (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965) 99.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in his pursuit of friendships among the aristocrats? Was it because he had a genuine admiration for them, or did he need to gain their confidence in order to use what he learned in his writing? One wonders to what extent Proust, like many other writers, approached the society of his time--whether consciously or unconsciously is hard to say--as so much grist for his mill, as raw material for future literary projects. One of Proust's biographers, Alain Buisine, sees humor as but one manifestation of a "fundamental ambiguity" in everything he did and everything he wrote, whether fiction, letters, or socio-literary criticism. What was most characteristic of Proust, Buisine thinks, is that in all spheres of life and in all of his interpersonal relations, he was "at one and the same time the farthest from and the nearest to" whomever he was with.[202]

Two of young Proust's friends, Jacques-Emile Blanche and Fernand Gregh, add further complicating observations to the question of the budding writer's "sincerity" when mixing with his social superiors. Concerning the small group of aristocrats whom Proust liked to call "the young dukes," Blanche believes, on the one hand, that he invited them to "his famous literary dinners" because he liked to rub shoulders with these avatars of the legitimist French aristocracy, but on the other hand that he "pretended" to be dazzled by them;[203] in other words, that he was playing a rather elaborate social game for reasons having to do with his "enigmatic" and "polymorphous" personality, terms used respectively by Daniel Halévy and Jacques Rivière in their recollections of Proust in the 1890s. For his part, Gregh was severely critical of his friend for his fawning behavior when in the presence of the nobility, yet he insists that Proust only "pretended" to be on his knees before the genius of Montesquiou. Basically, Gregh maintained, Proust's attitude was one of

---

202 Alain Buisine, Proust et ses lettres (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1983) 25.
203 Blanche, Mes Modèles, 103.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"admiration spiced with irony" towards titled people.[204] The admiration was genuine, but not unalloyed, and not really servile as some of Proust's critics claimed.

Tadié contributes two other observations that make one take a circumspect approach to Proust's social behavior in the 1890s. He stresses Proust's relentless questioning of everyone he spent time with, irrrespective of their social class or position. This kind of curiosity, together with the gimlet eye through which he observed the world around him, are not fully compatible with the behavior of someone whose only or primary goal is to impress his superiors and gain access to their drawing rooms.

On the basis of this and other aspects of Proust's attitude toward the social milieus he frequented in the 1890s, Carassus insists on his difference from such satirical novelists of high society at the time as Paul Bourget, Abel Hermant, Paul Hervieu, and Henri Lavedan. He insists also on Proust's moral superiority to these writers, whom he resembled only "superficially." We can grant the profound difference between the typical "worldly" social novels of the 1890s and the Recherche, where the doings and pastimes of the salon world are subjected to a thoroughgoing critique from a variety of perspectives, but to make such claims for Proust's writing in the 1890s is much harder to justify. Carassus is on the right track, in my view, when he speaks of the many instances in which Proust partook in and exemplified the manners and mores of the time; when he remarks that Proust's work "must assuredly be put back into that time of refinements and aesthetic crazes."[205] As we shall see, in PJ Proust

---

204 Gregh, Mon Amitié avec Marcel Proust 10. Gregh himself was not immune to the charm of the nobility. In L'Age d'or--souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse, 45 he confessed : "I still remember the name of one of my school-mates: Fontaine de Rambouillet. The name enchanted me by its sonority, and because of what it evoked." Gregh was probably alluding here to the celebrated château de Rambouillet situated in the forest that bears its name.

205 Carassus 536.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

probes the psyches of his aristocratic characters more deftly and sensitively than do his contemporaries, but he cannot really be detached from them as if he belonged to an entirely different literary universe.The relationship between a writer or artist of genius, such as Proust, and the surrounding socio-literary world is not one of incommensurable differences.

Two of Proust's writings published in Le Gaulois, the snobbish, semi-official organ of Parisian high society, offer a glimpse into how he viewed this glittery world in the mid-1890s. One is a piece he wrote on the extraordinary *fête* that Robert de Montesquiou hosted at his estate in Versailles on May 30, 1894; the other is a short article on how the banal remarks of concert goers managed to spoil the otherwise exquisite pleasure he had had in listening to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and several other orchestral works at the Conservatory of Music in early January of 1895.

Painter thinks that the *fête* of May 1894 was a crucial event in Proust's life, because it was there that he met for the first time many of the aristocratic salon hostesses of the faubourg Saint-Germain.[206] Montesquiou's biographer, Philippe Jullian, makes similar claims concerning the importance of this event to its host: "The great fête of 1894 at Versailles," Jullian writes, "seemed to Montesquiou the best of his lessons in Beauty; its success proved to him that he had a genius for parties." [207] Thus mentor and disciple were quite probably at one in perceiving this particular party as not just another in a series of social events but rather a unique occasion that showed off the wealth, finery and culture of Paris's upper crust to best advantage.

---

[206] Painter, vol. I, 179.

[207] Philippe Jullian, Robert de Montesquiou--a fin-de-siècle prince, trans. John Haylock and Francis King (London: Secker & Warburg, 1967) 188.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Proust's tone of voice throughout his description of the *fête* [208] is one of intense admiration, for here were gathered many of the most brilliant names among the Parisian nobility, and not just for the pleasures of witty conversation and delectable dining.[209] The main attraction was its musical and literary fare, which featured the pianist Léon Delafosse playing Bach and Chopin and Sarah Bernhardt, who shared a reading with two other actresses of the 1792 "Ode to Versailles" by André Chénier, written two years before the poet was guillotined on July 25, 1794. It is possible that Montesquiou chose this particular poem not only to celebrate Versailles but also to remind his guests that the *fête* was taking place almost exactly one hundred years after Chénier's death. In any case, Proust reminded his readers of Chénier's last years of life with his beloved "Fanny," and cited the first stanza of the poem read by the three actrices.

Among the artists and poets present were Maurice Barrès, Jean Béraud, Alphonse Daudet, Henri de Régnier, and Georges Rodenbach. Several of the host's favorite poems by François Coppée and Verlaine, and of course a few of his own poems, were read by Julia Bartet and Suzanne Reichenberg.[210] In the long list of invitees which Proust dutifully included in his piece, only five or six (apart from the poets and artists present) belonged to bourgeois families,

---

208 Under the rubric "Bloc-Notes Parisien," with the title "Une fête littéraire à Versailles" and signed Tout-Paris, the article has been positively identified as Proust's and included in Marcel Proust, CSB, 360-365. It appeared originally in Le Gaulois, May 31, 1894, 1.

209 As indicated by a letter he sent to Montesquoiu, Correspondance, t. 1, lxxviii, Proust was furious the day after his article in Le Gaulois appeared, since it had included a detailed appreciative description of dresses and gowns which the newspaper had excised. "What retarded, unpredicted, mysterious and clumsy hand corrected this article?", Proust exclaimed to his mentor. See CSB 882.

210 Suzanne Reichenberg (1853-1924) was for thirty years the leading ingénue at the Comédie-Française.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

among whom were the ubiquitous Madeleine Lemaire[211] and her daughter Suzette, at whose château in Seine-et-Marne Proust and Reynaldo Hann were to spend some happy days three months later. The two women's presence was no doubt due in part to their work as specialists in floral painting, which Montesquiou adored. Proust took pleasure in noting the flowers that were strewn with studied nonchalance on both sides of the path leading to the tent where the main events of the day were held. He described as well the Venetian lace and embroidery of the gowns and hats worn by the most prestigious female guests who arrived on the arms of their husbands, friends, and lovers. "The hall is full. And what a hall! The social elite of Paris!," Proust exclaimed, but not before paying tribute to the owner of the Versailles mansion, who had provided the residence, the floral décor, the Japanese hothouse with its rare flowers and birds, the manicured garden, the "sweet music" produced by an orchestral ensemble discreetly hidden in a nearby wooded area, and the "marvelous" improvised theatre above which, on a frieze, was the word *éphémère* , whose three syllables were Montesquiou's initials, but in reverse order (ef/em/err), FMR, in the aesthetisizing motto "Isn't everything beautiful and good ephemeral?" Proust delighted in such playful rearrangements of letters and words, as did his host.

After citing verses from three of Montesquiou's poems read by Sarah Bernhardt, and mentioning Delafosse's performance of a rhapsody by Liszt, Proust closed his piece with an almost nostalgic allusion to the reign of Louis XiV:

> It's over. The dream has ended. We have to return to Paris, where there is talk of a ministerial declaration, of interpellations

[211] Madeleine Lemaire, born Coll (1845-1928), was widely appreciated in Paris at the time, in part for her unusual devotion to roses, which she painted consantly, and in part because of her long time relationship with Alexandre Dumas fils, who helped her establish her salon, frequently the site of musical recitals and fancy dress parties.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> and other such things. With what a lovely memory and with what regret do we leave Versailles, the royal city, where, for several hours, we felt that we were living in the century of Louis the Great!

Proust customarily wrote in these years as both an "aristocratizing aesthete," to use Arno Mayer's phrase, and as an austere moralist, who condemned the very pleasures that gave him such exquisite delight. In this piece, we have only the aesthete.

The article titled "A Sunday at the Conservatory"[212] is of a different order, much more serious and reflective in tone, and more purely aesthetic in character, since in this case powerfully evocative music, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, provided an occasion to comment on how such creations briefly united people who otherwise had no connection with each other. In other words, art transforms mere juxtaposed existences into a cohesive collective spirit that lives for as long as the sounds of music fill the concert hall. For a short while, everyone in the audience was able to feel the inextricable bond between truth and beauty. But no sooner had the music ended than Proust's ears were offended by a woman seated near to him who asked her friend: "Do you want some candy?" The heroic enchantment of Beethoven's music was thus rudely dispelled, just as the party carefully arranged by Montesquiou had to end with an obligatory return to the city. Heading home from the concert with his brother and a friend, he noted that both men had already cast off the spell of the music, and were already thinking of their next apppointments.

Proust the cultivated journalist and observer of social gatherings and Proust the music lover and worshiper of truth and beauty were but two sides of the young writer who, in Pleasures and Days, was to reveal a fresh new literary talent to the world. It was a talent immediately appreciated by only a

---

[212] "Un dimanche au Conservatoire," CSB 367-372. The article appeared originally in Le Gaulois, January 14, 1895.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

select few, but it was one that gave sufficient reason to think that great accomplishments lay ahead.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Part Three

Literary and Ideological Crosscurrents in *Pleasures and Days*

Ch. 7 The Vicissitudes of a Text

Ch. 8 Problems of Structure, Unity, and Aesthetic Philosophy

Ch. 9 Elitism and the Primacy of the Spiritual

Ch. 10 A Profusion of Intertextuality

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter Seven

The Vicissitudes of a Text

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the main features of the six French editions of Les Plaisirs et les jours, and of the two English and two German editions[213] with a view to giving the reader an understanding of how critical trends and perspectives at various moments in the last one hundred years contributed to the ways in which Proust's early work has been presented to the public. Also of interest are some of the changes in typographical arrangement[214] in editions that followed the *editio princeps* of 1896 and the differences in titles of some of the individual pieces as well as of the book as a whole in the foreign-language editions.

My review of French and German editions should be read in relation to the larger aim of Part Three, which is to determine as precisely as possible what Proust's "little things," as he often called the close to sixty separate pieces that comprise PJ, can tell us about his conception of the world in the 1890s, and what they offer that is relevant to the socio-historical and ideological emphases of this study. The interactive relationship that exists between all literary texts and the society (or social group) within which and for which they are written is particularly important in the case of a work such as PJ, since before it appeared in book form many of its stories, prose poems, and sketches had either already been published or had circulated among writers and intellectuals associated with various Parisian literary periodicals. There is

---

213 See Works Cited, section B, for a partial listing of the foreign-language editions of PJ.

214 Typographical arrangements can influence the reader's sense of the author's thematic priorities, emphases and relationships.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

no doubt that PJ reflects and responds to many of the prevalent tastes and tendencies of its particular moment in historical time.[215] But some of this interaction between the author and a specific group of readers is hidden from view in the transition from one type of publishing framework to another and from one edition to the other. Moreover, Proust's intense exchanges of ideas over a three-year period (1893-1896) with many of his friends and colleagues concerning the practical as well as formal and aesthetic problems posed by a book such as PJ can only be appreciated by looking at materials such as inscriptions, dedications and letters. It is in these types of documents, as well as in the interstices of the work itself, that one can find the lines of connection between fictional or poetic writing and the social world of which it is a part.

The 1896 Deluxe Edition[216]

The "text" referred to in the title of this chapter is the first deluxe edition of PJ published on June 12, 1896 by Calmann-Lévy in Paris. This is the base text inasmuch as it is the only one corrected and authorized by Proust

---

[215] Two small examples are the March 1891 issue of Le Mercure de France, where G.-Albert Aurier's article on symbolism in painting is as close to what Proust had to say in the 1890s about ideas, art, and fetishism as can be found in contemporary thought: G.-Albert Aurier, "Le Symbolisme en peinture--Paul Gauguin," Le Mercure de France, March 1891,155-165; and the February 1892 issue of the same review where Saint-Pol-Roux's essay on "Magnificent Art" speaks of the differences between science and art and of the soul as the creator of art in terms that Proust often expressed in his critical writings and implicitly in his fictional works: Saint-Pol-Roux, "De l'art magnifique," Le Mercure de France, February 1892, 97-104. In my perusal of the reviews La Plume, Le Mercure de France, La Revue Blanche, La Gazette des Beaux Arts, and La Revue Hebdomadaire, I have found striking similarities between Proust's ideas and those of his fellow writers and intellectuals in the Paris of the 1890s. But of course it would be strange not to find them since we are talking about a relatively cohesive socio-literary world.

[216] Marcel Proust, Les Plaisirs et les jours (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1896), with original watercolor by Madeleine Lemaire, number 15 of twenty copies printed on Japanese Imperial Paper, BN Rés m_y^2 179. The pink watercolor of a rose appears just after the dedication. I have also looked at two other copies of the book, one printed on Chinese rice paper, BN Rés mZ 289, and a regular copy printed on supple shiny stock at the Manuscript and Rare Book division of the Columbia University Library. My description of the book in this chapter is based on a persual of all three copies.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

himself, together with the editorial staff of the publisher, and in close collaboration with Madeleine Lemaire, the book's illustrator, and Reynaldo Hahn, whose scores composed originally as musical settings for the four poems called "Portraits of Painters" were printed from photoengravings for the 1896 edition.[217] This first edition has never been reproduced, meaning that the effect Proust wanted to achieve with this format has been lost as a result of limitations imposed on publishers by technical and financial constraints, and perhaps by aesthetic judgments. On the other hand, some of the post-1896 editions have the merit of providing explanatory footnotes to numerous recondite textual allusions. In the 1971 Pléiade edition and the 1993 Laget edition, the reader will find some examples of variants that occurred when certain of the pieces were transferred from their first home in periodicals to their new abode in book form, as well as a smattering of the changes from the 1896 to the 1924 French editions.[218]

The 1896 edition is strongly characterized by its pictorial features due entirely to the hand of Madeleine Lemaire. It consists mainly of rather insipid pen and ink drawings that serve the purpose of illustrating characters,

---

[217] In his excellent study of Proust's "Portraits de Peintres" J. Theodore Johnson notes that Hahn's four pieces were reproduced in the 1896 edition not in the printed form in which they had first appeared in the folio album published by Au Ménestrel (Heugel Publishers) but rather in manuscript form, "no doubt an attempt to carry out even further the theme of 'sketches' that dominates this book both in the literary fragments by Proust and in the emblematic vignettes by Madeleine Lemaire." J. Theodore Johnson, "Proust's Early *Portraits de Peintres*," Comparative Literature Studies, Vol. IV, No. 4, 1967, 400.

Hahn took the task of fitting his music to the nuances of thought and feeling in the poems with great seriousness. He provided expressive instructions to the pianist, such as "a bit heavy like the croupe of Flemish horses" for the piano accompaniment to the poem on Albert Cuyp, and "with elegance and melancholy," which he felt was appropriate to the lives of the men depicted in the poem on Anton Van Dyck. The "Portraits de peintres" appeared originally in Le Gaulois, June 21, 1895, 2.

[218] I had intended originally to include in this chapter a sampling of the variants occurring from one handwritten manuscript to another, and of those that occurred in the transition from the "pre-original" texts that appeared in periodicals ("pre-original" is the term used for these writings by Larkin Price) to their appearance in the 1896 and subsequent editions of PJ. But this analysis broke the continuity of the chapter. Readers will find it instead in appendices A and B.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

places and things mentioned in the stories and prose poems. The book is oversized, eleven and a half inches high and eight inches wide, and has a pale green cover adorned with barely visible irises on the left and right sides. The lettering of Proust's name and the title on the cover, separated only by a small floral colophon, are framed within a rectangular background that itself suggests a painting set inside a frame.

More significant in terms of the initial inspiration for the book and the identity of the illustrator is the drawing on the inside title page of a château, no doubt Lemaire's Château de Réveillon, which appears on the frontispiece surrounded by stately pine trees. Another drawing of the château, but seen from a greater distance, and with a large iron gate topped by a crown and coat of arms, appears at the end of the book..The fact that the book opens and closes with drawings of the château has led some Proust scholars--notably Bernard Gicquel and Pierre Daum-- to divine a symbolic design in them, signifying a comprehensive "circular" order that Proust wanted to give to this collection of what had originally been scattered writings.

On the first of three pages that precede the preface we are informed that the copy of PJ which the ordinary reader has in his hands is not among the fifty separately printed copies (twenty of which have silk-embroidered covers) not intended for commercial distribution: thirty numbered copies printed on Chinese rice paper and twenty on Imperial Japanese paper, all containing an original watercolor by Madeleine Lemaire. These are in all likelihood the copies which Proust gave and inscribed to many of his friends. The fine paper and the drawings strongly suggest that the book itself was conceived as a work of art in its own right; it was a typically 1890s testimonial to the three sister muses of literature, painting and music, a relationship especially

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

dear to the hearts of Proust and Reynaldo Hahn. But to these three muses we should add a fourth, Thalia, the muse of comedy, present in a subterranean way throughout the book but plainly evident in the fourteen mainly satirical portraits of Parisian sophisticates Proust called "Fragments de comédie italienne," (Fragments from Italian Comedy), the last of which is titled "Personnages de la comédie mondaine," (Actors in the Comedy of Society, or Characters in the Comedy of Society), a faint echo of Balzac's "Human Comedy."

Following a three-page preface by Anatole France is Proust's five-page dedication to his recently deceased friend Willie Heath, which is set off from the rest of the text by its italics font. The dedication is headed by a drawing of books and manuscripts interspersed with pansies that recalls the same motif on the written text's last page, again pointing to the idea of symbolic and unifying "correspondences." A drawing of a dove with olive branch marks the end of the dedication. One wonders whether Proust thought of his book as a gesture on behalf of peace and harmony. The last paragraph of the last piece in the collection, a short story titled "The End of Jealousy," is a Tolstoyan appeal for human fellowship and reconciliation. The story's protagonist, Honoré de Lenvres, lies on his deathbed. The imminence of death has at last delivered him from years of tormenting jealousy. The young woman who has been the object of his jealousy, Françoise, speaks to him:

> Weeping at the foot of his bed, she murmured the loveliest of their former words: "My country, my brother." But having neither the desire nor the force to undeceive her, he only smiled and thought that his "country" was no longer in Françoise but in the sky and throughout the entire earth. In his heart he whispered, "My brothers," and if he looked at her more than at the others it was only out of pity, because of the flood of tears she shed before his eyes; his eyes that soon would close and that could no longer weep. But he did not love her more than he loved the doctor, the old relatives, the servants, and not differently. And

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

this was the end of his jealousy.[219]

The fact that the opening story of PJ, "The Death of Baldassare Silvande, Viscount of Sylvania," also ends with an epiphanic death scene in the manner of Tolstoy, supports the conjecture that Proust arranged his book in such a way as to give the reader a feeling of completeness and of a unifying principle of order governing otherwise disparate materials.

Among the more important of the sixty-odd drawings illustrating various characters, scenes and objects in PJ are a profile portrait of Baldassare Silvande looking emaciated and wanly aristocratic; a young woman seated on a patio gazing out at the sea, depicting the protagonist of "Violante, or Worldly Vanities;" the figure of Harlequin holding a sign that says "Fragments from Italian Comedy;" a drawing of the famed commedia dell'arte character Pantalone at the end of "Fragments;" a group of people talking animatedly at a dinner table, one of whom is the young Proust, for the story "A Dinner in Society;" and two women seated on a park bench, with a pond and two swans in the background, for "The Confession of a Young Girl," a story which parallels events in Proust's own life to a remarkable extent.

The writings of PJ are presented in the following order: two short stories, "The Death of Baldassare Silvande, Viscount of Sylvania" and "Violante, or WorldlyVanities;" twelve society portraits dealing mainly with snobbery which form the "Fragments from Italian Comedy;" a dialogue between the two Flaubertian characters Bouvard and Pécuchet about society and music; a short story called "The Melancholy Summer of Madame de Breyves;" eight "Portraits of Painters and Musicians" in rhymed alexandrine verses; two short stories, "A Dinner in Society" and "A Young Girls's Confession;" a miscellany of

---

219 Marcel Proust, Pleasures and Days and other writings, ed. F.W. Dupee , trans. Louise Varese, Gerard Hopkins and Barbara Dupee (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1957) 161-162.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

thirty short narratives, sketches, and impressionistic prose-poetic descriptions titled (in the English translation) "Regrets, Reveries, Changing Skies;" and a concluding short story, "The End of Jealousy."

All of these sixty-odd pieces, thirty-one of which appeared previously in periodicals, were written between 1891 and 1895, but they are not presented in chronological order. For example, the opening short story, "The Death of Baldassare Silvande," was written in the latter part of 1894 and published in La Revue Hebdomadaire on October 31, 1895, while some of the pieces in "Regrets" in the penultimate section of the volume, such as "A Family Listening to Music" and "The Sea," were written in 1892. Consequently, Proust was interested in criteria of placement other than chronology. What these might have been is discussed in chapter eight.

Calmann-Lévy did what it could to launch the book, prompted not only by its desire to recoup at least what it had spent on producing it but also by Proust's repeated prodding.[220] On June 9, 1896 Le Gaulois announced the imminent publication of PJ, stressing the Lemaire drawings as an added enticement to its readers, and Le Figaro published Anatole France's preface to the book. On June 13 another newspaper, Le Temps, highlighted precisely those aspects of PJ that amused some of Proust's friends and offended others: the *grand luxe* appearance of the book, its "charming" drawings, its cachet of

---

220 Such prodding was a prominent feature of Proust's correspondence from 1894 to the early part of1896. Lemaire agreed to illustrate the volume in November 1893, but was unable to begin work because Proust had not yet found a publisher. In that same month he wrote his friend Robert de Billy that "this year" he was planning to publish a "collection" of his writings. A year and a half later, in May 1895, perhaps despairing of ever seeing his "little things" in book form, Proust wrote to Lemaire asking her to help him persuade Arthur Meyer, the director of Le Gaulois, to publish some of his writings in that newspaper. Uncertainties about how and when the book would be published bothered Proust until the late spring of 1896, only a few months before the appearance of the book in June.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

sophisticated literary elegance.[221] Indeed, the book was placed on sale at 13.5 francs per copy, four to five times as much as the price of an ordinary book, thereby assuring that only a tiny elite of potential readers could afford to purchase it. In December 1896, after six months of failed efforts to interest the reading public, the publisher tried another tack, and offered it in the December 15th issue of La Revue de Paris as "a lovely Christmas gift." But the book was destined to remain a collector's item for almost thirty years. In 1918, of the original print run of 1500 copies, only 329 had been sold. It took Proust's posthumous fame as author of the Recherche and the publication of a new inexpensive edition in 1924, to begin to move PJ out of the publisher's warehouse. By 1927, Gallimard, which had acquired the rights from Calmann-Lévy, was putting on sale the 35th reprinting of PJ. Laget estimates that about 18,000 copies were sold in three years.

French Editions from 1924 to 1993

The second 1924 edition of PJ[222] , published by Gallimard, was presented to the reader as a "reprint" of the first 1896 edition and as having been "decided upon and prepared during the author's lifetime." But as already

---

[221] Larkin Price cites a stinging comment by Henri Jourdan in 1924 (reminiscent of Jean Lorrain's remarks in Le Journal of July 1, 1896 and February 3, 1897 reprinted in the 1993 Laget edition of PJ, 294-296 which provoked Proust to challenge him to a duel), that conveys what some people, among whom were a few of Proust's friends, thought of PJ. Shortly after the publication of the second 1924 edition of the book, Jourdan examined the 1896 edition and wrote: "I have under scrutiny the large in-quarto with a pale green cover. On this shiny paper, on these anemic flowers by Madeleine Lemaire, and these dreamy figures, on all this platitude of colors and forms, amidst the fleeting handwriting of Reynaldo Hahn, on this world swooning and swollen with sighs, I see passing before me the images of the Revue Blanche and that hothouse atmosphere which Anatole France described in his preface, where sickly orchids live." Larkin Price, "Materials for a Critical Edition of Marcel Proust's Les Plaisirs et les jours," diss, University of Michigan,1965, 67.

[222] The copy I used is Les Plaisirs et les jours, 18th edition (Paris: Gallimard, Édition de la Nouvelle Revue Française, 1924).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

mentioned, the supplementary "framing" items were not included in this or in any of the subsequent editions. Larkin Price is inclined to think that Proust did not supervise the editorial process in the early 1920s, since the changes made from the 1896 edition were all minor and insignificant.[223]

The 1935 and 1950 reprints of PJ appeared respectively as volume nine of Proust's Œuvres complètes[224] and as an independently published work.[225] One notes an attempt to give the book a more attractive appearance in 1935. The cover has a pink background, while the letters of the title, and the letters NRF (standing for Nouvelle Revue Française) are set off between light shades of brown and red. The book's size, six by nine inches, goes part of the way to restoring the book's original imposing stature.

Both the 1971 Pléiade edition prepared by Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre and the1993 paperback edited by Thierry Laget are milestones in the history of Proust studies. Both volumes benefited from the discovery and recovery of Proust materials unavailable to scholars before the mid-1950s, and from the considerable amount of illuminating scholarship and criticism done after 1950 by Bernard Gicquel (1960), Larkin Price (1965), Philip Kolb (an indefatigable researcher into the arcana of Proust studies, and editor of the multi-volume Plon edition of the Correspondence to whom all Proust scholars owe an enormous debt), Emilien Carassus (1966), Ninette Bailey (1966), J. Theodore Johnson (1967), Anne Henry (1973 and 1983), Paola Placella (1976), Luzius Keller (1987 and 1988), Renée A. Kingcaid (1992), and Pierre

---

223 Price 156-157.

224 Œuvres complètes de Marcel Proust, tome 9, Les Plaisirs et les jours (Paris: Gallimard, 1935). The copy I consulted is marked BN 8 Y2 75585 (9)

225 Marcel Proust, Les Plaisirs et les jours (Paris: Gallimard, 1950).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Daum (1993),[226] not to speak of the host of scholars whose work on other aspects of Proust's life and writings throw light on PJ. The deeper Proust scholarship probed the origins, form and purposes of his major work the more it became possible to look at his earlier writings with a sense of the essential continuity linking the period from the 1880s to the great turning point in Proust's life, the year 1908, when he began to compose the Recherche.

Both volumes provide wide-ranging introductory essays and the kind of critical apparatus that is necessary for an adequate understanding of a book as saturated in literary history and as filled with obscure but often significant allusions as PJ.

In the Pléiade edition PJ appears together with Jean Santeuil,[227] the unfinished novel that Proust worked on intermittently for about five years, from 1895 to 1900. As far as the text is concerned, Sandre explains in a brief note (909-910) that he and his colleagues had examined the voluminous Proust materials at the Bibliothèque Nationale to check on the degree of correspondence between the first typewritten manuscripts and slip-proofs and the definitive edition of 1896. The only discrepancy they found was in the order in which a few of the pieces appeared in 1896 compared with the place they occupied in the proof pages. Otherwise, they did not find a single correction in Proust's hand on either the typescripts or the proofs. However, Sandre took the liberty of "modifying the punctuation and the spelling" of the original edition, mindful of the need for "prudence and coherence" in such an editorial

---

226 Readers will find the titles of critical works on PJ written by these and other scholars in the List of Works cited.

227 Marcel Proust, Jean Santeuil précédé de Les Plaisirs et les jours, ed. Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

intervention.[228] They also corrected some "obvious typographical errors" in the 1896 edition. But Laget notes that the 1971 edition repeats some of the many errors in the 1924 edition, while correcting others. In at least one instance, he observes, the Pléiade editors did not catch a rather important error stemming from a misreading or misinterpretation of what Proust was trying to say in his dedicatory remarks, where they have him say "I have never depicted immortality except among human beings with a delicate conscience" whereas what Proust was talking about was "immorality."

The two features of the 1971 edition worthy of comment are the introductory "Notice" (901-909) and the notes and variants furnished at the end of the volume. These are so detailed and lengthy that it would have been impossible to place them on the same page as the passages to which they refer.

After saying that it is no longer possible to consider PJ as an insignificant work of Proust's youth, Sandre speaks of the elements joining it to the Recherche. He alludes to Proust's penchant for symbolizations and poetic stylization, his predilection for certain "impressionist" themes like flowers, boats, clouds, and the sea, his deep interest in the mores of upper crust society, and his concern with "the counterpoint of death and time." Sandre is favorable to the structural approach taken to PJ by Bernard Gicquel in his influential 1960 essay. I think that PJ does have a structural coherence and unity, but that this is a less important unifying element than the philosophical vantage point from which Proust wrote the miscellany of pieces that comprise PJ. The book's real

---

[228] In Appendix B the reader will find a listing and brief analysis of some of the differences in punctuation and wording between the story "La Mort de Baldassare Silvande, vicomte de Sylvanie" in La Revue Hebdomadaire and as it is printed in the 1971 Pléiade edition. Many of these changes are documented in the 1971 edition, 912-916. The 1971 edition reproduces the changes in citations, proper names, and a few other elements as they took place from the "pre-original" text to the 1896 edition, but it also makes additional changes worthy of note.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

unity lies in its point of view, its network of ideas and its psychological insights into the problems of human existence.

Laget's introduction to the 1993 paperback[229] is, I think, more critically astute than its counterpart in the 1971 edition. Its account of Proust's early years and his associations with a variety of literary groups is excellent, and his summary of the stages through which the planning and publication of PJ had to go takes advantage of recent scholarship to good effect. He connects the book to several contemporary trends, and offers his own views on the structuralist readings popular since the 1960s. But in this respect he tends to sound a little vague when he attempts to gather a miscellany of texts into a more or less solid thematic framework.

In addition to excellent notes, the Laget edition provides an even more exhaustive commentary than does the Pléiade, adding to that a convenient chronology of Proust's life, a listing of the original dates and places of publication, and excerpts from reviews of PJ written soon after its publication which offer a useful cross section of critical opinion at the time.[230]

English and German Editions

The two English editions of PJ, the first published in 1948 (and reissued in 1986), the second in 1957,[231] have no critical apparatus whatever,

---

229 Marcel Proust, Les Plaisirs et les Jours suivi de L'Indifférent et autres textes, ed. Thierry Laget (Paris: Gallimard, 1993).

230 These are by Paul Perret, Édouard Rod, Léon Blum, Charles Maurras, and Jean Lorrain (pseudonym of Paul Duval). Maurras's review is the most positive, and also one of the most perceptive, although it has been suggested that Maurras, future leader of the rightwing movement Action Française, was currying Proust's favor for political reasons. The volume also includes an appreciative posthumous commentary by André Gide.

231 Marcel Proust, Pleasures and Regrets, trans. Louise Varese, with preface by D.J. Enright (London: Peter Owen, translation copyright 1948, preface copyright1986).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

but both do have informative and perceptive introductions by D. J. Enright and F.W. Dupee. Enright picks up on the theme of "decadence" sounded by Anatole France in his preface, where the latter speaks of the "hothouse atmosphere" that permeates PJ. This is an aspect of the book which an American Proust scholar, Renée A. Kingcaid, has done most to develop in recent years. But Enright also points out the original and distinctive features of PJ, maintaining that "it is wrong to suppose that Pleasures and Regrets is interesting only for its prefigurements of Remembrance of Things Past, or as the otherwise negligible juvenilia of someone who later achieved fame."

For his part, Dupee offers a more thoroughgoing review of the book's literary characteristics, among which, anticipating the Recherche, is its remarkable array of genres. He suggests that one of Proust's aims in this early work was to answer Mallarmé's call for a comprehensive "Book of Life" that would "embrace all experience and all literary forms." Another fertile theme touched upon by Dupee concerns the "abstract" nature of Proust's stories, their tendency to take on the colors of "symbolist fables." He also comments suggestively on the reasons why Proust borrowed the title of his collection from the Greek poet Hesiod's Works and Days.

Important parts of the original French edition were excised.from both English-language editions. Not only are the drawings and musical scores absent, for obvious reasons, but both lack the vitally important dedication to Willie Heath, and the eight poems on painters and composers. These defects are virtually tantamount to a misrepresentation of Proust's artistic intentions.. As for the quality of the translations, they seem competent, even though they sometimes miss the musical and evocative qualities of Proust's prose.

The first German edition of PJ, translated by Ernst Weiß and titled

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Tage der Freuden (Days of Pleasures), appeared in 1926,[232] and was reprinted with the same title in 1965 and 1985. Like the two English editions, it lacked the dedication and the poems. The other German translation, edited and translated by Luzius Keller with great diligence and attention to detail in both the introduction and in the notes, appeared in 1988 with the title Freuden und Tage, an exact translation of the French original.[233]

Keller places PJ in the context of "the literary and ideological currents" of the late nineteenth century. He insists on his belief that the single pieces in their original form underwent a fundamental change when they appeared together in the 1896 edition, that they acquired thereby "a new shape and meaning." Whether he is correct in assuming that Proust already had a book in mind when he wrote his first youthful pieces is difficult to say. There is no hard evidence to support this opinion. We know only that he began to plan for their publication in a single volume in the summer of 1893, and that he spent the next three years looking for a publisher and revising some of the writings he planned to include in the collection.

The notes in the Keller edition are especially useful for what they tell us about the epigraphs and about the names of Proust's characters..This edition has the distinction of having restored the dedication and the poems to their rightful place in the volume.[234]

The question of the book's original French title and its English and German translations is more complicated than one might think. As already indicated, the title that Proust had originally chosen for the book was Le

---

232 Marcel Proust, Tage der Freuden, trans. Ernst Weiß (Berlin: Proplyäen Verlag, 1926).

233 Marcel Proust, Freuden und Tage und andere Erzählungen und Skizzen aus den Jahren 1892-1896, trans. Luzius Keller (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988).

234 The poems are rendered in prose translations. Keller also includes a bibliography and an index of names. Like other translations of PJ, the 1988 German edition includes some of Proust's early writings that were excluded from the collection.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Château de Réveillon, which from an autobiographical point of view, as a reminder of Proust's close relationships with both Madeleine Lemaire and Reynaldo Hahn, is much more revealing than the one he eventually chose by mid-April, 1896, Les Plaisirs et les jours. Laget claims that it was Lemaire herself who persuaded Proust to use the name of her château. In any event, a preliminary set of proofs dated March 20, 1896 still has the former title. Proust's resolution of the problem, coming only two months before the book's publication, suggests the possibility that he gave up his first choice reluctantly, shifting from a title that conveyed a strong sense of place and an already nostalgic recollection of golden days to one drawn from a classical source, Hesiod's Works and Days (written in the 8th century B.C.), which he used as a form of ironic contrast (for readers with a classical education) with the shallow pleasures and fruitless obsessions depicted in his own work. Anatole France (or as some think Mme Arman de Caillavet, née Léontine Lippmann) was the first to allude to the classical source of Proust's title in his (or her) preface to the volume. Since France signed and dated the preface, I shall credit it to him.

The replacement of "works" with "pleasures" is noteworthy in view of the fact that none of the protagonists of Proust's fictions in PJ live by any visible form of labor. They make love, go to parties, stay up late at night, worry obsessively about the meaning of their lives, suffer torments of jealousy, and die, sometimes quite dramatically, but they do not work.[235] The only people who work for their bread in PJ are a few coachmen and domestic servants, a musician in "The Melancholy Summer of Madame de Breyves," and young Honoré in "Violante, or Worldly Vanities," who abandons Violante to sign on to a merchant ship for a long tour of duty. But PJ has something else in common with

[235] A propos of Proust's characters who do not work, Robert Sayre said it well, in an observation about the Recherche that can be said equally about PJ: "The characters of Proust's world--both grand bourgeois and nobles--have no productive relation to the functioning society." Sayre 93.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Hesiod's poem: its awareness of the decline and decadence of the contemporary world, and its implicit belief that drastic measures would have to be taken to rectify an appalling moral laxity among the citizenry. Proust's writing, like Hesiod's, has a didactic aim.[236] I agree with Germaine Brée, who argued that Proust retained Hesiod's moral intent but that onto the Greek's classical didacticism he superimposed Judeo-Christian values and ways of looking at the moral life. If looked at from this perspective, she said, several of the stories in PJ could be read fruitfully as allegories.[237]

In view of this link with Hesiod's epic, although we might tend to favor the title Pleasures and Regrets of the 1948 English edition as being closer to the prevalent state of mind of Proust's characters, and more in harmony with Proust's own attitude toward love, jealousy and regret, the fact remains that any title other than Pleasures and Days strays too far from the author's intention. "Days" are seen in relation to "Pleasures" by Proust, while they were seen by Hesiod in relation to "Works." The differences and the similarities are crucial for understanding how the title connects with the main characteristcs of the Proustian vision in PJ.

As for the two German editions, I think that Weiß's translation Tage der Freuden, although hinting at something of what Proust intended--namely days given over to the pursuit of pleasure--loses the force of the *relational*

---

236 The text of Hesiod I have consulted is Homeric Hymns-Epic Cycle-Homerica, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, first published 1914).

237 Brée 41. Commenting on the second and fourth sections of Works and Days, xviii-xix, Evelyn-White makes a few observations that fit PJ equally well. "At first sight," he writes, "such a work seems to be a miscellany of myths, technical advice, moral precepts, and folklore maxims without any unifying principle; and critics have readily taken the view that the whole is a cento of fragments or short poems worked up by a redactor. Very probably Hesiod used much material of a far older date, just as Shakespeare used the Gesta Romanorum, old chronicles, and old plays; but close inspection will show that the Works and Days has a real unity and that the picturesque title is somewhat misleading. The poem has properly no technical object at all, but is moral: its real aim is to show men how best to live in a difficult world. So viewed the four seemingly independent sections will be found to be linked together in a real bond of unity."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

emphasis in Proust's title, so that the "Days" or the passing of time are obscured by locking days and pleasures in such a tight embrace. Therefore Keller's choice of Freuden und Tage was a necessary one.

There is a feeling of world weariness in Proust's title, of time passing in endless repetitive gestures, which Samuel Beckett caught nicely in his 1931 essay on Proust. "Proust's creatures," Beckett wrote, " . . . .are victims of this predominating condition and circumstance--Time; . . . .There is no escape from the hours and the days. Neither from tomorrow nor from yesterday."[238] Proust shows us that the escape into pleasures[239] does not cure the *taedium vitae* of his upper class characters, it only exacerbates their despair. This is why he turned to Thomas à Kempis's Imitation of Christ for several of his epigraphs in PJ.

---

238 Samuel Beckett, Proust (New York: Grove Press, 1970, first published in 1931) 2.

239 It is conceivable that the word "pleasure" in the title of Proust's book was influenced by Gabriele D'Annunzio's 1892 novel Il Piacere, which was widely known in France. Its description of the joys and sorrows of a young Roman aristocrat also had its moral as well as aesthetic purposes. Peter Gay's recent study of the bourgeois experience before and during the *belle époque* is aptly titled Pleasure Wars (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1998), alluding to the great transformation in work and in leisure life styles that marked the second half of the nineteenth century..

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter Eight

Problems of Structure, Unity and Aesthetic Philosophy

The critical debate about the extent to which PJ can be considered a structured, unified whole rather than a patchwork of miscellaneous pieces is of interest to me insofar as it helps to illuminate the ideological and socio-historical questions with which this study is chiefly concerned. In other words, my interest in this debate does not stem from a commitment to the methodological precepts of structuralism[240] in and for themselves but instead from a belief that the way a writer organizes and arranges the material of a fictional work can and often does reveal much about the point of view from which s/he has embarked on the task of writing.

Generally speaking, it would be surprising if this early work were not to display some signs of conscious planning and organization, given Proust's lifelong preoccupation with such matters. He always paid careful attention to how the parts of his various writings related to the whole and the whole to the parts. Gicquel picks up on precisely this aspect of Proust's mind in pointing out the book's "circular" form, and others have noted its many

---

240 In Structuralist Poetics--Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), Jonathan Culler identified the aim of structuralist analysis as being the setting of conditions that make criticism possible, that is, its clarification of those features of a literary work that allow for the exploration of its meaning. An aspect of Culler's approach that is relevant to the relationship between structure on the one hand, and meaning on the other, emerges in the chapter "Convention and Naturalization," which concerns the traits that make a writing literary, that give it the qualities distinguishing it from non-literary writings and utterances. Culler notes that "the distinction between speech and writing becomes the source of the fundamental paradox of literature: we are attracted to literature because it is obviously something other than ordinary communication; its formal and fictional qualities bespeak a strangeness, a power, an organization, a permanence which is foreign to ordinary speech. Yet the urge to assimilate that power and permanence or to let that formal organization work upon us requires us to make literature into a communication, to reduce its strangeness, and to draw upon supplementary conventions which enable it, as we say, to speak to us." (134)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"correspondences," to which I shall return later in this chapter. Proust often felt misunderstood by those who failed to grasp the degree to which he had moulded and shaped his material, in order to suit it to a definite point of view based on certain principles and "laws" of life. It would be odd if this trait were not to manifest itself at all in his earlier work, from the time in the summer of 1893 when he decided to gather his scattered writings into a single volume.

Another consideration of a general nature has to do with the philosophy and esthetics of symbolism, which exerted a strong influence on young Proust, despite his critical distance from it as a school of literary theory and practice. Symbolism's "gospel of correspondences" between the material and the spiritual worlds is a powerful current in Proust's writing. He was an eager disciple of the idea that there is a hidden cosmic order to which the affairs of the earthly human domain are somehow organically connected. His conception of nature as animated by mysterious forces to which the artist was compelled to respond is evident in many of the prose poems of PJ. Proust was also sensitive to the ability of metaphorical language to provide access to the deepest layers of the human psyche. Such language opened up a pathway to truth that was independent and autonomous vis-à-vis traditional logic. The techniques of musical composition were also important to Proust. Pierre Costil makes reference to this in his analysis of how "musical construction" became an active force in Proust's evolving "aesthetic of [literary] composition." [241]

There is also evidence that some important personal concerns and values were at stake for Proust in the publication and critical reputation of PJ. On February 3, 1897 Jean Lorrain published an article on PJ in Le Journal to supplement a review he had written the previous year making fun of the book's "precious and pretentious" style. This time he broadened his critique by

---

241 Pierre Costil, "La Construction musicale de la Recherche, Part I, " BSAP, No. 8, 1958, 489.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

alluding to Proust's personal relationships. The Anatole France preface to the book amused him and he predicted that "Proust's next preface would come from another eminent novelist, Alphonse Daudet, who was quite incapable of resisting the solicitations of his son."[242] The son Lorrain referred to was Lucien Daudet, Proust's lover at the time. Offended by these insinuations, Proust immediately challenged Lorrain to a duel (Lorrain was also homosexual, which made his remarks doubly injurious). The ritual armed encounter took place in the Bois de Meudon, at the Ermitage de Villebon, on February 6, 1897. Seconded by Gustave de Borda and the painter Jean Béraud, Proust acquitted himself with a bravery and *sang-froid* which Reynaldo Hahn, noting Proust's accomplishment in his diary, said "do not surprise me at all." [243]

It may be that both men, inexperienced in the use of guns, stood little chance of striking their target or merely fired into the air. One could even argue that they did not really have to duel at all, just pretend to do so. The fact remains, however, that Proust faced an opponent who was positioned at close range, and who could easily have killed him without suffering any legal repercussions. Moreover, in a letter to Lucien Daduet written on the same day as the duel, Proust was uncustomarily direct and laconic: "My dear little one, I wasn't touched nor was Lorrain although my bullet landed almost at his right foot."[244] This leads me to believe that he was fully prepared to die to protect his honor and to defend the integrity of his literary efforts. I would think that his motives were not dissimilar from those that led him to come to the defense of Dreyfus. In certain circumstances, he could feel as offended by insults to another person as he was to those directed against himself. The duel was

---

[242] Barker 71.

[243] Hahn, Notes (Journal d'un musicien) 54.

[244] Proust, Mon cher petit 130.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

among the experiences of his life in which Proust appropriated "the heroic ideal" he had discovered in his student days in the tragedies of Pierre Corneille. (See ch. 3)That it was also an act which could earn him the respect of a socio-literary milieu he valued highly cannot be discounted. This is how he spoke of the incident about ten years later, as recalled by his housekeeper, Céleste Albaret:

> Poor mother! She didn't want me to go. Nor did many other ladies either. But this man had offended me and no one encouraged me to do it; it was I alone who wanted this duel. Jean Lorrain was jealous of the preface that Anatole France had written for my book Les Plaisirs et les jours; he claimed that it was nothing but a salon-like favor to a young socialite suffering the pains of literary ambitions. We exchanged two bullets in the forest of Meudon. [245]

This recollection, if accurate, bespeaks an impulse to distinguish himself as a man of courage and honor who resisted the counsel of several women in his life, mainly his mother, who advised him to avoid the confrontation. He seems to have been anxious to disprove once and for all the gossip that categorized him as "effeminate."[246]

On the lighter side, but no less significant for what it tells us about Proust's literary intentions and ambitions in the 1890s, was his reaction to a skit titled "The Laurel Trees are Cut Down." This little play was part of an amateur theatrical performance in which a close friend of Proust, Léon Yeatman, imitated his voice and mannerisms with such precision that he rivaled Proust's talent for mimicry. Thus Proust was the butt of a lampooning which did not strike him as funny at all and which he resented. According to several of his friends, he was

---

[245] Céleste Albaret, Monsieur Proust--Souvenirs recueillis par Georges Belmont (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1973) 195-196.

[246] Douglas W. Alden thought that Proust's challenge to Lorrain was not surprising in a young man who "at the time took feudal society seriously" (by which Alden probably meant certain values of feudal society, such as personal honor and physical courage). See Alden, "Proust's Duel," Modern Language Notes, 58 (2), February 1938, 104-106.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

unable to comprehend the play's humor. But this does not seem a sufficient reason to explain his reaction of hurt and disbelief that his friends could make him the victim of such banal mockery. More was at stake, I think, issues that went much closer to the bone than mere incomprehension or hurt pride.

The amateur play[247] was performed on three evenings, from March 18 to 20, 1897, at the home of Jacques Bizet on the Quai Bourbon. Bizet was co-author with Robert Dreyfus. Larkin Price says that it attracted an "upper crust" audience. The play concerned the literary activities of several members of the Lycée Condorcet circle during the preceding year. Proust was not the only one to be lampooned. In any event, Bizet, Dreyfus and Fernand Gregh had often twitted Proust about the cost of PJ, and it was this aspect of the book which they accented in their skit. One part of it, which features Proust, played by Yeatman, a young man, played by Ernest La Jeunesse, and Fernand Gregh, playing himself, reads as follows:

> Proust: "Have you read my book?"
> A youth: "No, sir. It is too expensive."
> Proust: "Alas! That is what everyone says. And you, Gregh, have you read it?"
> Gregh: "I cut it in pieces in order to review it."
> Proust: "And did you find it too expensive as well?"
> Gregh: "Not at all. There is a lot for the money."
> Proust: "Isn't there? A preface by M. France, 4 francs. Pictures by Madeleine Lemaire, 4 francs. Music by Reynaldo Hahn, 4 francs. Prose by me, 1 franc. Verse by me, 50 centimes. Total, 13 francs 50.
> "Surely not too much?"
> Youth: "But, sir, there is much more than that in the Hachette Almanac, and that costs only 25 sous."

Instead of being amused by the skit, which he heard about from friends since he did not attend the performance, Proust was pained and indignant, according to almost all of his biographers. Why was this the case?

---

[247] Barker 72-3; Price 64, 95-6; Leon 85-86.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Renée Kingcaid provides a possible explanation.

Kingcaid sees the publication of PJ as "an important first gamble" on the part of young Proust to convince his parents, especially his father, of the feasibility of a literary career.[248] Her main point, put bluntly, is that what he feared most of all was literary impotence and premature death. Since the age of nine, he had suffered debilitating asthma attacks, to which he refers frequently in his letters. He was haunted by the thought that this illness would prevent him from realizing his literary aspirations, an especially burdensome fear for a person who saw the creation of a work of art as the summit of human endeavor. Since 1891 he had submitted to his parents' will by following a course in law, which led to a degree in 1895, but the practice of law or of an associated profession was never a realistic life choice for him. Yet what other prospects were there, if a career in literature and philosophy, the two fields which he felt he was born to cultivate, turned out to be illusory? Some of this anxiety may explain why he made such an intense effort to mobilize a wide network of friends and colleagues to stimulate interest in PJ. What all of this amounts to in practical terms is that the close to three years Proust spent finding a publisher, working with Madeleine Lemaire and Reynaldo Hahn, inducing Anatole France to write a preface to the book and recommend it to publishers, and giving advanced notice of his writings by publishing them in Parisian journals, were years of travail, of anxiety over his future which the publication of PJ somewhat allayed.

Proust referred several times to PJ as a book of "little pieces" without serious claims on the reader's attention. But this typically self-effacing remark, like his calling the contents of his new book "things of the imagination

---

[248] Kingcaid 36.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and sensibility, the two ignorant Muses that one does not cultivate," [249] are offset by two other letters, one to Mme Sauvage de Brantes (née Louise de Cessac) on June 12, 1896, the book's date of publication, the other three years later, to his friend Viscount Clément de Maugny.

The letter to Mme de Brantes continues the self-deprecating tone, but it does so in a manner that lets us understand how different his various writings appeared in book form from how they appeared when they were first published separately in periodicals. The intervening effort he had put into the task of gathering them up in a single volume is what stands out, implicitly, in his homage to Mme de Brantes, which reads as follows:

> To Madame de Brantes:
>
> > so that she will deign to accept the respectful homage of this book whose only value will remain that of having pleased her when it was scattered and formless, and to which the benevolence of her sympathy--*in this circumstance alone* I will not say the clear-sightedness of her intellect and her taste--has given distinction and elect status.[250]

Gathered in a single volume, the many "little pieces" were no longer "scattered and formless." They had assumed an order, a new reason for being, which he, the author, had given to them.

Clément de Maugny was perhaps Proust's most intimate friend among the French aristocracy during the 1890s; intimate in the sense that they related to each other as equals, and shared many interests in common. Now and then he was de Maugny's guest at the family's fourteenth-century château. Proust refers to his friend's kindnesses and generosity during the preceding three years, from 1896 to 1899, when he was prey to many disappointments. In a letter written on July 13, 1899, acknowledging de Maugny's sympathetic

---

[249] Letter to Charles Grandjean, November 13 or 20, 1893, Correspondance, t. 1, 255-256.
[250] Correspondance, t. II, 74.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attention to his problems after the publication of PJ, he spoke of the emotional pain he had experienced years earlier, during a period in his life when de Maugny did not know him. It was in this context that he presented his book to his friend. Here is the relevant part of the letter:

> Often we show a friend, who only got to know us much later, a photograph of when we were a child. The same holds true for this book which introduces you to a Marcel whom you did not know. May I say it? You who have seen me in pain, without ever having made me suffer from a mistake in tact, from a lack of compassion, which is also quite rare, you have seen the birth and dissipation of sadnesses which will not seem very different to you from those depicted in this book. What makes us cry changes but our tears resemble each other. It seems to me that, involved so closely with my pains during these years when you were my confidant and friend, you will feel more than others in these pages what they still conserve of storms that will not return ever again .[251]

This letter expresses something of the personal suffering that Proust associated with his youthful writing. PJ marked a beginning and an end for him; it documented his emotional life in disguised and fictional form, a stage in his life when he was still unsure of the direction that his future writing would take. But at the same time the letter is indicative of a certain detachment from early experiences that allowed him to place them in a different framework than would have been possible in earlier times.

A question needing brief commentary concerns the book's disparate genres. My point of view on this characteristic of the book is simply that the organic connection between these writings is not generic but philosophical and symbolic; it is to be found in the vision of life that inheres in them. By this I do not mean that a short sketch or prose poem may not have originated in a side of Proust's personality and experience that was substantially different, say, from the one that animated his short stories. Yet the

---

[251] Correspondance, t. II, 291-292.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

links between the shorter items and the longer ones are, in several instances, noteworthy. For example, the painterly prose of "Regrets, Reveries, Changing Skies" alludes to the same sense of time fleeting and of the "derisory" nature of certain illusions that pervades several of the short stories. The idea that beauty, like all spiritually inspired values, is not in things themselves but in the mind of the artist in "A Walk" is what--in perverted and illusory form, to be sure-- gives the fantasies of "Violante" and "Madame de Breyves" their interest as travesties of idealism in which "the omnipotence of thought"[252] leads to misery and loneliness in contrast to the fulfillment experienced by the artist. Throughout the collection, in almost all of its parts large and small, one senses Proust's passionate attachment to a conception of art that does not refuse, but rather delights and finds inspiration in, the most ordinary and humble aspects of life. Human passions, ideals, hopes, illusions, memories, all combine with a reverential attitude toward natural beauty to endow this collection with its own particular and cohesive character.

An example of the book's unity despite the generic diversity of its "little pieces" can be seen in the "Fragments of Italian Comedy," where Italian comedy is a metaphor for society itself in the stylized form of masked faces, affectation, foolishness, self-delusion, pretention, assumed identities, sudden changes of character and fortune, a whole array of situations in which individuals play strange roles and display unpredictable, often contemptible, behavior towards themselves and towards others. This is the lot, or threatened fate, of Proust's lovers in the short stories (as it will be for many characters of the Recherche), the only remedies for which, as already noted, are either the epiphanic moments that precede death, or the liberating effects of artistic

---

252 Freud's phrase in chapter three, "Animism, Magic and the Omnipotence of Thought," of Totem and Taboo, ed. and trans. James Strachey, introduction Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1989) 94-124.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

creation. For Proust, there are no other.

Bernard Gicquel was the first to study systematically features of PJ that made it a "composed work."[253] He argued that themes, images and situations in the book "respond to each other, reflect each other, evoke each other" even at some distance, and in this respect convey a sense of organicity. They suggest "an underlying order" far more significant than mere chronology, an "intentional placement" which substitutes for chronology "an aesthetic order desired by [Proust's] mind." Gicquel made much of the centrality of the Portraits, situated in the exact middle of the collection, surrounded on both sides by four stories or cycles of short pieces. This order manifested a "geometric arrangement" of its parts. He concluded from the position of the château drawings at the beginning and end that this was Proust's way of giving the book "a circular order" not dissimilar, he noted, from the "cyclical" collections of poems that were so popular in the Middle Ages. Originally a symbol of the return of the seasons, the circle becomes in PJ the very image of time, of those "days" alluded to in the title. Furthermore, he maintained, the story "The Death of Baldassare Sylvande," with its five chapters, contains the essential five themes of PJ: worldly vanity, sensuality, imagination, will, and death.

Luzius Keller's commentary in the German edition of PJ[254] is the other critical work that, joining Gicquel's essay, has gone furthest in arguing that PJ is constructed according to a compositional principle that gives Proust's youthful writings a "new shape and meaning." He stresses the centrality of art as a theme and as a unifying principle of the book, and the "symmetrical" arrangement of its various materials. Like Kingcaid, he also points out the prevalence of "decadent" themes (forbidden loves, confessions, matricide,

---

253 Gicquel 249-261.

254 Keller ed., Freuden und Tage, 277-287.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

suicide, illness etc.) seen against a "broad intertextual horizon" including such names as St. Augustine and Thomas à Kempis.

Keller considers "The Death of Baldassare Sylvande," written in 1894 and revised in 1895, as a summary or recapitulation of Proust's writing up to that point, as a sort of prefiguration of the book as a whole. This story, he believes, mirrors Proust's entire aesthetic experience, from Augustine to the French moralists, from Anatole France to Tolstoy, from Montesquiou to Hahn. Montesquiou's presence can be seen in the decadent aestheticism and elaborate finery of Baldassare's existence (exotic animals, the collection of musical instruments, the coat of arms) while Hahn's influence in Proust's life is reflected, among other links, in the title of the story inasmuch as the letters of "Reynaldo" are concealed within the name "Baldassare Silvande" except for the "y" and the "o" taken from "Viscount" and "Sylvania." However farfetched this may seem, what we know about Proust's fondness for such verbal play gives Keller's observation more than speculative value.

Keller's main point is that the book is arranged in such a way as to convey the notion that art and death are the means through which several of Proust's characters become aware of the "factitiousness" of so much of human life and approach the threshold of "truth and essentiality." This idea is certainly present, whether or not the arrangement of the materials in the book is indeed meant to highlight it. Baldassare and Honoré, in the first and last stories, "pay for an instant of authentic life with life itself." At the same time, Keller regards Gicquel's thesis concerning a "negative" and a "positive" valence as very questionable. He prefers, as do I, to see the unity of the book as residing more in its philosophical standpoint, in its tendency to focus on "the fluctuations and forces" of the world, than in its structural features per se.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Keller introduces another possible source of unity by looking at the book's pastiches and at how its many epigraphs play upon a series of interpenetrating themes. Proust used the devices of imitation, parody and pastiche as forms of commentary on some of his favorite writers; for example, "Violante," "Oranthe," and "Bouvard and Pécuchet" were essentially "stylistic studies" of Anatole France, La Bruyère, and Flaubert. To that Keller adds two other observations. First, he maintains that the shifts in narrative viewpoint that mark "Baldassare" and "The Melancholy Summer of Madame de Breyves" imply "a critical reflection on literature," that is, a self-conscious manipulation of narrative methods rather than a formal error committed by a novice writer. Second, and more importantly as far as the work in its entirety is concerned, he argues that in PJ Proust strings together forms of expression, fashionable trends and beloved authors belonging to the latter decades of the nineteenth century. His motive in doing so, Keller believes, was to provide a "panorama of *fin-de-siècle* literature," a kind of overview of contemporary literary currents. This interpretation runs the risk of overstating a fruitful idea, yet when we look at Proust's subsequent writing, culminating in the Recherche, and note that he incorporated into these works theories and views on contemporary painting, music, and literature, it does not seem off the mark to read PJ from this "panoramic" perspective.

The pastiche, remarks Léon Duffoux, is a form of satire without malice, a spoofing without ill will, as distinguished from parody, which uses "grosser artifices," and aims at making the ideas and the style of a writer an object of ridicule, usually in a "theatrical" and burlesque manner.[255] Both pastiche and parody are forms of irreverence, but in the case of pastiche the

---

255 Léon Deffoux, Le Pastiche littéraire des origines à nos jours (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1932) 187.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

irreverence can also be an indirect way of paying homage to a writer whom one admires. Jean Milly observes pertinently that pastiche was a "permanent activity" of Proust, a mode of literary appropriation through which he could at one and the same time pay tribute to writers who were important to him and "free himself from influences that were too strong, in order to achieve his independence, his full capacity as an original creator." [256] In other words, if this general point of view has validity, we would be entitled to add the word "critical" to Keller's characterization and call PJ "a critical panorama of *fin-de-siècle* literature." [257]

Pierre Daum, in his 1993 study of PJ,[258] approaches the work from a rather rigorously structuralist point of view. But he also identifies some of the book's stylistic traits, its rhythms and sonorities, and its alternating tones of lyricism and moralism. He sees the book as essentially "studies of human souls."According to this view, then, the unity of PJ is more psychological than philosophical, more intimate and introspective than ideological, as I have defined this last term.

Daum examines an aspect of Proust's writing in PJ about which there has been relatively little commentary. He characterizes several of the stories as having extremely vague temporal and spatial coordinates, as bearing very few traces of historicity, of rootedness in a specific historical time and place. They are detached from time, as if they were intended to be more fables than conventionally realistic stories of human experiences. Stories such as "The Death of Baldassare Sylvande," "Violante," and "Melancholy Summer of

---

256 Jean Milly, Les Pastiches de Proust (Paris: Armand Colin, 1970) 37.

257 Silvain Monod wrote a very funny pastiche of Proust's style in the Recherche called "A la recherche de Clémentine" (somewhere between pastiche and parody) published in Monod, Pastiches, preface Paul Reboux (Paris: Henri Lefebvre, 1963) 236-243.

258 Pierre Daum, Les Plaisirs et les jours de Marcel Proust-Étude d'un recueil (Paris: Nizet, 1993).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Madame de Breyves," and shorter pieces such as "Encounter by the Lake" and "The Stranger" seem suspended in time, despite a few allusions to things and people reminiscent of Parisian society in the 1890s. I strongly agree with this perception. The often abstract, fabular atmosphere in PJ reflects young Proust's desire to retreat into a timeless realm where ideal types could act and ideal situations could unfold free of the real historical determinants of human thought and action. His intention was to highlight the universal significance of his characters' inner lives and relationships. He wanted to suspend his readers' attachment to the world by transporting them to the imaginary domain of abstract elemental forces at work in human destiny. Either he gives his characters names--Baldassare, Violante, Madame de Breyves, Heldémone, Adelgise, Oranthe, Cardenio, M. de Laléande--that have an exotic or un-French sound, or he gives them no name at all, as in "Encounter by the Lake" and "Dream." While many of the important characters clearly belong to the aristocracy, the settings in which these characters act out their lives conjure up an almost childlike and fantastic atmosphere.

This does not mean that PJ lacks critical bite. On the contrary, Proust's critique of a self-indulgent, wasteful, superficial society is quite evident. What it means, however, is that he wanted his criticism to transcend the moment in which the stories were written, so that the reader would feel free to attach a general human significance to them rather than associate them with too specific a social milieu. Too much historical material could spoil the subtler effects of fantasy. Proust was after the general, the universal, the "laws" of human nature as revealed in similar and recurrent situations. We gain access to Proust's youthful "ideology" precisely through these attempts to protect a domain of fabular purity from the contaminations of history. He shared this need with many

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

other artists and writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. That he eventually transcended this penchant for the timeless fable in favor of a resolute psychological realism, as seen in the Recherche, is one of the things that sets him apart from many other writers of his generation.

PJ reflects Proust's readings of Kant and Schopenhauer, as Anne Henry has demonstrated in her study of Proust's aesthetic theory. The philosophy and implicit ideology of Proust's early writings are testimony to his assimilation of certain notions about the nature of the human mind, about art, and about the relationship between empirical and ideal truth that derive directly from the two German thinkers. If, as I have claimed, the unity of PJ consists to a significant extent in its philosophical premises, then German idealist and neo-idealist thought must be taken into account.

Raymond Williams's characterization of the history of modern aesthetics as "in large part a protest against the forcing of all experience into instrumentality ('utility'), and of all things into commodities" [259] is pertinent to the reasons why Proust and many of his contemporaries assigned supreme importance to the aesthetic in the hierarchy of human activity. This attitude helps to explain why he was so responsive to a thinker such as Kant, a responsiveness which hinges on the German thinker's attempt to make a place for art within a moral universe and in accordance with a theory of the human mind as the primary creator and shaper of knowledge. Kant based much of what he said in Critique of Pure Reason on the assumption that human beings possess and exercise a faculty of pure a priori cognition inherent in the mind, and not dependent on empirical evidence. The proper tests of such cognition, he argued, were universality and necessity. Kant assumed that metaphysics had to be considered as really existing, if not as a science, nevertheless as a

[259] Williams151.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

natural disposition of the human mind. He applied the term "transcendental" to all knowledge "which is not so much occupied with objects as with the mode of our cognition of these objects, so far as this mode of cognition is possible a priori."[260]

In this regard, he continued, what was of interest to him philosophically speaking was not the nature of "outward objects" but rather the properties of the mind, of the subjective knowing entity. "The object of our investigations," he said, was not to be sought without, but altogether within ourselves. Kant did not, however, discard or minimize the role that objective knowledge played in human cognition. There were at bottom two sources of human knowledge, sense and understanding. By the former, objects were *given* to us; by the latter, *thought*. . Building on these premises, Kant went on to present the foundational principles of his "transcendental aesthetic" philosophy, which required a distinction between empirical intuition, which works on all phenomena given to us through the senses (sensibility), and pure intuition, which exists a priori in the mind, the preliminary abode of thought.

Both space and time, Kant reasoned at a decisive turning point of western philosohpical thought, were concepts that could be spoken of only from the human point of view. Space, he said, was not a form which belongs as a property to things, but was rather the form of all phenomena as they are perceived by the subjective condition of the sensibility; objects remain quite unknown to us in themselves. What we call outward objects are nothing but "mere representations of our sensibility."[261]

Kant considered time "the formal condition a priori of all phenomena whatsoever." While space was the form of our "external intuition,"

---

260 Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason (London: Dent, 1934) 38.

261 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason 47.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

time was nothing but the form of our "internal intuition." Time inheres not in objects themselves, but solely in the subject (or mind) which intuits them. The conclusion he drew from all this was what made his thought exceptionally appealing to the mind and sensibilities of writers such as Proust, who were looking anxiously for a way out of the constraints imposed by various forms of materialist and positivist thought.

The key point to be made here is that, instead of embracing a dialectical historical materialist approach to problems of knowledge and perception, Proust, following a growing number of writers and artists in the nineteenth century in an ever-expanding movement of thought that culminated in the symbolism and spiritualism of the century's last decades, embraced Kantian idealism as it was expounded in part in the famous Introduction to Critique of Pure Reason. In his "general remarks on transcendental aesthetic," Kant wrote as follows:

> We have intended . . .to say that all our intuition is nothing but the representation of phenomena; that the things which we intuit, are not in themselves the same as our representations of them in intuition, nor are their relations in themselves so constituted as they appear to us; and that if we take away the subject, or even only the subjective constitution of our senses in general, then not only the nature and relations of objects in space and time, but even space and time themselves disappear; and that these, as phenomena, cannot exist in themselves, but only in us. What may be the nature of objects considered as things in themselves and without reference to the receptivity of our sensibility is quite unknown to us. We know nothing more than our mode of perceiving them, which is peculiar to us, and which, though not of necessity pertaining to every animated being, is so to the whole human race. With this alone we have to do. Space and time are the pure forms thereof; sensation the matter. The former alone can we cognize a priori, that is, antecedent to all actual perception; and for this reason such cognition is called pure intuition.[262]

---

262 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason 54.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In the specific realm of aesthetics, this revolutionary affirmation of idealist thought [263] found expression in the pages of Kant's Critique of Judgment, where he presented what he called his "Analytic of the Beautiful."[264] In this work, explains Walter Cerf, we find ourselves immersed in a series of "dualisms" and "binary oppositions" that lie--as Jacques Derrida, Barbara Johnson, Joseph Buttigieg and others have told us--at the very core of western metaphysical discourse. They form the conceptual horizons of the Kantian philosophy of pleasure: the metaphysical concept of the soul-body dualism, the epistemological concept of the subject-object scheme, and the concept of the cause-effect relation. Indeed, everything Proust wrote, from the early stories and prose poems to the later masterpiece, is difficult to imagine without the philosophical underpinnings provided by this essential dualism inherent in Kantian idealist thought. The soul-body dualism goes back many thousands of years, attaining in Christian philosophy a preeminent place of honor, but it was only in its specific elaboration by Kant and others of his school that it became fully accessible to and assimilable by writer-philosophers such as Proust, who

---

263 In a notebook entry on Flaubert written around 1910 that remained unpublished until 1971, in CSB, 299-302, Proust referred to the "revolutionary" character of Kantian thought. In this note Proust compared Flaubert's "grammatical" innovations to Kant's philosophical breakthrough in the following manner: "As he suffered so much over his syntax, it is in this [aspect of his writing] that he forever placed his originality. He is a grammatical genius. And his genius is a god to be added to the singular gods of The Temptation of Saint Anthony, it has the form of a past absolute, of a pronoun and of a present participle. His immense, enduring, almost unrecognizeable originality because it has become so incorporated into the literary language of our time that we read Flaubert under the name of writers without realizing that they only speak like him, is a grammatical originality. He can make us understand what certain painters who have changed [the use of color?] have been in the history of art (Cimabue, Giotto). And the revolution of vision, of the representation of the world that flows--or is expressed--from and by its syntax, is perhaps as great as that of Kant in moving the center of knowledge of the world to the soul." It would seem, therefore, that Proust looked upon Kant's philosophy as having become so thoroughly incorporated into the mental life of western civilization as to be an unquestioned reality taken for granted by its beneficiaries. It should be recalled that Alphonse Darlu had introduced Proust to Kant in 1888-1889 in a course of study at the Lycée Condorcet, a course which Proust supplemented in private lessons given to him at his home by Darlu.

264 Immanuel Kant, Analytic of the Beautiful-from the Critique of Judgment, ed. and trans. Walter Cerf (New York and Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Co., 1963).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

needed a spiritualist grounding for his theory of art but one that was couched in terms that were free of explicitly religious connotations. This he found in Kant, especially in the way Kant applied his thought to problems of knowledge and aesthetics.

Kant's aesthetics rested on the distinction between impure pleasure and pure pleasure, the latter untainted by the senses. What he envisioned was a theory of the beautiful which, on the one hand, was separate and autonomous vis-à-vis the senses, yet on the other hand could help form a part of the bridge between the analysis of cognition and the analysis of morality. In other words, he accorded autonomy to the aesthetic, but at the same time insisted on its ultimate relation with moral judgment.

What stands out for our purposes in this study is Kant's assertion that the judgment of taste, which is the faculty of judging the beautiful, is not logical, but aesthetic, which in turn cannot be other than subjective. This feeling for the beautiful, he argued, was rooted in the human capacity for pure disinterested pleasure, as opposed to the pleasure that rests entirely on sensation. The judgment of taste is merely contemplative, it has no object or rationale beyond a disinterested enjoyment of the beautiful in and for itself. Kant was committed, avers Dieter Henrich, "to the view that beauty and all other elementary and purely aesthetic qualities depend exclusively on the formal arrangement of a perceived manifold."[265] If this is the case, we can see why Proust was not entirely satisfied with some of the implications of Kantian aesthetic purism, since he wanted to reintroduce into aesthetic philosophy the notion of humanity's moral life and destiny, to which the experience of art could add vital elements. He was not prepared to isolate "form" from "content" in

---

265 Dieter Henrich, Aesthetic Judgment and the Moral Image of the World--Studies in Kant (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992) 54-55.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

writing or in the other arts. But this is an aspect of Proustian thought that remains somewhat unclear, as far as I can determine. It does not seem to me that he was ever entirely ready to align himself with a formalist aesthetics resting on the presumed Kantian theory that it is design and composition "which are the proper objects of pure judgment."[266]

Certain aspects of Schopenhauer's thought were also of importance to Proust, in that, even more resolutely perhaps than Kant, he gave to art a distinctive place in human experience, but did so by accenting concerns and considerations that had not played any real part in Kant's scheme of things. Schopenhauer introduced into western philosophy an eastern component that gave to the material world a transitory, illusory quality. For Schopenhauer, "the ideality of time and space" was the key to all true metaphysics because "it made way for an order of things quite different from what is found in nature."[267] But he noted in typically pessimistic fashion that most men were incapable of entering this different order; they were victims of foolish illusions about sensual gratifications and so "the very thing they allowed to slip by unappreciated and unenjoyed was just their life, precisely in the expectation of which they lived."[268] Something of this attitude can be detected in Proust's way of analyzing the role of illusion in the general problematic of human existence.

Schopenhauer's reflections on the qualities of "genius," one of whose characteristics was the ability "to see the universal in the particular," led him to another notion that, theoretically, was to play an important part in Proust's aesthetics, namely that "the kind of knowledge of the genius is essentially purified of all willing and of references to the will; [from which it follows] that the

---

266 Kant, Analytic of the Beautiful 31.

267 Arthur Schopenhauer, Philosophical Writings, ed. Wolfgang Schirmacher (New York, Continuum, 1996) 20.

268 Schopenhauer 22.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

works of genius do not result from intention or arbitrary choice, but that genius is here guided by a kind of instinctive necessity." [269] This idea fascinated Proust as a principle of literary and artistic creation, although it conflicted with another aspect of his world view, which was that "thought" and therefore conscious reflection were what gave true dignity to works of art.

Where Schopenhauer left his mark on Proust was in his reflections on the relations between history and art, the former seen as displaying "the transient complexities of a human world moving like clouds in the wind, which are entirely transformed by the most trifling accident,"[270] the latter a realm in which what was of permanent and universal value could find its fulfillment in lasting works of the creative imagination. In this concept, Schopenhauer felt that he had identified a crucial element of the "philosophy of the moderns," which derived largely from Berkeley and Kant, but purified of the tendency to discount the necessary dialectical relationship between the thinking subject and its object of thought.

Much of what Proust had to say both in fictional and in critical form was grounded in the presuppositions and principles of idealist philosophy, even if he tempered some of its more mystical features--as seen especially in Schopenhauer--in favor of what Mieke Bal calls his "visual poetics" resting in turn on a theory of knowledge

> . . . that does not separate the domain of the mind from that of the body, in other words, that does not separate the cognitive, the affective, the aesthetic, and the sexual domains. Rather it explores all avenues, however unusual they may be, that lead to the discovery of new aspects of the real by means of sensations, experiences, and the very pores of one's being. It is for this reason that we can treat Proust as a philosopher and even view him in the

---

269 Schopenhauer 87.

270 Schopenhauer107.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

same light as the greatest philosophers of this century.[271]

Bal's formulation allows us to see what distinguishes Proust's philosophy of art from that of his idealist forebears. The material world has a palpable presence in Proust's writing which, even if still bound by the constraints of dualistic thinking, adheres to and illuminates sense experience in an admirably realistic manner.

---

271 Mieke Bal, The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually, trans. Anna-Louise Milne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 239.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter Nine

Elitism and the Primacy of the Spiritual

Proust was essentially an independent thinker who never unqualifiedly identified himself with any school or movement. Literally and figuratively, he stood "between two centuries." He was classically educated and revered the Greco-Roman heritage, yet he was clearly a modernist who derived ideas and inspiration from impressionism and symbolism. He was formed, intellectually, by a powerful current of idealist thought, yet his close attention to physical detail in his writing, his interest in inherited traits, and his constant concern with understanding the "laws" of human behavior show that he was far from indifferent to the new experimental sciences in the fields of biology and psychology.[272] His ability to reconcile opposing views on many issues in the search for higher and higher levels of philosophical synthesis mark him as basically an eclectic thinker, with little if any tolerance for hard-and-fast, absolute positions. Although a non-believer, he spoke of art with religious enthusiasm, and used the word "divine" frequently in his commentary on

---

[272] The idea that human beings are subject to "laws" governing their lives as psychosexual as well as physical beings appears in various guises in Proust's early writing, especially in those passages where the narrator of his stories stops for a moment to reflect on the implications of actions taken by his characters. For example, in "The End of Jealousy," the protagonist, Honoré, plagued by a crippling jealousy, begs God to free him of his obsession. He begs also for constancy of love and affection, to no avail:

" 'My God! My God! Grant me by Thy grace that I shall love her forever. My God, this grace alone I ask, my God, Thou who hast the power, grant that I shall love her forever!'.

Now in one of those purely physical moments when the soul within us hides behind the digesting stomach, behind the skin that still enjoys the recent shower and the sensation of fine linen, the mouth that smokes, the eye that takes delight in bare shoulders and bright lights, he repeated his prayer with less conviction, no longer really believing in the miracle that would reverse the psychological law of his inconstancy, just as difficult to circumvent as the physical laws of gravitation or of death." Dupee ed, 144.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

various writers and artists.[273]

Nevertheless, despite this characteristic "in-betweenness," I think it is fair to say that Proust shared three interrelated values with many writers and intellectuals coming of age in the 1880s and 90s. These were elitism, individualism, and spiritualism. It will be the task of this chapter to discuss and to illustrate how these values manifested themselves in PJ and in several other writings of the 1890s.

Young Proust's elitism appears most strikingly in his dedicatory preface to PJ and in a letter he wrote to a friend, Pierre Lavallée, on or around June 12, 1896 when he used the occasion of his book's publication to comment on his relationship with Lavallée and others belonging to their circle.

The elegaic dedication of PJ to his friend Willie Heath,[274] written in July 1894, is learned, somewhat ornate and "precious" in style, deeply felt, all-inclusive in its tributes to the people who were most important to him at the time, and quite charming. In the course of its six pages, it manages to mention, allude to, or cite passages (in the following order) from Ernest Renan, Homer, Alexandre Dumas fils, Madeleine Lemaire, Robert de Montesquiou, Anton Van Dyck, Leonardo da Vinci, Proust's mother, the Bible, Virgil, Racine, Count Charles de Grancey (a boyhood friend), Reynaldo Hahn, Anatole France, and

---

273 Proust's conception of artistic originality and individuality, which he regarded as the primary determinants of literary style and the expression of an artist's personal vision of the world, was what gave to the work of every genuine writer its "transcendent" spiritual quality. This quality probably had little to do with "supernatural" beliefs or systems of thought. In a letter to his close friend Mme Geneviève Straus, written many years later (on November 6, 1908) than the period covered in this study but relevant to it nonetheless, he alluded to his convictions and to his lack of conventional religious belief by saying: ". . .nothing can be beautiful except that which bears the mark of our choice, of our taste, of our uncertainty, of our desire, and of our weakness." Proust closed the letter with these words: "Madame what a gloomy madness ("sombre folie") to begin writing to you about grammar and literature. And I am so ill! In the name of heaven not a word of all this to Madame Ganderax. In the name of heaven. . .in which, alas, neither of us believes, neither you nor I. Respectfully, Marcel Proust." Mme Ganderax was the wife of Louis Ganderax, whose ideas on grammar and style Proust was critiquing in this letter. Correspondance, t. viii, 1908,. 278.

274 Laget ed.39-43.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Alphonse Darlu. One might be tempted to call this mere name-dropping, a childish form of pedantry, yet we know that each of these names and the works with which they are associated had an undeniable importance in Proust's development as a writer. In this sense, perhaps, he wanted the dedication to Heath to function also as an acknowledgement of his indebtedness to his mother and to a group of esteemed writers, artists, thinkers, and friends.

One feature of the Heath dedication that makes it rather typical of its historical moment is its attempt, in the manner of contemporary decadentism, to link illness and the possibility (or reality) of imminent death with artistic creativity, or better, with the psychological detachment from the quotidian affairs of the world that is often a condition of creativity. The link is established through the sequence of images and allusions relating first to Heath, then to the Van Dyck portraits of King Charles I and the Duke of Richmond who, like Heath, were marked for imminent death, and finally to himself, where Proust recalls his feeling of sadness as a boy when his mother read to him about Noah, the "patriarch" who was forced to spend forty long days on his ark cut off from the rest of the world. But this sadness was replaced some years later, Proust tells us, by his growing realization that "Noah was never able to see the world better than from his ark." This insight was made possible by his own illness, followed by a convalescence and eventual recovery of health which, although welcome and joyous, was also accompanied by a certain nostalgia for a period in life when "the special grace of illness brings us closer to certain realities that are beyond death."

The motifs of spiritual elitism, based on what Proust calls "moral elegance," which Heath had in common with the men depicted by Van Dyck, and of the privileged condition of persons suffering illness who, like lovers and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

poets, "feel themselves closer [than other men] to their soul," are deftly interwoven into this brief dedication. Immediately after citing in the first paragraph a few of Montesquiou's verses devoted to Madeleine Lemaire, Proust referred to the "elite" among her many admirers who would have recognized Heath's qualities had they been able to know him as he, Proust, did. Thus Proust sees himself here as an intermediary figure, a translator, as it were, charged with the responsibility of interpreting certain feelings and experiences for the benefit of those in his social world who were able to receive them. He tells this elite in particular about the pact he had made with Heath, "the dream, almost the project, of living more and more with each other, in a circle of magnanimous and select women and men, far enough from stupidity, vice and wickedness to feel ourselves protected from their vulgar insults."

Faith, creative genius, love, intense awareness of death and of "certain realities that are beyond death," these are the life forces which Proust exalted in his dedicatory preface to PJ. They are among the qualities and attitudes of some of the writers and artists who, like Proust, proclaimed themselves to be an intellectual and spiritual elite in the pages of such reviews as the venerable Le Mercure de France (founded in the seventeenth century),[275] La Plume, and La Revue Blanche. Frank affirmations of cultural and intellectual superiority, coupled with incessant, vaguely mystical appeals to the primacy of the spirit, of the soul, of the contemplative life, made of these and other periodicals natural meeting places for writers adhering to movements that had broken away from the tenets of naturalism and realism. Idealism and what some called *idéoréalisme* were the rage in Paris in the 1890s.

---

[275] The review appeared with various adjectives attached to Le Mercure beginning in 1611. It was published with the name Le Mercure de France from 1724 to 1791, and then, after a long hiatus, again with this name in a new format beginning in January 1890. (Dictionnaire des Littératures, ed. Philippe Van Tieghem, vol. II (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968) 2603-2605.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The editors of La Plume saw as one of their primary purposes that of clarifying what separated them from the "crowd" of soulless worshipers of Mammon and from the "utilitarian" critics and theorists who were concerned (foolishly, in their opinion), with what literature was supposed to be doing for the cause of the weak and the downtrodden. Any such mixing of art with social struggles would lead, ipso facto, to a defilement of its supreme spiritual mission.[276]

Le Mercure de France, a rallying point for the avant-garde at the time, resolutely opposed the rise of "mass" culture which made of everything that was easily digested, quickly understood, and commercially successful the end-all of the publishing industry. Railing against the "contaminations of commercialism," many of the writers for the review celebrated the "solitary" artist who, disdaining illicit profit and resisting the "stupid cajolery of the plebes," worked in silence for the realization of an ideal. "Innocence" and "purity" were the virtues of Renoir, said G.-Aubert Aurier, making of him the very embodiment of what a true artist ought to represent in the world.[277] In another essay devoted to Gauguin, he spoke of "the imbecilic human herd" that would never understand the ideas and ideals of the modern creative spirit.[278] Rémy de Gourmont recalled Huysmans's defection from naturalism as marking the

---

[276] See for example the special August 1, 1889 issue of La Plume, dedicated to idealism and edited by Fernand Clerget. A whole generation, said Claude Tegrel, had claimed that only matter is worthy of study; they ridiculed the Ideal, and devoted themselves exclusively to science. For this, they paid a heavy price. "The Masses ("la Foule"), saturated with errors and negativity, is now beginning to understand perhaps that the final expression of matter is death; the flesh laments its separation from the Spirit." Claude Tegrel, "Simplement," La Plume, August 1, 1889, 18-19. In a review of Maurice Barrès's novel Sous l'œil des barbares, Paul Bourget touched upon another aspect of the elitist point of view at the time when he noted that "the barbarians are what Flaubert called the bourgeois, and Heine the philistines; beings who, not belonging to the same race as the very refined artist, constitute nonetheless the society in which this artist must develop." Paul Bourget, "Le Roman d'analyse--Maurice Barrès," La Plume, May 15, 1890, 83-87.

[277] G.-Aubert Aurier, "Renoir," Le Mercure de France, August 1991,103-106.

[278] G.-Aubert Aurier, "Le Symbolisme en peinture--Paul Gauguin," Le Mercure de France, March 1891, 189-191.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

beginning of a new era in the history of French literature.[279] Saint-Pol-Roux spoke of the poet as a "second creator" inspired directly by God, the first and eternal creator, thus establishing a bond between divinity and art that was dear to the hearts of Proust's generation.[280]

Fairly typical too of French literary intellectuals in the 1890s was a belief that art and philosophy had few prospects in an age ever more relentlessly subverted by social upheavals and by the rise of a mass culture, which was widening the gap between the creative minority on the one hand, and the "oppressed classes" on the other. How can we expect to reach such masses, asked Marcel Collière, when the deficiencies of popular education and the demands of daily labor made them impervious to beauty and to the "higher things" embodied in the writings of Homer, Shakespeare, and Mallarmé. Camille Mauclair saw the essential flaw of naturalism as its interest in "the object in and for itself," whereas it was the subjective apprehension by the poet of "the pure idea" that gave poetry its magical appeal.

The editor-in-chief of La Revue Blanche in the mid-1890s, Lucien Muhlfeld, put his finger on an essential problem of the time in two articles, one devoted to various contemporary writers but with special attention to the Belgian symbolist playwright and poet, Maurice Maeterlinck, the other to what he called "a crisis" in the relationship between writers and readers in "an age of transition." Calling Maeterlinck "the most interior of interior" spirits, the one and only "true mystic" of the age, Muhlfeld connected him to the poetic tradition of

---

279 Rémy de Gourmont, "Là-bas et ailleurs," Le Mercure de France, June 1891, 321-325.

280 Saint-Pol-Roux, "De l'art magnifique," Le Mercure de France, February 1892, 97-104. But artists and writers adhering to this idea did not all see "divinity" in the same way. Some conceived of it as a transcendent spiritual entity similar to the Platonic notion of pure Ideas preexisting the concrete forms it assumes in the sensible world, while others, like Proust, conceived of it as a human extension of Spirit that circulates, in an immanent fashion, in nature and in the works of art fashioned by human intelligence.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Baudelaire and Poe, who were in turn the beneficiaries of a "mystical" purism originating theoretically with Plato, followed then by Plotinus, and reaching the modern era in the poetry of Novalis and Coleridge.[281] It was the esoteric, symbolic, "mystical" qualities of Maeterlinck's language that gave it a special appeal to Muhlfeld and others like him who were looking for a way of justifying their feeling of superiority to and difference from a mass civilization they perceived as threatening to art and culture. Not all of the writers associated with La Revue Blanche agreed with Muhlfeld, of course, but enough of them did to give the review a pronounced elitist coloring.

Muhlfeld's other article to which I referred above deals with the same problem of art and literature in a time of mass culture in which the popular and working classes were clamoring for a greater role in the political life of the country, usually in the name of programs that were socialist, egalitarian, and often Marxist in their ideological orientation. He spoke of the end of an era in which writers and readers understood each other and could safely assume that they shared the same or compatible values, and the onset of a new era where what he called "public art" for the masses and "mandarin art" for the few could no longer communicate easily if at all. But whatever the regime or social class in power, he said, especially one where popular democracy was the ruling creed, artists must not be obliged to contribute to "national progress." Art had its own unique ends, and the mandarin class had the duty of safeguarding a long tradition of "disinterested" cultivation of precisely these ends, and no others.[282]

Muhlfeld was articulating a point of view that distanced him from the vision of "national-popular" culture which, in Gramsci's view, distinguished two nations above all others: France and Russia. It was in these two countries,

---

281 Lucien Muhlfeld, "Chronique de la littérature," La Revue Blanche, November 1891, 142-155.
282 Lucien Muhlfeld, "Chronique de la littérature," La Revue Blanche, January 1892, 53-61.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Gramsci believed, that one could find a fertile relationship between artists and people, between intellectuals and the masses, that had allowed for the emergence of a literature that spoke of and to the popular masses in a language that could reach a large audience without sacrificing artistic values.[283] If Gramsci's way of posing this question has any merit, and I think it does, it is clear that Muhlfeld and his colleagues represented a countercurrent in France, one that placed the writer and the intellectual in a category by themselves, apart from and superior to the common life of the people. This raises difficult questions about the history of nineteenth and twentieth-century avant-garde movements, some of which, like impressionism, surrealism and, later, existentialism, certainly aspired to a communicative and interactive relationship with the people. But in the 1890s the avant-gardists attached to reviews such as La Revue Blanche were not in a frame of mind that made them friendly to, or feel in solidarity with, democratic or socialist struggles. In the main (and there were exceptions), they had very little sympathy with the intrinsic merits of "national-popular" culture in any of its forms.

It is difficult to know where exactly to place Proust with respect to this widening gulf between a self-proclaimed elite and the people during the 1890s. I will attempt nonetheless to do so further on in this chapter, where the question of elitism will be discussed in terms of its literary representations and embodiments in PJ. That there was something in his attitude toward writing and its revelations that made him a familiar figure in the milieu of writers like

---

[283] See almost all of the entries in Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, vol. II, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) and the section on the concept of "national-popular" in Antonio Gramsci, "People, Nation and Culture," Selections from Cultural Writings, ed. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, trans. William Boelhower (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985)196-286. For an excellent critical commentary on Gramsci's thought as it relates to the concept of the "national-popular" and in general to the relations between literature and society, see Robert Dombroski, Antonio Gramsci (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Muhlfeld seems to me to be quite evident.[284] Yet at the same time, there are also hints in his early writing of a responsiveness to certain popular complaints and criticisms directed against elitism--whether social or spiritual in nature--that demand, in his case, that we not rush to judgment and that we proceed with caution.

Before turning to PJ for signs of Proust's understanding of elitism, individualism, and spiritualism, we need to look at the letter to Pierre Lavallée which, together with the dedicatory preface, expresses succinctly the nature of Proust's feelings about the social world he wanted to reach and with which he identified himself. In this case, it will be advisable to give the French original first, and then the English translation by Ralph Manheim.[285] It is a subtle letter, one that gives the impression of hiding more than it reveals, of implying a structure of meaning which only the initiated can fully grasp. It exemplifies rather well some of what Foucault was alluding to when he spoke of "fellowships of discourse," whose function is to preserve or to reproduce discourse, but in order that it should circulate within a closed community, according to strict regulations, "without those in possession being dispossessed by this very distribution."[286]

Here is the letter in its entirety:

[Vers le 12? juin, 1896]

Mon cher Pierre,

> Comme celui dont le nom figure, seul au bas d'une souscription dont plusieurs de ses amis ont fait les frais, je me sens un peu honteux d'entendre appeler mon livre, d'avoir à te dédier un livre qui pourrait être aussi bien le tien, si l'ayant comme moi, mieux que moi toute ta vie rêvé, tu avais pris la peine, au lieu de moi, de l'écrire. Si même les choses auxquelles j'attache le

284 However, Muhlfeld, although Jewish, was adamantly opposed to any revision of the trial that had condemned Dreyfus to Devil's Island. It is probable that this stance alienated him from Proust.

285 I have taken the liberty of changing Manheim's translation here and there when I felt that a different wording would be more faithful to the original.

286 Foucault, The Archeology of Knowledge & Discourse on Language 225.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

plus de prix-- un certain sentiment des métempsychoses que je n'ai pas besoin de définir davantage quand c'est à toi que je parle--j'ai su les y mettre, qu'y peut-on aimer qui ne se rencontre, et avec plus de distinction et de pureté, en toi-même, et qui, héritage commun de nos âmes, ne soit pour nous ce terrain natal où nos sympathies se sont conjointes, le fond même, plus ancien et plus durable que nous et qu'elle-même, de notre amitié. Mais en tout cas cet exemplaire particulier méritait une dédicace spéciale. Un exemplaire que tu lis, surtout si c'est un exemplaire de mon livre, ne saurait ressembler aux autres. Que de sens cachés aux autres, de profondeurs--relatives--connues de toi seul, se découvrent si c'est toi qui lis. Je dis mon livre comme si je n'en devais jamais écrire d'autre. Tu sais bien que ce n'est pas vrai. Si je puis terminer celui qui est entrepris et en commencer d'autres, ne me ménage pas, je t'en prie, l'inspiration de ta tendresse, la récompense de ta compréhension. Féconde et aime en moi mes défauts qui te sont le meilleur de moi-même. Nos qualités nous appartiennent moins et il n'y a pas besoin d'une tendresse aussi familière, d'une ressemblance aussi intime pour les goûter.

Ton ami reconnaissant

Marcel Proust[287]

And now the English translation:

[Around June 12?, 1896]

My Dear Pierre,

Like someone whose name appears alone on a subscription that several of his friends have helped to pay for, I feel a little ashamed to hear people speak of this book as mine, to inscribe to you a book that could just as well be yours, if you, having like me, better than me, dreamt of it all your life had, instead of me, taken the trouble to write it. Even though I have managed to put into it the things to which I attach the greatest value--a certain feeling about metempsychosis, which I have no need to define more clearly when speaking to you--what is there to love in it that one does not find, and with greater distinction and purity, in you, and that is not the common heritage of our souls, the native ground in which our sympathies have united together, the very foundation, older and more durable than ourselves and than it, of our friendship. But in any case, this particular copy deserved a special dedicatory inscription. A book read by you, especially if it is a copy of my book, could not resemble any other. How many meanings hidden

[287] Correspondance, t. II: 1896-1901, 76-77.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> from others, what--relative--depths known to you alone, will come to light, if you are the reader. I say my book as though I were never to write another. You know well enough that that is not true. If I can finish the one I have undertaken and begin others, I beg you not to hold back from me the inspiration of your affection, the reward of your understanding. Love my faults and help them to grow, for to you they are the best part of me. Our good qualities belong to us less, and there is no need of so warm an affection, so close a resemblance, to enjoy them.
>
> Your grateful friend
>
> Marcel Proust[288]

Among other questions, the letter to Lavallée almost compels us to ask this one: at the time that young Proust was assembling his writings for publication in PJ, did he effectively feel himself connected only to a small literary and social elite, or did he see himself as being, at least potentially, in touch with a larger popular audience that would understand and appreciate what he had to say despite the predominantly aristocratic social types and subject matter depicted in his writings?

Everything we know about the circumstances of PJ's publication--its cost, its appearance, the type of elite readership Proust hoped to attract by reason of Lemaire's illustrations, the select group of individuals who, like Lavallée, received inscribed copies--conspires in support of an elitist conception of writing.

My reasons for thinking that this is the case are based not only on the letter's explicit statements but just as much on the character of the person to whom it is addressed. Lavallée, like all of the individuals to whom Proust dedicated and sent inscribed copies of his book, belonged to an aristocracy of intellect and culture, if not of birth. But that is precisely the point: young Proust cared considerably more about this ideal or spiritual elite than he did about an

---

288 Marcel Proust, Letters 1880-1903, ed. Philip Kolb, trans. Ralph Manheim (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) 123.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

aristocracy of birth, although the names, appearance, habits, breeding and way of life of the aristocracy always fascinated him, as we have seen in his relationship with Robert de Montesquiou and other members of the French nobility. I would say that his elitism was animated by a concept of highborn and upper bourgeois individuals who incorporated in their persons that "common heritage" to which he alludes in the letter. People of the working classes could and did, for Proust, embody aspects of that heritage, for they too drew their identities from a common "native soil" that nourished the French people as a whole. But the intellectual and spiritual components of that common heritage had been transmitted only by and through select individuals who, by reason of their birth, their education, their culture, had appropriated it in its highest form. Therefore, when Proust spoke of what he shared with Lavallée and of what belonged to both of them, such as "a certain feeling about metempsychosis," he was almost certainly not alluding so much to an occult belief system deriving from the Orphic religion, or to the theosophic teachings of Emmanuel Swedenborg, as to the biologically and culturally determined transmission of traits passed down for centuries by families, from one generation to the next. The "transmigration of souls" was rooted primarily, for Proust, in biology and heredity, not in occult practices and beliefs. Yet this "transmigration" was also a "mysterious" force, something which one felt to be true and that did not require elaborate scientific experiments to substantiate. While it must be acknowledged, as Anne Henry observes, that the word "metempsychosis" has a distinctly "exotic and mystical coloration,"[289] I would be very surprised to learn that Proust looked upon it as a religion. When it came to supernatural and mystical beliefs as understood in a dogmatic sense, Proust was, if not a convinced non-believer,

---

289 Henry, "Les Plaisirs et les Jours: chronologie et métempsychose," 70.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

certainly a skeptic, or better, an agnostic.[290]

Another element of the letter that seems to support the notion of elitism lies in Proust's sense that Lavallée would understand certain of the book's meanings which would remain "hidden from others." Proust had met Lavallée at the Lycée Condorcet, where they took a course on Rhetoric together in 1887.[291] In 1893, when they met again at the Law Faculty, the two became close friends and remained so until the end of the decade, when Lavallée married and their paths diverged. Lavallée was one of three friends (the others

---

290 But here again we need to proceed with extreme caution. In Ésotérisme et écriture dans l'œuvre de Proust (Paris: Librairie Minard, 1990), Juliette Hassine makes a fairly strong case for Proust's interest in and perhaps partial acceptance of the doctrines of the Zohar, the chief work of the Spanish Kabbalah in which the image of light (Zohar means brightness in Hebrew) is of central symbolic importance. This is in itself a suggestive idea in relation to Proust inasmuch as the sun and its manifold properties is a pervasive theme in all of his fictional writings, especially in Jean Santeuil, as will be seen in Chapter twelve. Hassine points out that the Zohar offers a view of the creation "as a writing of signs supposed to have revealed themselves beginning with a principal light identified with Wisdom by the Zohar." She then refers to the role attributed by this system of thought to Memory and to Music in the process of the creation of the world. Obviously, we need to read no further to catch the fascinating possibilities of a connection between this body of thought and the Proustian vision of things. Time, Light, Memory, Music are in the Zohar the four "dimensions" of the world at its creation. Hassine goes on to apply this esoteric doctrine to the way Proust related to his mother, as seen especially in two episodes of Jean Santeuil, where Jean at one moment puts on his mother's shawl at a tense moment in his relations with his family, and at another moment angrily breaks a piece of Venetian glass much prized by his mother. These episodes, according to Hassine, bespeak the influence of Zoharian mysticism and its concept of "metempsychosis," the "transmigration of souls" from one person to another through the generations. The notion of mempsychosis here refers to Proust and his mother, whose soul was passed on to him and symbolized by the shawl but even more significantly by the breaking of the glass, in Jewish tradition a symbol of marriage but here of the indestructible union between mother and son. Hassine also traces Proust's theory of homosexuality to Kabbalistic influences, in the opening section of Sodome et Gomorrhe, where we see "a close relationship between the fact of metempsychosis and that of inversion that reveals itself equally through references to myths in which the transformation of a person's sexuality takes place with the help of a process of transmigration." (69) Such ideas have been broached and discussed by several Proust scholars, and it is possible that they are more important than many of us have thought. On the other hand, the concrete evidence adduced by Hassine and others to support this particular thesis is not especially copious. The question is to determine to what extent the Zoharian and other mystical, neo-Platonic and Jewish traditions actually helped to shape Proust's conception of time, light, and the role of the arts in human history. In "Le Sensible et l'intelligence chez Proust et Senancour," Giorgetto Giorgi touches on Proust's interest in Swedenborg and the Kabbalah, stressing in particular that "Proust was a profound connoisseur of the Bible." The article appeared in Europe, August-September 1970, 205-215.

291 I have drawn biographical information on Lavallée mainly from Tadié's Marcel Proust.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

were Reynaldo Hahn and Robert de Billy) with whom Proust enjoyed visiting the Louvre and discussing the fine points of particular paintings such as those mentioned in his "Portraits of Painters." Indeed, Lavallée was to become the chief curator of the library and museum of the School of Fine Arts in Paris.[292]

Lavallée belonged to a select group of art connoisseurs, historians and curators such as the Henraux brothers, Emile Mâle, Emmanuel Bibesco, and Bertrand de Fénelon, from whom,Tadié tells us, Proust learned a great deal, including detailed knowledge about museum holdings and foreign cities he had not been able to visit in his early years because of ill health. In sum, although Lavallée was not literally an aristocrat, but rather "a child of the secular and republican bourgeoisie," he had the special qualities that Proust acknowledged by sending him a copy of the rice-paper edition (No. 29 of thirty copies printed) of Les Plaisirs et les jours[293] on or close to the day the book was published, along with the letter just discussed.

It is remarkable that there is hardly a hint in PJ of the enormous changes that were taking place in Europe at the time the book appeared, changes in the material conditions of life as well as in culture and thought. As a collection of writings presumably purporting to convey a sense of what people were thinking about and responding to at the time, many of the pieces of PJ do indeed exude a "hothouse" atmosphere, as Anatole France suggested in his preface, but not, in my view, for the laudable reasons he indicates. That is to say, Proust never ventures outside the social worlds he depicts, he never stands apart from them in order to provide the reader with a feeling for the

---

[292] Lavallée was a specialist in the history of European drawing. Among his publications are Dessins des maîtres anciens (1927), Dessins français du xviii^e siècle (1928), Les Dessins français du xiii^e au xvi^e siècle (1930), Art italien des xv^me et xvi^me siècles (1935), Eugène Delacroix-14 dessins (1938), and Antoine Watteau-14 dessins (1939).

[293] Proust, Letters 1880-1903, 123n1.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

conflicts and issues that made his characters the way they are. His is an insider's glimpse into these worlds, true enough, and as such the book offers a rich array of social types and genealogies. But nothing is contested in these pages, nothing seems to be at stake beyond the fate of one individual. In short, unlike the Recherche, where the reader slowly comes to understand that the story unfolding before him concerns not only Marcel's discovery of a literary vocation but also what Irving Howe called "the fate of society itself,"[294] in PJ Proust was dealing at best with "the gradations within society," where what is at stake is the fate of an individual looking at him or herself in an extremely narrow context. Proust never lets us see how someone or a group of persons belonging to a social milieu substantially different from the one depicted, and conceivably representing a system of thought critical of or in opposition to the one we see, might interact with the main character or characters. There are no opposing individuals, forces, or classes in PJ. The conflictual element which is present in the book is almost exclusively internal, or involves a close familial relationship, such as mother and daughter. Everyone is in his or her place. One would never guess from PJ that the winds of change and struggle were blowing so tempestuously in the France of the 1880s and 90s.

One might argue that the short stories and prose poems of PJ cannot be expected to achieve the depth and dimensions of social analysis we find in a sprawling novel such as the Recherche. However relevant such a viewpoint, the fact remains that there is nothing inherent to the short story form that precludes penetrating socio-historical analysis. To limit ourselves to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the cases of Tolstoy, de Maupassant, Thomas Mann, and Giovanni Verga are there to confirm that the short story can be powerfully engaged in issues of class struggle, alienation, political and

294 Irving Howe, The Political Novel (New York: Horizon Press, 1957) 19.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

moral differences that define and condition the lives of typical characters (typical in the way Georgy Lukàcs used the term, to mean representative of broad currents of historical change and conflict at given moments in time).

Another way to look at what is said above is to say that in PJ, truth-seeking, always a fundamental aspect of Proust's conception of the writer's function, is a private, self-scrutinizing act that takes place on the basis of the implicit assumption that truth is a value for the individual alone to discover, work through, and live with. The source of this truth lies in some mysterious abstract realm to which the conflicted or sinful individual, as the case may be, gains access solely on his or her own. That truth might be conceived differently, as a socially and historically constructed value involving contending forces in a struggle whose outcome is always in question, is a notion fundamentally alien to young Proust's mindset.[295] His point of departure and point of reference is always the idea of an individual conscience that draws sustenance from its internalization of essentially Christian moral doctrine. Proust's is a form of Christian individualism, which conceives of salvation and damnation in strictly personal terms, by postulating the possibility that a single person, through either adherence to or rejection of "the truth" of righteousness and purity, will either save or condemn himself. It does not matter very much that Proust avoids any explicit reference to heaven or to hell. His characters live their own heavens, more often their own hells, as a consequence of their actions. One might say that Proust's world view in PJ is the spiritual counterpart of bourgeois individualism in the political and social spheres, a notion that precludes collective deliverance from the ills that afflict mankind. Nowhere is there any

295 This conception of truth-seeking is effectively analyzed by Benedetto Fontana in "Politics, Philosophy, and Modernity in Gramsci," The Philosophical Forum, vol. xxix, nos. 3-4, Spring-Summer 1998, 104-118, and in an as yet unpublished essay, "What is Truth: Modernity and Hegemony in Gramsci," presented at the International Gramsci Conference, Cagliari, Sardinia, April 15-18, 1997.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

sign whatever of solidarity between individuals, except, as already mentioned, within familes, and in a few instances between master and servant. But then, where would solidarity come from? None of the vital life forms and activities typical of modern civilization are present in the book, including collective work processes. Young Proust was a shrewd psychologist and insightful moralist, but a rather poor sociologist.

The ideological preconceptions just discussed depend in turn on another idea dear to Proust's heart almost from the beginning of his life as a writer, namely the notion that there is something called *le moi intérieur*, [296] the inner authentic self which the individual can find only by separating him or herself from society and social relations, which are conceived as the matrices of falseness, superficiality, and inauthenticty. In other words, this inner self lives by reason of a committed renunciation of society and of the corruption that society embodies, with its illusory, merely material rewards. The idea that the individual self could be realized, on the contrary, by understanding how and why the human personality is always formed, for better or for worse, in the course of its "active relationships" [297] with others was not a decisive element of young

---

296 The conceptual origins of the idea of a "moi intérieur" can be traced, in Proust's case, primarily to Pascal and to Henri Bergson. Not only does the notion of an "inner self" pervade Proust's writing in the 1890s, it also appeared in his conversation, as remembered, for example, by Robert De Billy. In the early to mid 1890s, De Billy recalls, there were many theories, schools, fashions. The new poetry and theatre were seen as "miraculous" by the young generation. But "Marcel believed only in work and in the inner life. He smiled at the sometimes self- interested enthusiasms, and the world said [in response]: 'He is a dilettante.' And he informed himself about disciplines and forms far removed from his conception of things." Marcel Proust, Lettres et conversations (Paris: Editions des Portiques, 1930) 80-81.

297 A fundamental concept of Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, where he contrasts the Catholic concept of the self with that of historical materialism. What Gramsci found unsatisfactory in Catholicism, from a philosophical point of view, was that it insisted on placing the cause of evil in the individual person rather than in the social relations and practices which, together with inborn tendencies and the natural conditions of life, shape personality. Sayre puts this social conception of personality formation nicely: "For Marx one of the defining characteristics of man in general is sociality: 'Man is in the most literal sense of the word a *zoon politikon*, not only a social animal, but an animal which can develop into an individual only in society.' Men become what they become only together, in relationship to other men." Sayre 3.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Proust's consciousness, just as the notion of salvation or redemption was understood by him as a matter for the individual "soul" to deal with, not for humanity as a whole. What this amounts to, it seems to me, is that Proust had internalized one of the bedrock dualities of bourgeois civilization, that is, the notion that society does not provide the means by which the individual self can fulfill itself, but rather constitutes a great barrier to selfhood because of its inevitable corrupting influence on naturally creative and productive human beings. It is the doctrine of Rousseau writ large, but without the moral passion that drove the French thinker to declare that "man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains."[298] Rousseau was condemning a particular socio-political order, the one he knew, while young Proust, although deeply critical of certain attitudes and practices prevalent in the society he lived in, was, as already indicated, interested basically in revealing "the [moral] gradations within [that] society," not in challenging its foundational principles, in the manner of Rousseau. He devoted his talents as a youthful writer of fiction to examining the codes and prejudices of a class, or classes, whose survival was threatened, not by opposing forces, but by its indifference or blindness to its own deficiencies.

What young Proust did, he did very well. But because this is a study of ideological questions as they connect to literary representations, my task is to "show the text as it cannot know itself," not "to redouble the text's self-understanding."[299] On the other hand, I must also acknowledge that, as Terry Eagleton has argued brilliantly a propos of Jane Austen, while young Proust did not confront the issues typically of interest to Marxist or Marxist-influenced thinkers, what he did accomplish was in a sense attributable to the very

---

[298] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, trans. Maurice Cranston (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968) 49.

[299] Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology 43.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"exclusion of the real as it is known to historical materialism." This was true, Eagleton avers, because

> . . .without the exclusion of the real as it is known to historical materialism, there could be for Austen nothing of the ethical discourse, rhetoric of character, ritual of relationship or ceremony of convention which she presents--nothing, in short, of those elements for which we find her fiction 'valuable'.[300]

I don't agree with Eagleton's assumption that a writer who bases his/her work on "historical materialist" premises cannot also interest him/herself in the things he prizes in Austen's novels, if that is what he is saying, but the point he makes is certainly relevant to the enterprise of literary criticism in general, which should remember that writers often compensate the reader for what is not said with values and insights corresponding to other conceptions of what matters in the world.

Two pieces in PJ that bear upon and illustrate the question of "the inner self" in contradistinction to "the outer or exterior self" in society are "Olivian," one of fourteen compositions forming the suite titled "Fragments from Italian Comedy," and "The Stranger," item sixteen of "Regrets, Rêveries, Changing Skies." They encapsulate quite well the book's thematic core, which turns up in a variety of narrative settings and situations.

"Olivian"[301] is a short morally charged appeal or entreaty addressed by the writer to Olivian, evidently a cultured "man of letters" who spends his time mainly going to theatre, traveling, talking, and making love with his "dull mistress." Its message is that time spent in society, talking with even the most brilliant conversationalists, is a waste of time, for it is time spent with people who use only their "bodily eyes" to see, while the truth is that "the voice

---

300 Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology 71.

301 Dupee ed., 50-51.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the imagination and of the soul is the only voice that can make the whole soul and the imagination echo happily. . .." Instead of making fruitless journeys to far-off places in foreign lands, Olivian is advised by the narrator to remain safely at home cultivating his own garden, and thereby come into touch with his true self, his inner self. Accompanying this "lesson" in moral philosophy is the notion that living in the present, as Olivian does, is a grave error, since the imagination, on which a writer depends for inspiration, thrives only on the past or the future. The present is dead to the man of sensibilities, for it offers only ephemeral pleasures.

In one fell swoop, Proust gives us some of the essential ideas that will, in infinitely more elaborated form, reappear in the Recherche. The difference, however, is that the society in which Marcel grows from childhood to maturity in the novel, although depicted as being just as illusory in many ways as the one alluded to in "Olivian," is also seen as providing the intersubjective relationships from which the budding writer will derive his understanding of himself and of his artistic mission. The novel lets us see the dynamics of human interaction, spiritual influences, a process of evolution and change from various perspectives. The implication of "Olivian," on the other hand, is that solitude, self-scrutiny, withdrawal into oneself, listening to the voice of one's own imagination and soul, is the only path to deliverance from the bondage of society. Whereas in the novel, conversation, the exchange of ideas and feelings between the narrator-protagonist and numerous individuals, is of vital importance, the explicit message of "Olivian" is that "conversation, even the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

most exquisite, is only the pleasure of men devoid of imagination."[302]

Of course, a short "study" in the manner of La Bruyère such as "Olivian" has an entirely different function than that of a novel, yet I do not think that a comparison between them, from a thematic point of view, is irrelevant. It is the root assumption governing "Olivian" that is in question here, its ideology of the inner self as somehow separable and independent from the surrounding society, that calls for scrutiny. Moreover, the idea that the inner self must take precedence over any and all forms of social interaction is not absent from the Recherche. It is in those moments when the narrator devotes himself to self-scrutiny, to listening to the "voice" of his imagination and his soul, that he produces the fundamental insights and perceptions on which the novel is based. So it can be said that in this sense too, as André Gide came to believe, PJ foreshadows the Recherche, that it anticipates the novel's central concerns and themes. In their humble way, "Olivian" and "The Stranger" too reflect several of the key values informing the entire history of western metaphysical thought.

"The Stranger"[303] is a still more emphatic assertion of spiritual elitism. I regard it as a crucial document in the formation of Proust's theory of the soul as an inner essence that must be nourished and above all protected from

---

302 Proust modified this rigorous philosophy of creative solitude in the concluding pages of the Recherche, where he takes account of the fact that at this crucial moment in his creative life, as he is about to embark on the writing of his novel, he was experiencing something analogous to other moments he had passed alone and that, for a long time, he had envisioned as conceivable only in a solitary setting. See Marcel Proust, In Search of Lost Time, vol. vi, "Time Regained," trans. Andreas Mayor and Terence Kilmartin (New York: The Modern Library, 1993), 332-335. In these same pages he acknowledges his literary and spiritual debts to Chateaubriand, Nerval, and Baudelaire.

303 Dupee ed.120-122. The first of Baudelaire's Petits poèmes en prose is titled "L'Étranger," quite different from Proust's in its conception of what is "strange" or foreign, but there is a connection between the two nonetheless: their emphasis on the primacy of the spiritual: in Proust, through the concept of the soul, in Baudelaire, in the evocation of clouds as evanescent symbols of spiritual longing and beauty.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the corrupting influences of society. It is a charming parable designed to illustrate an idea that radiates throughout Proust's writing, in a variety of ways and in many different styles and genres.

This modern morality tale, somewhat longer than "Olivian" and more trenchant in its depiction of an idle and complacent group of social butterflies, is written in the third person, and concerns a young man named Dominique who, unlike Olivian, is aware of the threat to his "soul" posed by his incessant soirées and dinner parties, but is unable to do anything about it because, he admits to himself, "I cannot bear to be alone." This inability to be alone is what makes Dominique reject "the stranger," that is, his own soul, and choose the company of his boisterous and superficial friends. Once again, the idea is that the soul of a human being can grow and expand only in solitude. The crucial point is that "the stranger," who is none other than Dominique himself, since the soul is the essence of a person, tells him that he cannot have it both ways: "if you wish me to stay," the "stranger" tells Dominique, "you must send the other guests away." Here, in stark and decisive terms, Proust gives us the essential kernel of thought which he will develop in all sorts of complex and intriguing ways in his future writing.

But there is more to this little parable. Three points that can easily be overlooked without a close reading are, first, that when the "stranger" speaks to him, Dominique is gripped with fear and remorse, for he had never before allowed himself to heed its voice; second, that, very much in accord with earlier periods of storytelling, the abstract figure of Habit interposes itself in the parable when the "stranger" blames it for having so repeatedly and grievously wounded him as to leave him close to death; and third, that when the "stranger" appears to Dominique the storyteller notes that "No crest was inscribed on his signet

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ring, nor had wit frosted his speech with its sparkling needles." In other words, in the presence of the soul, all of the social privileges and distinctions which characterize the milieu to which Dominique attaches such importance fall away into utter insigificance.

What we have here is a depiction of ordinary social relations as inimical to the happiness and purity of the inner person, the inner self that can live and prosper only apart from society. There can be no compromise between the rigorous demands of spiritual life and the habits of an existence based on conversation and dinner parties. The social and public dimension of life is radically discounted, while the private and intimate side is virtually apotheosised. "The Stranger" is a telling example of how far young Proust had taken the teachings of Thomas à Kempis in The Imitation of Christ, which he cites epigraphically several times in PJ. Theoretically at least, if not in practice, a virtuous solitude and renunciation of worldly pleasures were for Proust the necessary price that one had to pay to come into touch with the deepest part of oneself, the part from which one drew in the creation of works of art. That this notion conflicted with other aspects of his thought is undeniable. Yet it remained one of the foundational principles on which he grounded his aesthetic and moral philosophy.

In the final analysis the idea that seems to be circulating through many of the short "studies" as well as longer narratives of PJ (a few of the latter will be examined in the next chapter) is the rather preposterous one that real life, the life people lead in their normal everyday pursuits, is hopelessly degraded from the very outset, and has value only insofar as it provides the source from which the intoxicating revelations that spiritual purity and artistic expression make possible are drawn. Real daily life cannot produce a stable

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"residence for ideality,"[304] which exists only in the mind of the dreamer, the visionary, the poet. Life as lived by ordinary mortals is a miserable affair, redeemable solely through the gift of memory and the creative transformation of experience in works of art.

The idea that works of art, or more broadly speaking the creation of beauty, are what give artists their liberatory function in society, is omnipresent in PJ, and is often associated with high social rank. It will be recalled that Baldassare Silvande is a musician. The orphaned young aristocratic protagonist of "Violante, or Worldly Vanities"[305] inherits from her parents both their titles and their lively interest in the arts, containing in her person a "harmonious" blending of their best traits. Twice abandoned by young men who had aroused her sexual feelings, she decides to leave the duchy of Styria, of which she is now the mistress, to go to the Austrian court, where she marries the Duke of Bohemia and sinks into a morass of "bourgeois" pleasures and ambitions. But on an ideal plane, for young Proust, she represents that potential alliance between magnanmity of soul and artistic creativity that can be found in only a few privileged individuals. The fact that she betrays her spiritual inheritance is what gives the story its pathos. Her tutor and servant Augustin (whose name has induced some critics to connect with Saint Augustine) responds in this manner to her announcement that she wants to leave Styria:

> "God help us," said Augustin. "What will the poor people here do without your charities while you are living in the midst of all those wicked people? You will no longer play with our children in the woods. Who will play the organ at the church? We shall no longer see you painting in the fields, you will no longer compose your songs for us."

---

304 Frank Lentricchia's phrase where he describes "logocentrism" as aimed at "protect[ing] the ideality of meaning by inventing a residence for ideality--the interior of a consciousness shielded from all exterior contaminations," in After the New Criticism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980) 177.

305 Dupee ed. 25-34.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Don't worry, Augustin," she replies, "just keep my castle beautiful and my peasants of Styria faithful. The world for me is only a means to an end. It gives one vulgar but invincible arms, and if some day I am to be loved I shall have need of them."

But the means become the end, and everything of value in Violante's life is squandered. It is no wonder that Thomas à Kempis provides two epigraphic quotations for this story. It reads like a parable, a fable designed for didactic purposes. The fact that it is dated August 1892, and was therefore written when Proust was only twenty-one, matters much less than that Proust revised it for inclusion in PJ four years later. The story spoke for an important side of his personality and of his youthful vision of life. Central to that vision was the hope that art and nobility might combine to liberate the low-born and lift them to a higher level of culture. This vision was what made Violante's inability to realize her potential so significant and so disappointing to Proust.

However, the question of whether Violante's life history was truly meant to be a parable of moral and intellectual betrayal by France's elite, or whether it was subtly intended to poke fun at a still popular form of hero-worship on the part of sectors of all the French social classes, cannot be avoided. The question is relevant because of the attention Proust gave in PJ to various types of snobbery, where he was much less apt to adopt an ambiguous stance toward the high and mighty than he was in "Violante, or Worldly Vanities." In the snobbery pieces, his criticism is sharp and, I would say, unambiguous, making him a writer whom Edouard Rod described as "a La Bruyère of our world." But as already indicated, Proust, while directing his sharpest arrows at a spoiled and self-deluded aristocracy, does not really call into question the social conditions and hierarchies on which that class based its still considerable

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

prestige. After all, Proust himself, the scion of a wealthy and privileged family, was not ready in the mid 1890s to challenge the social order that had spawned him and given him the means with which to assert his identity as a writer and moralist. He was inclined toward nuances, not to black and white confrontations. For this reason, even while noting his dislike of discriminatory social practices and attitudes, we have to grant the possibility that in this as in most other aspects of his life Proust was ambivalent, and that he thought that certain types of snobbery were compatible with spiritual and intellectual distinction.[306]

We have to ask ourselves: would a writer who rejected the existing social order have appealed to and relied upon a newspaper such as Le Gaulois to publish his writings, advertise his book, and speak enthusiastically about his talents? That seems unlikely. The editor-in-chief of Le Gaulois, Arthur Meyer, was among the most reactionary figures in the Paris of the 1890s, yet it was not until the schism caused by the call in January 1898 for a revision of Dreyfus's trial, against which Meyer took an intransigent anti-revisionist stand, that Proust became alienated from him. Le Gaulois was a newspaper written by and for the social elite. It took an unyielding conservative position on everything that affected French politics and culture. On May 31, 1894 it published Proust's article on the literary *fête* organized by Montesquiou in Versailles; on June 21, 1895 his "Portraits of painters," and on June 12, 1896 the piece on the Tuileries from "Regrets, Rêveries, Changing Skies." Moreover, Proust asked Madeleine Lemaire to recommend him to Meyer in order to give him the entrée he needed to have various writings from Le Château de Réveillon published in Le Gaulois. In other words, it was not until Meyer turned down these writings that Proust

306 Carassus credits Proust with a much more nuanced understanding of snobbery than that of other contemporary writers who dealt with the phenomenon.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

changed the title of his collection to Les Plaisirs et les jours, only three months before the book's appearance. The name of a château was much more attractive to the editors of Le Gaulois than a (for many) obscure reference to a work by Hesiod.

In a section of The Prison Notebooks titled "The Modern Prince," Gramsci spoke of "the basic innovation introduced by the philosophy of praxis [that is, Marxism] into the science of politics and history" as being

> the demonstration that there is no abstract 'human nature', fixed and immutable (a concept which certainly derives from religious and transcendentalist thought), but that human nature is the totality of historically determined social relations, hence an historical fact which can, within certain limits, be ascertained with the methods of philology and criticism.[307]

In the 1890s, but later on as well, even if modified by all sorts of historical and philosophical mediations, Proust's conceptual frame of reference was fundamentally alien to the viewpoint alluded to by Gramsci, in part by choice, in part as a result of the values which he assimilated from teachers and friends and from the general spiritualist emphasis of French literary life at the time. His was essentially a "religious and transcendentalist" outlook resting not on conventional religious thought but rather on its modern secular variant which redirects metaphysical thinking towards art and the life of the mind.

---

[307] Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks 133.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter Ten

A Profusion of Intertextuality

"Proust's work is like a lens where all the tendencies of our literature converge."

Simone Kadi, La Peinture chez Proust et Baudelaire, 113.

Proust can no more be separated from his great literary models than can Joyce, Mann, and T.S.Eliot.. But unlike these three titans of modernism, who are associated so inextricably with a single dominant predecessor (Homer with Joyce, Goethe with Mann, and Dante with Eliot), Proust selected his models eclectically and diffusely. They range, in the French tradition, from La Bruyère to de Régnier and Robert de Montesquiou, from Racine to Baudelaire, from Saint-Simon to Chateaubriand.

Intertextuality is a general term designating various forms of literary appropriation by one writer of another writer's work: images and ideas, stylistic mannerisms, direct illustrative quotations or allusions in the text or in the form of epigraphs, technical devices, even plagiarism, an example of which, according to Anne Henry and several other scholars, is Proust's use of Tolstoyan death scenes for several of the short stories in PJ. Exploring the whys and wherefores of such borrowings has become a staple of contemporary literary criticism. As John Erickson has observed, "intertextuality is a notion that has become inseparable from the notion of criticism."[308] Julia Kristeva, who helped to popularize the term, considers it a key component of the

[308] John D. Erickson and Irène Pagès eds., Proust et le texte producteur (Ontario: University of Guelph Press, 1980) v.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

poststructuralist view of writing as perpetually open and therefore inherently resistant and inhospitable to definitive interpretations of any kind whatever.[309]

In the case of PJ, intertextuality manifests itself in all of the ways mentioned above, and it does so continuously, pervasively, from the very beginning to the end of the volume. The book also contains a rich array of intertextual references where the worlds of painting and music are paramount. As we have seen, the title itself is an example of borrowing by Proust from a classical work, Hesiod's Works and Days. We need to ask ourselves why the still very young writer felt the need to attach his own work to so many diverse literary figures and traditions. Was he, as suggested in chapter eight, making a panoramic survey of literary styles and forms typical of *fin-de-siècle* France? What is the spectrum of attitudes he displays towards the writers he cites epigraphically or alludes to in some fashion in the body of the pieces comprising PJ? Directly germane to the main emphasis of this study are the questions: What are the ideological implications of his borrowings and appropriations? What do they tell us about Proust's relationship with existing structures of literary and social values?

The potentially subversive or, at least, irreverent nature of the book's title derives from the fact that it points up a contrast between Hesiod, who conceived of work as a remedy for corruption and evil, and the modern era, where the pursuit of pleasure had replaced work, not as an occasional relief from toil but as the primary purpose of life. In the opening section of his poem, Hesiod recounts the five Ages of the world, which parallel the five races or "generations" of human beings created by Zeus, the last of which, forefathers of the generation existing in Hesiod's own time, finds itself in a miserable

---

[309] As cited by Jonathan Culler in Structuralist Poetics139, from Kristeva's Semiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse (Paris: Seuil, 1969) 146.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

condition and in desperate need of redemption. Such redemption, the poet says, can come only from pious respect for the superior power of the gods, and from daily labor both in the fields and in the industrious production of useful goods. In short, religion and work are Hesiod's solutions to the ills that afflict humankind.

The title of PJ, therefore, accomplished by insinuation what would have taken many pages to accomplish by persuasive argument, namely to highlight the current moral decline, seen in turn as a possible symptom of economic and social decline. In this sense, a rather substantial part of PJ, especially the stories and the portraits in "Fragments of Italian Comedy," can be read as *exempla* illustrating prevalent situations and character types in the Paris of the 1890s. On the one hand, the title serves to connect PJ to an ancient tradition of thought about the human condition, and on the other to complicate that connection by inviting the reader to reflect on the differences between past and present. Raymond Williams notes that tradition is usually "a version of the past which is intended to connect with and ratify the present."[310] But Proust uses literary and cultural tradition in a highly selective manner; he is an arbiter and decision-maker, not a servile imitator. One part of him wanted to "ratifiy" the present by appealing to the past, but another equally strong part of him interrogated and critiqued that past, and questioned the present. He no doubt wanted to stimulate his readers to look at the state of their society from a morally critical point of view, not, to be sure, with a view to radically changing it, but rather to correcting certain of its egregiously harmful habits and vices. Like his mentor Anatole France, and in the spirit of idealist philosophy imparted to him by Alphonse Darlu, he was seeking in his own way to restore the conception of literature as a vehicle of thought and worldly enlightenment. By linking himself

310 Williams 116.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to the classical world in this way, he was trying to reaffirm the natural, millennial alliance between literature and moral philosophy.

In her 1966 study The Social World of Marcel Proust, Germaine Brée synthesizes these points nicely: "For Hesiod's round of work," she said, "Proust substituted the calendar of social pleasures, but he kept the moral intent. His short stories read like allegories, and the 'Fragments of Italian Comedy' are transparently moral in mood."[311] This is a handy formulation, which Luzius Keller takes one step further when he opines, with reference to the Biblical allusion in the dedication, that Proust wanted the story of Noah and the Ark to stand for the imminence of an "apocalyptic" end to modern civilization. Like the apocalypse mentioned in Hesiod's Works and Days, Keller proposes, "the flood is the punishment for the decline of morals." [312] In another remark in his German edition of PJ Keller sees a thematic connection between Hesiod and modern decadence in the portrait "Olivian" (item 13 of "Fragments of Italian Comedy"), where the writer, speaking directly to his character, admonishes him to "Have the courage to take up rake and hoe. And one of these days you will know the pleasure of sensing a delicious odor rising in your memory as from a garden wheelbarrow filled to the brim."[313] With this allusion to pick and hoe, Keller believes, Proust was alluding to the poet who was first to value manual labor as a remedy against destructive pleasures and amusements.

But these ingeniously conceived literary and moral connections between Hesiod and Proust rest on somewhat unsteady ground, inasmuch as the allusion to Noah was designed to convey a deeply personal memory, not primarily an apocalyptic one, while the passage from "Olivian" has a distinctly

---

311 Brée 41.

312 Keller ed., Freuden und Tage 291n10.

313 Dupee ed. 51.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

metaphorical character, even if it is possible to see the allusion to "rake and hoe" as a reminder of the agricultural labors recommended by Hesiod. Keller's interpretations of these two passages do have the merit, however, of recalling to mind the "prophetic" side of Proust's personality which has been appropriately emphasized by several literary scholars, notably Edmund Wilson.[314] By "prophetic" I mean the capacity and the will to make oneself the conscience of a people by reason of one's spiritual and moral insight.

The epigraphs and other literary connections in PJ are too numerous and complex to be discussed in detail within the framework of this chapter. I shall limit myself to the most significant ones and attempt to give the reader a sense of their purpose in the overall economy of the book by pointing out what I think are the basic attitudes and ideas Proust wished to communicate through them. I am referring specifically here to the epigraphic uses he made in PJ of the following writers: Emerson, Kempis, Theocritus, Horace, Racine, Shakespeare, Baudelaire, La Bruyère, and Tolstoy.

An unexpectedly dominant epigraphic presence in PJ is that of Ralph Waldo Emerson, two of whose essays, "History" and "The Poet," had a strong impact on Proust and which he cited in PJ. In 1894 or 1895, he read them in a French translation by Emile Montégut. It is possible, however, that his attention was first drawn to the American philosopher by an article in the June 1894 issue of Le Mercure de France, where Camille Mauclair reviewed a more recent translation of Emerson's essays introduced by the Belgian symbolist playwright and poet Maurice Maeterlinck. In his twenty page preface, Maeterlinck called Emerson "the wise man of ordinary days," meaning that while Emersonian philosophy was transcendental in its inspiration, it was also practical and down to earth. Mauclair felt that Maeterlinck's long preface "was

---

[314] Wilson143-145.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

one of the rare metaphysical documents of French intellectuality in this century" and that it constituted a crucial link between American transcendentalism and European spiritualism.[315] In any event, in a letter to Reynaldo Hahn, written on January 18, 1895, Proust said that he was reading Emerson in an "enraptured" state.[316] The fact that he was under Emerson's spell at this particular time probably accounts for the four epigraphic citations from his essays in PJ, one each at the beginnings of "The Death of Baldassare Silvande," "Fragments," and "Regrets," and one for part three of "The End of Jealousy."

As Larkin Price has shown,[317] the passage from "History" that introduces part one of the story "The Death of Baldassare Silvande" intrigued Proust; it appears in various guises elsewhere in PJ and in several of his letters. What attracted him to this particular passage in "History" appears to have been not only its explicit philosophical content but its form, which relies on myth to convey its meaning rather than on logical argument. But a problem presents itself here: the French translation (translated in its turn into English) cited by Proust reads as follows: "Apollo kept the flocks of Admetus, say the poets; each man is also a hidden god who apes the fool." The original English is: "Apollo kept the flocks of Admetus, said the poets. When the gods come among men, they are not known. Jesus was not; Socrates and Shakespeare were not." [318]

Both passages stress the role of poets in transmitting myths down through the ages, myths which encapsulate basic narratives of birth, death, and rebirth, and signal the eternal duality of the human soul, which is of divine origin but which also assumes a fallible, all too human form. But the French passage

---

315 Le Mercure de France, June 1894,117-122.

316 Correspondance, t.I, 363. Proust said he was reading Emerson "avec ivresse."

317 Price, Materials 233-235.

318 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "History," Self Reliance and Other Essays (Toronto: General Publishing Company, 1993) 13.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

is more laconic; it stresses the double nature of the human species. The English original honors the poets among us by comparing Socrates and Shakespeare, mere mortals, to Jesus, the son of God, and it does so by placing them on the same plane as God. The French passage is more pertinent to the story of Baldassare Silvande, because he, although a gifted musician and composer, has "aped the fool" by devoting much of his life to superficial and wasteful pursuits instead of cultivating the deepest part of himself. Yet he is "a hidden god," his genius comes from above, it cannot be attributed solely to chance, or to biological heredity. This "hidden god" also performs humble tasks, he mixes with ordinary people, and suffers in the same way that all mortal creatures suffer. In this sense, he is no different from all other human beings.

The passage introducing "Les Regrets--Rêveries Couleur du temps" is taken from the essay "The Poet," where Emerson undertakes a "consideration of the nature and functions of the Poet" in modern times. One of the characteristics of this essay for which Proust no doubt felt a strong affinity was that it gave a primary role to "thought" in the process of poetic creation. In several instances I have commented on the primacy of "thought" in Proust's critical and self-reflective lexicon. In this regard, he found in Emerson a kindred spirit, a thinker who understood what Proust felt almost instinctively, namely that

> . . .it is not meters, but a meter-making argument, that makes a poem,--a thought so passionate and alive, that, like the spirit of a plant or an animal, it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing. The thought and the form are equal in the order of time, but in the order of genesis the thought is prior to the form. The poet has a new thought: he has a whole new experience to unfold; he will tell us how it was with him, and all men will be the richer in his fortune.[319]

In Emerson's somewhat overheated prose we recognize some of

---

[319] Emerson 68.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the cardinal features of Proust's idealist aesthetics: his belief that each new writer or artist renews the world with a fresh vision of things; his belief that thought is generative of beauty; his subordination of form to feeling. But the passage he uses for "Les Regrets" is of another order; it concerns the poet's "manner of living," where Emerson's responsiveness to the ordinary aspects of natural life struck another sympathetic chord in Proust. In this case, the French translation is more literally faithful to the English original. It exhorts the poet to live a simple life, and to take delight in the sun, the sky, the air. Proust translated Emerson's advice, for example, into the vibrant, sensorial, exquisitely earthy lines that open the prose poem "A Walk." This prose-poetic fragment, written in the first person, begins by describing the colors, the vibrancy, the joyfulness of a cold morning in early spring, where an "intense and ardent" sky and the clear water of a nearby pond form the backdrop of an idyllic scene. But in the second paragraph, Proust shifts our mind's eye to another very different site, a nearby barnyard, which leads then to a moment of reflection and to the use of imagery that express in seven lines one of the core principles of his aesthetic philosophy:

> The barnyard, where one went for eggs, was a no less pleasing sight. The sun, like an inspired and prolific poet who does not scorn to dispense beauty in the humblest places, which no one had ever dreamed of including in the realm of art before, warmed the salutary vigor of the dunghill, of the rough paved court, and of the pear tree broken and bent like an old serving woman.[320]

This short passage suggests that Proust's obsession with sunlight may have had a "mythic" origin in that Apollo was at once the god of light, of poetry and music, and of youth (and therefore of ardent desire). He was also associated with the care of flocks and herds, noted earlier with regard to

---

[320] Dupee ed.102.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Baldassare Silvande, which reappears in the final paragraph of "A Walk." After drawing the reader's attention to the "regally attired" peacock which deigns to share the same space with chickens, pigs and goats-- "Juno's bird," a common symbol of beauty in symbolist and decadent verse--the narrator tells us that it is right here, among ordinary animals and "rustic farm implements"

> . . . . .that the peacock spends his life, a veritable bird of paradise in the barnyard among the turkeys and the hens, like a captive Andromache spinning her wool among her slaves, except that unlike her he has left behind none of the splendors of royal insignia, a radiant Apollo, recognizable always--even when he guards Admetus's flock.[321]

Thomas à Kempis's The Imitation of Christ was widely read and cited in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1893, Proust went to the trouble of borrowing a copy from Pierre Lavallée, and seems to have been quite affected by it.[322] Like Maurice Barrès in volume two of his trilogy Le Culte du moi, titled Un Homme Libre (1887), Proust found in the Imitation an eminently quotable authority on how to live with rectitude in a corrupt social environment that perpetually distracts and attracts the vulnerable individual with its pleasures and refinements. Barrès was moved by the book's arguments for the virtue of solitude and silence.[323]

Proust used this influential fifteenth century work as an ideological support for two of his short stories, "Violante, or Worldly Vanities," and "A Young Girl's Confession." Both are stories of young women who come to an unhappy end: Violante, who survives physically to old age but who dies spiritually at the moment when she rejects her tutor Augustin's advice to seek fulfillment not in worldly pleasures but in doing what she loves with "the deepest tendencies of

---

321 Dupee ed103.

322.In a short letter to Lavallée Proust assured his friend that he would soon return his copy of the Imitation "which I have enjoyed and used very much." Correspondance, t. I, 234.

323 Maurice Barrès, Un Amour libre (Paris: Emile Paul, 1912)16, 135.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her soul;" and an unnamed young woman who tells her story in the form of a confession to an equally nameless listener who lends a (presumably) sympathetic ear to what the girl is saying.

In both stories the parental role is important, either by reason of its absence because of an untimely fatal accident (in "Violante"), or because of a mother's inability to prevent her daughter, the first person narrator, from yielding to her sexual impulses in the arms of a seductive young man (in "A Young Girl's Confession"). The epigraphs from the Imitation are used to emphasize how narrow and hazardous the path to virtue is, and how fearsome the temptations that lie in wait once a young person during her formative years fails to develop the strength of "will" necessary to maintain her moral equilibrium. Kempis's ascetic thought serves the purpose of placing these two tales in a fabular atmosphere where good and evil, rectitude and sin, are at war with each other, and where what is at stake are the souls of the two protagonists. Stéphane Sarkany speaks in this connection of the "Christian ascetic and medieval morality" in PJ.[324] In fact, there is no way of avoiding the conclusion that for young Proust the human soul is a battleground, fought over by fiercely opposed forces, in a war that can give no quarter, for the stakes are high and permanent.

The confessional mode has induced some Proust scholars to suspect the influence of Saint Augustine and Rousseau. One could make a reasonable case for the former, inasmuch as Violante's mentor and tutor is named Augustin, and he intervenes in one of the exceedingly rare moments in Proust's early fictions where the leading character enters into a dialogic relationship with someone who looks at the world from a different and critical perspective, thus allowing for a more dialectically structured plot. In the

---

[324] Sarkany, "Pragmatique et réception de *Les Plaisirs et les jours*," in Erickson and Pagès eds., Proust et le texte producteur115-122.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Confession," however, there is nothing of this sort, only the shocked expression and fatal collapse of the mother when she sees her daughter locked in passionate embrace not with her fiancé, but with another young man. As a result of this horrific scene, the girl shoots herself, and it is in this mortally wounded state that she tells her story. Life is thus seen as a perilous adventure demanding the utmost rigor and self-discipline to be lived successfully, from a Christian point of view.

Lines from one of Theocritus's bucolic poems, used for part V of "The Melancholy Summer of Mme de Breyves," contrast the pastoral serenity of a flock of young sheep with the torments of the shepherd Polyphemus, who is consumed by his unrequited love for the nymph Galatea: an apt passage for a story about the psychology of love and desire. Proust uses two lines from Horace for the satirical social commentary of "A Dinner in Society," the equal, I think, in its humorous effects, to similar episodes in the Recherche, and the most acute collective portrait in PJ. Unlike almost all of the book's other stories and sketches, "A Dinner in Society" lets in some air from the outside world, a refreshing relief from the book's "hothouse" atmosphere. We witness amusing exchanges between characters, several of whom are servilely attached to various personalities in the Parisian literary world, while the narrator lets the reader in on the little games and secrets of this socially elite but morally degraded group of dinner guests. There is even a soupçon of explicit political satire in this sketch, rare in Proust's early writing, when the hostess, Mme Fremer, ends a brief discussion about anarchism by asking what such a doctrine could possibly do for the world, since "rich and poor we have always with us." The narrator comments:

> And all these people, the poorest among them having an income of at least a hundred thousand pounds, impressed by the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> truth of her remark and relieved of their scruples, emptied with beaming cheerfulness their last glass of champagne.[325]

The epigraphic quote from Racine's Phèdre that introduces "The Melancholy Summer of Mme de Breyves" is taken from the same scene of Act One to which Proust referred in the dedication. It revolves around the moment in which Phèdre summons up the courage to confess her sexual love for Hyppolyte to her nurse Œnone. In the passage cited here, she compares her stricken heart to the "wound" her sister Ariadne had suffered when she was abandoned by Theseus, now Phèdre's husband, on the island of Naxos. According to the version of the Greek myth used by Racine, Ariadne died after her abandonment by Theseus, and it is this link between love and death that the playwright wanted to underline in the passage quoted by Proust, who in turn treats the theme of love precisely as a "wound," as an affliction, a terrible and irrational illness of the soul that devours its victim. When deep-seated taboos are added to the natural pains of love, the end result is tragic, whether literally as in the story of Phèdre, or spiritually, in the story of Mme de Breyves.

There is a reason rooted in myth underlying Proust's use of the passage from Act One, scene three when Phèdre exclaims: "Ariadne, my sister, by what a love wounded did you die on the shores where you were abandoned!". It shows how carefully Proust arranged his materials in some of these stories, where the form and the theme complement each other in suggestive ways. The end of the long last paragraph of "The Melancholy Summer" picks up again on the theme of a young woman "wounded" by love:

> If, sometimes, walking along the beach or in the woods, she lets the pleasure of contemplation or of reverie, or even a sweet odor, or a song brought from a distance and muffled by the breeze, gently take possession of her, make her for an instant forget her pain, all at once she feels a terrible blow and a wound in her

---

325 Dupee ed. 97.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> heart--and above the waves, higher than the leaves, in the misty horizon of woods or sea, she catches sight of the vague image of her invisible and ever-present conqueror, his eyes shining through the clouds, as on the day when he offered himself to her, and sees him vanish with the quiver from which he has taken and let fly another arrow.[326]

The famous soliloquy in Act Five, Scene Five where Macbeth speaks of "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow. . .," after learning of Lady Macbeth's death, appears at the beginning of the fourth and final part of "The Death of Baldassare Silvande." Its purpose seems to be that of recalling the epigraph which begins the story, where Emerson spoke of every man as a "fool" inhabiting the body of a god, just as Apollo tilled the fields for a year in the guise of a humble farmworker. Baldassare is as much fool as god; he has wasted the substance of his genius in trivial ways. Yet there is something strained in the connection Proust wants to make with Macbeth, for whom "all our yesterdays have lighted fools/The way to dusty death," because of the magnitude of the events in the Shakespearian tragedy compared with those in Baldassare. In any case, the reader needs to reflect at length on the questions raised by the two epigraphs in relation to the story's plot line and character portraits. There is no question that Proust had given much thought to how his narratives might best manifest diverse facets of his conception of life. They are far more dense and complex than one might think at first glance.

Baudelaire was close to Proust's heart from his student days on. Since symbolists and decadents both claimed Baudelaire as one of their sacred forebears, it was inevitable that young Proust would look to him for spiritual wisdom as well as inspiration in the literary realm.

A point that deserves some consideration concerns the possibility that PJ is in effect Proust's Fleurs du mal. Like the Fleurs du mal, the items in PJ

---

[326] Dupee ed.78.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

assumed form and unity only after their author had written most of them prior to the book's definitive status as an anthology. More essentially, PJ, like the Fleurs du mal, was a work in which beauty had been wrested and shaped from its source in "evil," death, and various forms of social and moral corruption. Keller's thesis that PJ is at bottom a "decadent" work exemplifying the concerns of poets and novelists belonging to that school, and Kingcaid's stress on young Proust's obsession with "neurosis," illness, and "fetishism" give such an interpretation some authority.

One expression of Proust's deep affinity for Baudelaire was his desire to interrelate and to blend poetry, music and painting in a single interactive voice heralding a new era in the history of art. Another was his conviction that criticism was the partner of creativity, not its enemy. Both Baudelaire and Proust thought of their writing as having an organic unity. Both were "modernist" in their sensibilities, yet both were deeply influenced by an essentially Catholic conception of good and evil. Perhaps most important, both attributed primary importance to the notion of an "inner self," a core of individuality which they articulated in various ways, as in Baudelaire's belief--one with which Proust certainly agreed--that "There can only be any true, that is to say, any moral, progress in the individual and through the individual himself."[327] In addition, we need to remember that it was not only the Fleurs du mal that enchanted Proust. The Little Poems in Prose were also a literary reference point that affected him as it did successive generations of writers, and not only in France.

There were also important differences between them. Proust was less prone than Baudelaire to supernaturalism and especially to the idea that

---

[327] Baudelaire as cited and translated by John Middleton Murry, "Baudelaire," in Henri Peyre ed., Baudelaire--A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962) 107.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

evil exists not only in human affairs but in the very constitution of the universe. Baudelaire truly believed that "the cleverest ruse of the devil is to persuade us that he doesn't exist." In Les Fleurs du mal the poet oscillates between "the dark abyss into which my heart has fallen" and "the clear fire that fills the limpid spaces." Proust did not see descent into the abyss as a condition for ascent to the realm of the spirit in the same way as did Baudelaire. Yet he did believe, with Baudelaire, that beauty could be extracted from evil, and that artistic creation was a means with which to redeem a fallen world.

Proust drew in PJ from both the Fleurs du mal and the Petits poèmes en prose for images, devices and themes. Two examples of how the former work lived on in the pages of PJ are the "Portraits of Painters" and the prose poem "The Sea," while the Petits poèmes are present in the short story "The Melancholy Summer of Mme de Breyves" and in the last of the thirty pieces comprising the "Regrets," titled "Harbor Sails."

Baudelaire was a major contributor to the sub-genre of poetry about painting in "Les Phares," which is part of the first section of his Fleurs du mal. Proust followed his lead in PJ, not in a single poem but in four, one of which, on Watteau, recalls Baudelaire's quatrain on the eighteenth century painter. An obvious yet easily missed characteristic of the Proust and the Baudelaire portraits is that they do not describe the painter himself but rather several of his creations, which is one way of saying that for an artist, the deepest part of him is embodied in his art, not in his worldly experience and physical appearance. Baudelaire and Proust both chose to emphasize the "carnivalesque" and theatrical side of Watteau's artistic personality, as seen in his depictions of actors from the Italian and French comic theatre, and in his famous "Embarkation for Cythère," an airy evocation of a *fête galante* that has

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

charmed generations of visitors to the Louvre.[328]

"The Sea," mentioned in chapter five in connection with Proust's "musical" aesthetic, is shot through with Baudelairian imagery, as noted by Anne Henry and Thierry Laget. Baudelaire's "Man and the Sea" is a philosophical poem of the kind that Proust admired, both for what it said and for what it suggested, in the sense that the poem acts as a catalyst for further thought on the part of the reader. It first likens man and the sea, in the depth of their "intimate riches" and "secrets," then alludes to the eons of time during which man and sea have been enemies, both "remorseless" lovers of "carnage and death," and because of this, "eternal combatants, implacable brothers." Baudelaire's poem "Music" is closer in spirit to Proust's "The Sea" inasmuch as it explicitly compares the effects of the sea on his state of mind with the effects of music. But Proust does something different with this relationship. Where Baudelaire pictures the sea as expressing both the turbulent and the depressive parts of his personality, Proust begins his little essay by reflecting on the fascination of the sea for those who have known the "disgust of life" and "the lure of mystery" even before sorrow has afflicted them. Unlike Baudelaire, he then dwells exclusively on why the sea, in its vastness and purity, "bears no traces of men's toil and of their lives." In other words, Proust does not follow Baudelaire's cue, at least not in his vision of what the sea symbolizes in human experience, and he uses the poet's evocation of the sea's "musical" enchantment for his own quite different purposes.

Thus, there is nothing crudely imitative in Proust's use of these Baudelaire poems. He seizes upon their imagery, and reflects on how music is comparable to the sea in its freedom from all worldly taint, but does not merely

---

328 The best study of Proust's "Portraits of Painters" is by J. Theodore Johnson, "Proust's Early Portraits de Peintres," Comparative Literature Studies, (4), 1967, 397-408. There are excellent pages of analysis also in Anne Henry's Marcel Proust-Théories pour une esthétique.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ape his predecessor. Intertextual presences in this instance are signs not of subordination on Proust's part to a revered model, but of independence grounded in knowledge of what literary tradition offered him that could be turned creatively to his own ends.

The same is true of Proust's use of Baudelairian images and themes in the story "The Melancholy Summer of Mme de Breyves," which has been studied most intensively by Maria Paganini. At the end of part four of this story that mixes fabular and real historical elements, the narrator dwells on a conception of the enraptured lover that is in fundamental respects akin to the state of mind customarily associated with the "intuitive" poet, the "ecstatic" believer, and the "mystically" exalted lover of nature and music, which have their seat in "the mind in its divinest form." Françoise, the story's unhappy heroine, is living out the drama of a passion fed by her mind and her imagination that have fixed themselves on an individual who bears little if any resemblance to the figure conjured up by her fantasy. It is this fantasy that gives meaning and purpose to her life, and it is embodied in the rather ordinary figure of Monsieur Jacques de Laléande, a musician associated by Proust with several "Wagnerian" leitmotifs. Part four ends with the following portentous words, which comment on Françoise's reviling of that part of her which, in Proust's scheme of things, endowed her with a spiritual nobility far more precious than the aristocratic name she has inherited by birth:

> . . .she reviled that inexpressible feeling of the mystery of things when our spirit loses itself in the radiance of beauty like that of the sun when it sinks into the sea, for having deepened her love, for having immaterialized, broadened, infinitized it without, for all that, making it less agonizing, for as Baudelaire says (speaking of the end of autumn days), "there are certain delicious sensations which are no less intense for being vague; and there is no sharper point

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

than that of infinity."[329]

The quote is from the prose poem "Le 'Confiteor' de l'artiste," where Baudelaire uses the sacrament of confession to speak of his tormented desires as a lover and as a poet. It is an exceedingly compressed expression of the "duel" in him resulting from his incessant "study of the beautiful" which makes him, like all artists, "cry with fright before being beaten." Something of this "duel" and this duality is what Proust seems to have been alluding to in the passage quoted above, where he makes use of a Baudelairian concept but applies it to a woman, Françoise, rather than to a man. Françoise is in the grips of a kind of "divine" fury, a struggle which will go on in her soul for as long as her passion for Laléande feeds on itself and its accompanying fantasies and not on the flesh and blood man called Jacques de Laléande.

A short story with a theme similar to that of "Melancholy Summer" is "L'Indifférent," in which we find a treatment of love as degrading obsession that foreshadows the Recherche in the depictions of Swann's "love" for Odette and the narrator's emotional involvements with Gilberte and then with Albertine. Evidently Proust did not think that this story was worthy of inclusion in PJ.[330] It concerns a young aristocratic woman, Madeleine de Gouvres, who finds herself irresistibly attracted to a man, Monsieur Lepré, only after Lepré makes it clear that he is not romantically or sexually interested in her. It is his very "indifference" to her that ignites her passion. There is something in her temperament and psychological makeup that impels her to desire this man who, "as all of Paris knows," a friend informs her, although a charming young man,

---

329 Dupee ed.75.

330 The story appeared in La Vie contemporaine et revue parisienne réunies on March 1, 1896, 428- 439. The quote is taken from Marcel Proust, L'Indifférent, ed. Philip Kolb (Paris: Gallimard, 1978) 60.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

has a single vice: "He loves ignoble women of the type you find in the dirt and whom he loves madly." Thus two forms of human perversity meet and clash to produce misery and unhappiness, as happens so often in Proust's fictional universe.

One other key with which to unlock the secrets of intertextuality in PJ is provided by Baudelaire's prose poem "The Port," which Proust assimilates in "Harbor Sails." Both of these prose poetic texts fix the mind's eye on the sense of mystery and the unknown that emanates from ships in the harbor, vessels that have traveled the seas and that now enjoy a brief moment of repose before setting sail again to far off places. This short piece also illustrates Proust's sensitivity to impressionist painting, which was characterized by just this kind of atmosphere and subject matter.

In the literature of what the French call *mondanité* dealing with the behavior of men and women in society who act parts assigned to them by their social class but who are also a prey to their own ambitions and insecurities, the seventeenth century produced Molière and Pascal, with La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld, Fénelon and others not far behind. What La Bruyère brought to the genre of moral and social observation is the ideal of the sincere man, the person who combines elegance, restraint, tact, and good taste in equal measure, and who moves in society with considered regard for himself and others. It is according to this standard that La Bruyère evaluates his fellow human beings, and finds most of them sadly deficient. He is pessimistic yet modestly hopeful that sound advice, if couched in pleasurable form, as in his own writing, might lead to the correction of foibles and vices that otherwise would fester and deteriorate. He denounced pretense and snobbery, and within limits argued against some of the more obvious manifestations of inequity and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

injustice. He was a man of moderate views, a conservative in his thinking, never prone to advocacy of extreme positions. These traits and qualities were what made him attractive to Proust, whose own writings, from PJ to the Recherche, have an honorable place in the history of French literature that deals with *mondanité*. [331]

Proust's reflections on matters of the heart, on various types of women, on fashion, on social mores and habits, on the faults of the aristocracy, and on such things as the art of conversation, dinner parties, and salons owe much to La Bruyère's treatment of these subjects. Like Proust, La Bruyère did not question the idea of a social hierarchy, but he did point out flaws in the morals underlying that hierarchy that could be used by bolder individuals for purposes other than literary. Roger Francillon put the essential elements of the connection between La Bruyère and Proust quite succinctly when he observed that

> . . .the most important bases for the relationship between the two writers are: a controlled sensitivity both to the delicacy of feelings and to what is laughable in society, an understanding of the transitoriness of men and things, a rejection of all systems of thought and a stubborn determination to transform the banal and daily stuff of life, by means of style, into a work of art.[332]

One might quibble with what Francillon says about Proust's "rejection of all systems of thought" (Proust was a lifelong follower of Kantian idealism, and of the Schopenhauerian view of art and the artist) but his view of the two writers strikes me as sound. A few comparative examples from the Caractères and PJ will have to suffice here.

---

331 In 1888 the seventeen-year-old Proust won a de luxe edition of the Œuvres de la Bruyère ed. by Gustave Servois Album (Paris: Hachette, 1882) as a school prize for French composition: Marcel Proust, Usuels de la Réserve (Paris: 1965)14.

332 Roger Francillon, "Proust und La Bruyère," in Marcel Proust, Bezüge und Strukturen--Studien zu Les Plaisirs et les Jours, ed. Luzius Keller, 52-74.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Consider for example what La Bruyère has to say about love and friendship in the section of his book called "On the Heart":

> Love is born suddenly, without reflection, by attraction or by weakness: a beautiful feature seizes us, and determines us. Friendship on the other hand is formed little by little, with time, through contact, by long interaction. How much intelligence, goodness of heart, commitment, favors and generosity among friends, in order to do in several years much less than is done sometimes in a moment by a beautiful face or a beautiful hand![333]

The tone and attitude conveyed by La Bruyère is very close to Proust's understanding of the contradictions and apparent paradoxes that pervade intimate human relationships. What Proust brings to his depictions of these relationships, however, that is entirely missing in La Bruyère is an intense sensuality and an enjoyment of and need for natural beauty and sensorial expressiveness.

Another feature of Caractères that appears in PJ is a series of "portraits" drawn from life but elaborated with great artistry. His various feminine types, with a few adjustments here and there, are close in spirit to Proust's portraits of Parisian men and women. Proust's portrait of "Oranthe" (an invented name like many of La Bruyère's) is no doubt a pastiche of La Bruyère's manner in describing such characters. It begins by directly interrogating the character, in much the same way that La Bruyère addressed some of his subjects:

> So you didn't go to bed last night? You haven't washed this morning?
>
> But why proclaim it from the house tops, Oranthe? Brilliantly gifted as you are, isn't that enough to distinguish you from common mortals? Must you insist upon acting such a pitiful role besides?
>
> You are hounded by creditors, your infidelities drive your wife to despair. To put on evening dress would seem to you tantamount to donning a livery, and no one could persuade you to go into society other than disheveled. Seated at dinner you keep your

[333] Jean de La Bruyère, Les Caractères précédés des Caractères de Théophraste, ed. Robert Pignarre (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1965) 136.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> gloves on to prove that you are not eating, and if ever you have a fever at night you call for your victoria and go for a drive in the Bois de Boulogne.[334]

"Protest against Frankness" is another La Bruyère pastiche. Proust introduces three men, Percy, Laurence, and Augustin, calling the latter, who "always tells the truth," a true friend, but we quickly learn that "he is frank, in the same way that Percy is a lecturer, not in your interest but for his own pleasure." The little sketch ends by informing the reader that these three "impudent scoundrels," far from losing favor in society, are the object of applause and keen interest. The three men have hoodwinked an entire social milieu. Little gems similar to this are numerous in the Caractères.

The snobs, the roués and sophisticates, the haughty women and pretentious men of the Caractères and the "Fragments from Italian Comedy" are "actors" performing their parts in ways that, as Proust saw it, remain fixed in the minds of their social peers, thus allowing the individuals who wear these masks in society a wide latitude within which, in their private lives, to be as outrageous as they wish. Assuming the identities of typical comic characters is the price that real people, unlike the stock characters they imitate, gladly pay for a freedom from restraint that allows them virtually unlimited license to do and say what they want. For Proust, Italian comedy was a convenient metaphor for society itself in its hilarious and tragi-comic displays of affectation, foolishness, hypocrisy, self-delusion, cowardice, pretense. Proust's voice in these "Fragments" was that of a satirist, a moralist, and a shrewd man of the world.

Proust's interest in Russian fiction was noted by several of his friends in the early years of the 1890s. He was keenly interested in the moral questions raised by Dostoievsky and Tolstoy, and he turned to them, as he did

---

[334] Dupee ed. 43.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to certain nineteenth century English novelists (especially George Eliot and Thomas Hardy) for perspectives on the problems of modern society for which the French novel and French poetry did not furnish entirely satisfactory answers. Concern with the interrelations between art and morality was deeply rooted in French literature, but the Russians and the English gave a new immediacy to this concern, and in ways that reflected societies whose social structures and historical experiences diverged radically from those of the French nation. The Russian sense of character and the British flair for social contextualization were among the qualities that attracted him.

As far as aTolstoyan presence in PJ is concerned, the case has been persuasively argued by Anne Henry and several others, notably Pierre Daum, but Henry should be credited in particular for a discovery and an insight that had not occurred to anyone before her, as far as I know. There is only one unresolved question in her analysis, and it is that she seems to contradict herself on the nature of Proust's attitude toward the two characters, Baldassare and Honoré, the ill-fated but finally redeemed protagonists of the stories that open and close the volume. On the one hand, she argues that "without the story of Ivan Ilych which tells an identical story of revolt and then of inward conversion that allows for a reconciliation with death, 'The Death of Baldassare Silvande' could never have been written." To this she adds, a propos of "The End of Jealousy," that this story too, on the basis of strong internal evidence, "recalls too irresistibly the death of Prince André, also a jealous lover, his slow agony next to the woman who keeps watch over him and who has caused his torment, to allow us to discard the hypothesis of a direct influence of these pages from War and Peace on Proust's short story." [335]

But further on in her analysis, Henry shifts her ground by arguing

[335] Anne Henry, Marcel Proust--Théories pour une esthétique 34.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

that after 1893, Proust felt the need to detach himself explicitly from vague idealism by caricaturing it in "The Death of Baldassare Silvande." Baldassare, the refined aesthete, who closely resembles the dandy Robert de Montesquiou, lives among chrysanthemums, kid goats, and black cats in a circular-shaped living room looking out on the ocean, is compelled to renounce all pretention in the face of the reductive power of death, but before he descends into his grave, Proust ridicules him by the spiciest of autopastiches in gathering together all of his own devices as a decadent writer. To buttress her argument, Henry points out that the anthology of Tolstoyan death scenes titled La Mort , which appeared in 1886, contained for the first time in French the death scene from Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych," which had not yet been translated in its entirety, plus extracts from already published novels, the death of Prince André of War and Peace, the death of Levin in Anna Karenina, and three other sketches on the same theme, "The Three Dead," of 1859, which recount the final minutes on earth of a woman traveling on a train, of a simple moujik, and of a tree, which Tolstoy transformed virtually into a suffering human being.

That such writing on a theme that was never far from Proust's consciousness could have had a strong impact on him makes eminently good sense. Henry notes in support of her thesis that Baldassare, this esthete and viscount in the vaguely named country of Sylvania, after a life of extravagant wastefulness and only occasional musical productivity, of numerous love affairs and lavish banquets, comes to terms with his own spiritual needs in the last moments of his life, like the hero of "The Death of Ivan Ilych." But in advancing the argument that Proust had, after 1893, shifted in his basic orientation from "vague idealism" to a much more critical and down-to-earth attitude toward his two protagonists, Henry makes us wonder about what exactly the vantage point

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was from which Proust was treating his death scenes: were they really "plagiarisms" of Tolstoyan scenes, as she thinks, or were they borrowings for satirical and even caricatural purposes, or perhaps in order to say something about human existence that might differ sgnificantly from what Tolstoy had to say? I would venture to guess that, as was his wont, Proust was making use of another writer, in these two instances Tolstoy, but that he was doing so for reasons of his own, having to do with what Henry herself calls his new understanding that "asestheticism was unable to confront the great questions of existence." Thus Tolstoy was not so much imitated plagiaristically as utilized in a way that lent greater moral authority to Proust's youthful fictional writings.

There is little doubt, in any event, that Tolstoy helped Proust to shape his death scenes. A comparison of the endings of "The Death of Ivan Ilych" and "The Death of Baldassare Silvande" lends credence to Henry's discovery that a usage of some sort was operative. Here is the ending of Tolstoy's story, written in 1886:

> And suddenly it grew clear to him that what had been oppressing him and would not leave him was all dropping away at once from two sides, from ten sides, and from all sides. He was sorry for them, he must act so as not to hurt them: release them and free himself from these sufferings. "How good and how simple!" he thought. "And the pain?" he asked himself. "What has become of it? Where are you, pain?"
>
> He turned his attention to it.
>
> "Yes, here it is. Well, what of it? Let the pain be."
>
> "And death. . .where is it?"
>
> He sought his former accustomed fear of death and did not find it. "Where is it? What death?" There was no fear because there was no death.
>
> In place of death there was light.
>
> "So that's what it is!" he suddenly exclaimed aloud. "What joy"!
>
> To him all this happened in a single instant, and the meaning of that instant did not change. For those present his agony continued for another two hours. Something rattled in his throat, his emaciated body twitched, then the gasping and rattle became less and less frequent.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"It is finished!" said someone near him.

He heard these words and repeated them in his soul.

"Death is finished," he said to himself. "It is no more!"

He drew in a breath, stopped in the midst of a sigh, stretched out, and died.[336]

And now the last scene of "The Death of Baldassare Silvande:"

At this moment the doctor beckoned everyone to approach, saying, "This is the end!"

Baldassare lay with closed eyes, and his heart listened to the bell which his ears, paralyzed by approaching death, could no longer hear. Once more he saw his mother kissing him as she always did when he came home, then in the evening tucking him in bed, warming his feet in her hands, staying with him if he could not sleep. He remembered Robinson Crusoe, and evenings in the garden when his sister sang, and his professor predicted that one day he would be a great musician, and his mother's emotion which she tried in vain to hide. Now there was no more time to realize that passionate expectation of his mother and sister which he had so cruelly disappointed. He saw again the tall linden tree under which he had become betrothed and the day when his betrothal had been broken, when only his mother had known how to comfort him. He thought he was kissing his old nurse, holding his first violin. He saw it all again through a luminous distance, sweet and sad like the one on which the sightless windows gazed, facing woods and pastures.

All this he saw, yet not two minutes had elapsed since the doctor, listening to his heart, had said "This is the end!" Then, rising, "All is over."

Alexis, his mother, and Jean Galéas knelt down, together with the Duke of Parma, who had just arrived. The servants were weeping in the open doorway.[337]

Compared with the ending of "The Death of Ivan Ilych," where there truly is a reconciliation of sorts with death, Baldassare's final moments are much more taken up with remembrances of people, places and emotions associated with his formative years than they are with death. But let's look a bit more closely at the Tolstoyan and the Proustian scenes. There are common

---

336 Leo Tolstoy, Great Short Works of Leo Tolstoy , introd. by John Bayley, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) 302.

337 Dupee ed., 23-24.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

features. They are 1) the death sentence itself, pronounced by someone at Ivan's bedside in Tolstoy, by the doctor in Proust; 2) the distortion of the sense of time in both stories, where thought is extraordinarily compressed as death approaches; 3) the presence of family members and friends at the death scene; 4) the image of light, presented in an unadorned way by Tolstoy, in an image, that of "luminous distance," by Proust, which reflects the influence of impressionism on his imagination, where Tolstoy was inclined merely to state an objective fact, even if that fact also has a clear spiritual connotation. But there are important differences between the two endings.

Tolstoy focuses quite closely on the fact of impending death itself, and on how Ivan comes to terms with it, through an exceptional moment of reconciliation involving a falling away of pain and, above all, of the fear of death that had always haunted him. In Tolstoy, death has almost a friendly mien; it is what separates Ivan from his family and friends. They cannot comprehend what the dying man is experiencing. Ivan thinks of the world outside his room now as something remote, far off, irrelevant to the great and decisive moment through which he is passing.

With Proust, the emphasis is on life, not death, or at least on Baladassare's still powerful attachment to life, as we see in the series of memories that occur to him as he lies paralyzed in his bed. In fact, we recognize in this ending several of the key components of Marcel's first experiences as recounted in the Recherche, but already very much present to Proust's imagination in PJ, and in Jean Santeuil: his mother's ever comforting presence, his favorite childhood reading, the benevolent aspects of nature that surrounded him. Baldassare is but a projection of Proust's own personality and vision, and what matters in the death scene is the life he is able to recall, not the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

death that is about to take him. Another difference is that the death scene in Proust highlights a failure, a missed opportunity, time spent frivolously, one of the central ideas informing all of Proust's writing, and that preoccupied him constantly: the idea that life offers the individual only so many chances, only so many privileged moments, which must be seized in the eternal struggle against loss, waste, and dispersion. Such a failure is especially sad, in Proust's view of things, when it involves a person's capacity for creative and artistic expression, which alone, except for the illuminations made possible precisely by death, redeems the otherwise inevitable passing away of all things and beings, great and small. From Tolstoy, we learn something about the actual experience of death. From Proust we learn about the value of life, but through sensous and sensory experience, through what memory brings in its wake that is meaningful, through light that truly enlightens the reader about a character's relationship with life much more than about his way of understanding death.

The last scene of "The End of Jealousy" is a much more authentically Tolstoyan ending than the one just reviewed, in that it is charged with that deep humanitarian feeling of universal fellowship that we associate with the Russian novelist. Both Tolstoy and Proust understood the psychological dynamics of jealousy very well, and it is logical that in this respect, Proust owed much to Tolstoy. In any case, jealousy, and the epistemological and moral problems it raises, is a common theme that justifies a comparative study of the two writers.

Intertextual presences in Proust's early writings therefore reflect not only his reading and assimilation of the techniques and devices used by other authors he admired, but also his formal education, his social background, his philosophical interests and concerns, his family life, his friendships and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

relationships in Parisian society of the 1880s and 90s, his class affiliations, and his appreciation of certain values that he felt the desire to translate into literary terms. In sum, writing for young Proust was the expression of his personal vision of the world, but expressed in such a way as to become part of a social patrimony.

In answer to the question of what the ideological implications of Proust's literary borrowings and appropriations are, I would say, first, that his early writing is in large measure a defense of tradition and an assertion of the place he hoped to make for himself in French literary history, which he looked at, however, in a critical and independent manner, often satirically; and second, that he was engaged in an exploration of psychological and philosophical problems to which the genres he was utilizing gave a particular kind of access. Proust was interested not in breaking entirely free from established literary practice, in the manner of the radical avant-garde, but rather in respecting what the past had to offer him and that he could then turn to his own purposes. There is nothing in his early writing that presents insuperable problems to most readers.Yet as I hope to have shown in this chapter, there is a great deal going on in his texts that needs to be studied in detail in order to savor their peculiar stylistic qualities and comprehend their conceptual premises. Nothing in his writing can be taken for granted. One must probe its surfaces to extract the treasure below. He was a conservative thinker, in some respects, but able to see and to reveal the deficiencies of the existing order with considerable verve. His subsequent writing projects--the essays on Ruskin, the uncompleted Jean Santeuil, and later the Recherche--build on the foundation he laid in Pleasures and Days.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Part Four

The Critic and the Novelist

Ch. 11 The Critical Principles of a Visionary

Ch. 12 Literary Text and Ideology in Jean Santeuil

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter Eleven

The Critical Principles of a Visionary

> I will always be on guard against an exclusive cult that would attach itself to anything other than the joy that [beautiful flowers] give us, a cult in whose name, through a self-centered return to ourselves, we would make them "our" flowers, and would take pains to honor them by decorating our room with works of art where they are represented. No, I will not find a painting more beautiful because the artist may have painted a hawthorn in the foreground, although I know of nothing more beautiful than the hawthorn, because I want to remain sincere and I know that the beauty of a painting does not depend on the things depicted in it.
>
> Marcel Proust, "John Ruskin," CSB, 137

In this and in the next concluding chapter of this study, my aim is to present an analysis of young Proust's writings during the second half of the 1890s and into the early months of 1900. This is a period in which he devoted himself to the writing of a novel he never finished, after which he turned his attention to the work of the English art historian John Ruskin. There is no doubt that his Ruskin studies, which eventually bore fuit in a series of essays and in two translations,[338] played a key role in his development as a critic and as a novelist. The turn to Ruskin is symptomatic of Proust's ever more intense effort to work out a unified aesthetic philosophy incorporating literature, painting and music. The novel reflects this effort in curious ways, among which are its focus on subjects dear to the Impressionist painters, and in its reverence for images of light, which are pervasive throughout a text that numbers almost seven hundred fifty pages.

Proust was always a deeply serious writer, yet it seems to me that,

---

338 John Ruskin, La Bible d'Amiens, trans. and ed. Marcel Proust (Paris: Mercure de France, 1904), and John Ruskin, Sésame et les lys, trans. and ed. Marcel Proust (Paris: Mercure de France, 1906).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in the second half of the 1890s, he moved to a significantly higher level and quality of commitment to creative and critical endeavor, due in part to his reading of Ruskin and in part to a natural process of maturation that we see already manifesting itself before 1895, in certain of the pieces of PJ. Proust's encounter with Ruskin and his more than six years of "apprenticeship"[339] to the English writer, was certainly a major event in his intellectual and literary life. It was under Ruskin's tutelage that Proust strengthened his commitment to writing as a mission, as a calling every bit as fateful in its nature and consequences as the one that inspired the great religious prophets of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Proust looked upon Ruskin as a "prophet" equal in power and scope to Nietzsche, Tolstoy, and Ibsen; moreover, even if still implicitly, since he was not yet embarked on the great undertaking of his life--the writing of the Recherche--Proust saw himself as only to a limited extent responsible for his choice of mission. On a deeper level, he felt that he, like all committed artists, was but an instrument in the hands of a higher power, and he looked to that power (whether the "Muses" or some vaguely defined essence of Divinity is hard to say) as the source of his inspiration, much like Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton. Translating and interpreting the art criticism of Ruskin was Proust's rite of passage, as it were, to a realm where he believed that elemental forces were at work shaping and moulding the creative lives of poets, painters, composers, all those whose existences were consecrated to realizing themselves in works of art. In sum, Proust was fully prepared to sacrifice life itself for the purpose of realizing himself in his chosen field of literature, for he saw himself now as one of the elect few whose destiny was to light the way to future generations. This does not mean that he suddenly became an anchorite. His schedule of social

---

339 The term is used by Richard Macksey in his Introduction to Marcel Proust, On Reading Ruskin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) xv.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

engagements continued to be full, at least up to the moment in 1907 or 1908 when he began composing the Recherche. It means more modestly that his priorities underwent a radical change in emphasis. In the latter part of the 1890s, he was already a man for whom writing was the primary reason and purpose of life, the one and only activity that could give him a feeling of complete fulfillment.

Let's begin looking at this crucial period in Proust's life by considering the meaning and implications of the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter,[340] taken from the most important of Proust's writings on Ruskin prior to the prefaces of 1904 and 1906. At first glance, the thought encapsulated in this passage may seem simpler than it is. Its difficulty stems from the fact that it is a highly compressed statement of concepts that are at once aesthetic, psychological, and philosophical.

The aesthetic principle operative in it rests on the notion that while beauty in nature and beauty in art are, in certain respects, interdependent, they are also, and more fundamentally, different from each other. The beauty that the viewer sees in a flower is itself a creative and subjective perception, not a quality that resides intrinsically in the flower. In this sense, the viewer of the flower and the viewer of a work of art depicting the flower play the same role in the interaction between subject and object, and as such the experiences are similar. Concerning this point, Sartre wrote: "When I am enchanted with a landscape, I know very well that it is not I who create it, but I also know that without me the relations which are established before my eyes among the trees,

---

[340] The text from which the epigraph is taken is titled "John Ruskin," in CSB, 105-141. The essay appeared originally in the Gazette des Beaux Arts, April 1,1900, 310-318. The original places and dates of Proust's other writings on Ruskin, prior to the two translations of 1904 and 1906, are as follows: " John Ruskin: Necrologie," La Chronique des Arts et de la Curiosité, V, No. 4, January 27, 1900, 35-36; "Notes et souvenirs: Pèlerinages ruskiniens en France," Le Figaro, February 13, 1900, 5; "Ruskin à Notre-Dame d'Amiens," Le Mercure de France XXXIV, No. 124, April 1900, 56-88; "John Ruskin," Gazette des Beaux Arts, August 1, 1900, 135-146.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

foliage, earth and grass would not exist at all."[341]

The viewer fixes his aesthetic attention on both the flower in nature and the flower in art with a feeling of pleasure that originates in a gaze that "establishes" the "relations" between it and its surroundings. But at the same time, there is a difference between the aesthetic pleasure given by a flower in nature and a flower represented in a painting that one finds beautiful. The former is a pleasure that derives from the object's existence as something independent of human volition, something also that is transitory, of very brief duration, yet destined to return at another time by reason of the seasonal and cyclical rhythms of the universe. On the other hand, the beauty of a flower represented in a painting hinges on a principle that has nothing to do with the natural flower except its outer form, for in the case of the painting, it is what Proust liked to call the "vision" of the artist that determines its peculiar beauty, its power to please and enchant us. It is the artist, the creator, who breathes life into the depicted flower; it is his or her special and unique conception of the object and ability to translate that conception into highly individualized forms that distinguish the painted flower from the natural one. And, of course, art transcends time, it raises the depicted thing or person to a level of autonomy that resists time, even if, ultimately, in the remote future, all things will fade and pass into oblivion. What the flower depicted in a painting possesses that a flower in nature does not is the imprint of an artist's individuality, the mark of a shaping intelligence that renders the objective reality of the flower, to be sure, but the flower as seen by the eyes of a visionary, that is, someone whose unique talent allows him or her to fashion something in a manner unlike any other. This would be as true of a flower rendered abstractly as of one rendered

---

341 Jean-Paul Sartre, Literature and Existentialism, trans. of Qu'est-ce que la littérature by Bernard Frechtman (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1994) 51-52.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in a more realistic style, since even the most literal painterly realism differs from the photographic image. Proust's appreciation of artistic individuality was a basic component of his ideology as a theorist and practitioner of literary expression; it was what made him such a powerful voice in defense of spiritual values that were threatened, as he and many others like him saw it, by the encroachments of "machinism," by standardization and routine, by what Ruskin and other English Victorians judged to be "the leprosy of industrialism and speculation." [342]

From a psychological point of view, the passage alludes to a phenomenon that has attracted an enormous amount of attention since Marx and Freud conceptualized it, each in his own way, as a basic characteristic of alienated human beings incapable of grasping reality in its dialectical integrity and wholeness: the phenomenon of fetishism. Proust was aware of fetishism as a result of his readings in the works of contemporary experimental sexologists and psychologists, but his grasp of its importance as a trait of modern civilization is every bit as sharp as that of Marx and Freud. He applied it primarily to art, where he noted a widespread tendency to give to works of art, especially paintings, a value that transcended the legitimate bounds of aesthetic appreciation.

Fetishism can manifest itself in various ways: in the desire to appropriate a beloved object, as in the case of a person who adopts a flower or some other natural life form as his own, thus changing a relationship that is essentially spiritual into one that is personal and possessive, or in attributing to that life form "a special force or independent life" in a work of art apart from the

---

342 Robert de la Sizeranne, Ruskin et la religion de la beauté, 10th ed. (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1920) . 286.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

vision of the artist who created it.[343] The latter case is the one especially relevant to Proust's understanding of fetishism. What the cited passage alludes to is the inclination to separate some special feature of a work of art from the vision of its creator. The flower in a painting derives its beauty solely from the shaping vision of the artist, for it is his or her spirit that inhabits and penetrates it. Yet art lovers persist in worshipping the beauty of the things depicted in paintings. Just as, in a Marxian sense, money and commodities in a capitalist system acquire a fetishistic value in and for themselves, considered entirely apart from the complex productive labor process and the social relations that inform them, and as in Freud's investigations, which shed light on why and how human beings attach sexual power not to the totality of the beloved's selfhood but rather to a single feature of that self or to a material object they endow with an animated force of its own, so Proust felt the need to alert himself as much as his readers against the ever present danger of substituting things for human emotions, objects for spiritual presences.

In his Ruskin essays, Proust commented repeatedly, almost obsessively, on the need to distinguish between fetishistic cultism and genuine spiritual identification with an artist or, as in Ruskin's case, with an original critical mind. After Ruskin's death on January 20, 1900, Proust noted, far more people had visited his grave in Coniston than had journeyed to Amiens to see the great thirteenth century cathedral where Ruskin's soul resided, for it was there that the essential part of him was to be found, not in the grave where his physical remains were interred.[344] Ruskin's soul lived on in the architectural works to which he consecrated his life, and whose beauty and singularity he

---

[343] Hal Foster, "The Art of Fetishism: Notes on Dutch Still Life," in Emily Apter and William Pietz eds., Fetishism as Cultural Discourse (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) 253.

[344] This remark appears at the beginning of Proust's obituary of Ruskin, "Pèlerinages Ruskiniens en France," in CSB 441. The article appeared originally in Le Figaro, February 13, 1900, 5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

described in his writings. The distinction is a crucial one, psychologically and morally; it is what gives to Proust's critical writings in the years 1896 to 1900 much of their intellectual interest.

Proust used his Ruskin essays as a means with which to educate his readers concerning the notion that beauty, when seen in relation to the creative process, should be understood always as a quality residing within the soul of the artist, not in the objects he or she depicts. This idea was closely tied to another, namely that even the greatest works of art, in whatever medium, must not be allowed to take on an independent life of their own apart from historical and moral considerations. History was the record of human strife and enterprise, including that of art, whose purpose, in addition to providing moments of disinteredted pleasure, was just as importantly that of illuminating the moral life of humanity, of offering lucid commentary on human affairs, of providing perspectives on problems in human experience that would otherwise remain hidden from consciousness. "Prophetic" writers like Ruskin, in Proust's view, were the supreme consciences and teachers of humankind; they were, as Carlyle had believed, the true "heroes" of the ages. Proust's conception of the writer was as exalted as that of Shelley, the essence of whose idealistic pronouncement that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" he assimilated into his own thought.[345]

There is also a philosophical and religious concept present in the epigraph to this chapter, one that establishes a theoretical link between nature and art as creations emanating from the mind of a creator. In this regard, even if he did not accept in its entirety the immense superstructure of beliefs constituting the Jewish and the Christian world views, Proust did, I think, agree

---

345 Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry," English Poetry and Prose of the Romantic Movement, ed. George Benjamin Woods (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1950), 769-777.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

essentially with an aspect of Thomas à Kempis's way of articulating the relationship between God and the created world. He saw this relationship as analogous to the relationship between artist and work of art. Kempis believed that our reverence must always be directed to God the creator, not to his creations; in the same way, as Proust conceived of the question, the reverential attitude so often attached to works of art was in reality misplaced, for it ought to be fixed at all times on the vision emanating from the mind of the artist. Only in this way could human beings protect themselves from aesthetic fetishism. The lofty philosophical idealism that Proust brought to this conception of art was what fed his notion that art as the embodiment of a unique vision of the world belongs properly in the domain of the eternal, where all contingency is transcended. This quasi-religious way of conceptualizing the place of art as being at once in and yet outside the flow of historically measured time was typical of a moment in European history in which poet-philosophers like Mallarmé gained broad influence in reattaching poetry to metaphysical concerns.

What I have said above about Proust's idealist critical principles does not mean, however, that the material world had somehow suddenly vanished from his field of vision. On the contrary, philosophically as well as practically speaking, he never lost sight of the material world, as Randolph Splitter and Mieke Bal have argued, the former in his "psychoanalytical" study of the Recherche and the latter in her examination of Proust's "visual poetics."[346] Both scholars show that Proust's aesthetic philosophy and practice can only be appreciated by seeing them as part of a unitary world view, which distinguishes his thought from that of religious philosophers like Kempis and his followers,

---

346 Randolph Splitter, Proust's Recherche-A Psychoanalytic Interpretation (London: Routledge,1981) and Mieke Bal, The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually, 1997.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

regardless of his indebtedness to them.

Proust's many polemical comments about the gross "materialism" of contemporary critics, who looked at the succession of literary and artistic schools of thought as if they were so many changes in government or in fashion,[347] has induced some scholars to take what the narrator says about the "purely mental character of reality" in the last volume of the Recherche as his definitive philosophical position concerning literature and art. But what that passage means is not that the material world plays no role in forming an artist's understanding of reality but rather that the meaning of that reality can only be apprehended by the mind. It was in this context that the narrator declares: "I had realised before now that it is only a clumsy and erroneous form of perception which places everything in the object, when really everything is in the mind,"[348] and subsequently, a few pages later, insists on "the purely mental character of reality." [349]

Unlike Kempis and most other theocentric religious philosophers, Proust did not believe that God the creator existed apart from His creation, just as he did not believe in the Crocean notion that a work of art already exists in the mind of its creator before it assumes concrete form in a poem, a painting, a musical composition. The matter/spirit dichotomy so prevalent in western philosophy, which assigns an inferior and often shame-ridden role to matter and to everything concerned with the body, while reserving for spirit an absolute purity of origin and purpose, is not entirely absent from Proust's thought, yet I think that Splitter is correct when he observes that "spirit" and "matter," essence and impression, are finally inseparable in Proust's writing, and that he really

---

347 Tadié, Marcel Proust166.

348 Marcel Proust, vol. vi of In Search of Lost Time, 323.

349 Marcel Proust, vol. vi of In Search of Lost Time, 326-327.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

writing, and that he really never lets us forget the inescapable "materiality" of even the most rarefied and "sublime" moments.[350]

Just as persuasive as Splitter in this regard is Mieke Bal, whose analysis of Proust's "sensualist epistemology" should discourage the tendency to translate his idealist conception of life into one-sidedly spiritualist terms. Bal argues that Proust's work, culminating in the Recherche, is one of the greatest of all testimonies to the power of a "visual poetics" that utilizes techniques of representation and figuration remarkably similar to those of two of his favorite painters, Rembrandt and Chardin. We will be looking at Proust's essay of 1895 on these two painters a little further on in this chapter, but it is important to note here, with Bal, that for Proust, it is imagery based on sense experience, and not logical reasoning, that focuses the reader's mind on the significant moments in his narratives; that the image is a place where "affectivity and cognition, epistemology and aesthetics, subject and object, are inextricably mixed."[351] In the final analysis, therefore, if Splitter and Bal are, as I believe, correct, we can say that Proust does not separate the domain of the mind from that of the body. Where he did adhere to idealist premises was in his virtually lifelong conviction that "truth and beauty" reside within the human subject, not in objects, with its corollary that a work of art, once it is separated from the human mind that created it and given an autonomous value of its own, can only lead to fetishism and idolatry.[352] Art is a world where the "irreducible individuality of the mind is revealed,"[353] not one where "material" considerations of any kind whatever should be allowed to be determinant.

---

350 Splitter 26

351 Bal 198.

352 CSB 136.

353 John Porter Houston, The Shape and Style of Proust's Novel (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982) 19.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Some of the same contradictory tendencies in Proust's thought concerning the place of literature and art in relation to the principles of idealism and materialism manifest themselves to one degree or another in what he had to say about science and intuition as sources of knowledge, in his views of the proper role and function of criticism, and in his understanding of the relationship between criticism and art. One of the problems we face in trying to untangle these contradictory threads lies, as I have already pointed out several times elsewhere in this study, in the fact that he had an extremely narrow, positivistic, and undialectical notion of what "materialism" means. In a manner tantamount to erecting a proverbial straw man, he almost always attached the word to a series of mundane concerns unworthy of a critic who aspires to achieve what Proust himself saw as the primary aim of criticism, i.e. "to help the reader grasp the essential traits of a writer or artist and, if possible, to reconstitute the writer's particular vision of reality." [354]

Historical perspective itself, although increasingly acknowledged by Proust, at least in theory, to be a crucial component of all criticism, has at best a perfunctory presence in his writing, even during and after the period of his Ruskin studies (1899-1906). This explains in part why he remained so stubbornly attached to the notion that a writer's life experience was of no essential importance in the process of evaluating his work. In effect Proust trivialized the biographical side of literary study, reducing it to the futile pursuit of external "facts" that bore no relevance whatever to the core values of artistic creativity.

Despite his disregard (or more probably ignorance) of what the great historical materialist thinkers have contributed to the cause of general

---

354 Walter A. Strauss, Proust and Literature--The Novelist as Critic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957) 58.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

enlightenment about art, society and history, Proust was in practice a writer who, while adhering to idealist principles, did not neglect science; who insisted on the differences between creation and criticism, yet never really separated these two realms from each other; and who believed, together with his constant model Baudelaire, that criticism was not only a professional obligation of the writer and poet but also a crucial part of his or her creative life. What he wanted to do, essentially, while not abandoning science and criticism, was to hold the line against incursions of a mechanistic form of scientism by reclaiming for art and literature a unique and irreplaceable role in human civilization, wherein the creative and visionary qualities of the human mind retain their primacy. Unless we keep these two levels of Proust's thinking firmly in mind, it becomes difficult to appreciate why Tadié can speak pertinently of Proust's "medical" and "diagnostic" view of the human condition, while recalling at the same time that Proust was a lifelong idealist thinker. It becomes difficult also to appreciate Malcolm Bowie's comment that the bulk of Proust's writing, whether "creative" or "critical" in nature, occupies an *intermundium* between theory and fiction.[355] We could argue endlessly about how successful Proust was in integrating critical reflection in his fictional writings, but there is no valid way, in my view, of denying what David Ellison calls "the close relationship of criticism to creativity" in Proust's literary practice,[356] a relationship that is especially close in the concluding pages of the essay "John Ruskin" and in the final section of the Recherche, where an essayistic meditation on art, subjectivity and imagination brings the novel to an end.

Of the twenty or so critical writings Proust produced during the

---

[355] Malcolm Bowie, Freud, Proust, and Lacan-Theory as Fiction (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 7.

[356] David R. Ellison, The Reading of Proust (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) 50.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

years 1895 to 1900, seven deserve brief elucidation in this chapter, either because they exemplify broad critical trends and tendencies of the time, or because they are exemplary and original in an intellectual sense, as expressions of Proust's visionary idealism. Two deal with literary questions: "Against Obscurity," published on July 15, 1896 in La Revue Blanche and "Poetry or Mysterious Laws," which is impossible to date precisely; it was not published during Proust's lifetime. Scholars associate it with the years he was most heavily engaged in writing Jean Santeuil, 1895-1899. The five others deal with issues in art criticism. One is devoted to Chardin and Rembrandt; it was published posthumously, while the remaining four are on Ruskin: they consist of two short appreciative obituaries, written in January and February 1900, shortly after Ruskin's death, and two lengthier and more ambitious essays that were later integrated in 1904 and 1906 into the long prefatory and strongly autobiographical essays that Proust wrote for his translations of The Bible of Amiens and Sesame and the Lilies.

Looking first at Proust's commentary on contemporary symbolism,[357] one notes in this essay, as in all of his critical efforts during these years, a more personally engaged attitude, coupled with an intense effort to raise the level of critical discourse above polemics to an ideal plane, where, he believed, contingency is transmuted into permanent and essential values.

When Proust first submitted "Against Obscurity" to La Revue Blanche in November 1895, he told Pierre Mainguet, the director of La Revue Hebdomadaire, that he was taking considerable risk in letting it circulate openly, and that he feared angry reactions from his friends and associates in the symbolist camp.[358] But the article was not published until July 1896, when it

---

[357] The text I cite in this chapter is "Contre l'obscurité," CSB 390-395.

[358] Correspondance, t. I, 446-447.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

appeared suddenly, and in truncated form. Proust was as surprised as anyone else when the essay appeared on July 15th. This was a month after the publication of PJ and the minor critical controversy that it had provoked. On July 16th, Proust wrote to his mother[359] complaining that the editors of La Revue Blanche had published "without consulting me, without advising me, without having sent me the proofs to correct, an article (shortened) that I had submitted six months ago (the article on Obscurity in Poetry) which I had completely forgotten and which I thought had been put in the waste basket. Perhaps you find it disturbing that something by me would appear at this moment and because of that I am very upset."

Proust had good reason to anticipate a strong critical response to his article from La Revue Blanche. With such figures as Mallarmé, Henri de Régnier, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Gustave Kahn on its editorial staff, the review deserved its reputation as a "fortress of symbolism." [360] What Proust found deficient in symbolist poetry was not really its "symbolism" but rather what he called its "hermeticism" and its "preciosity," meaning that it used a language that was at once private and pretentious. In a long letter to Reynaldo Hahn a month after the controversial article had appeared, Proust spoke more cautiously and equivocally about symbolist verse. In this letter he said that he found Mallarmé's images to be both "obscure and brilliant," in that they were indeed "the images of things," but "reflected so to speak in a dark and polished mirror of black marble." He noted also to Hahn that Mallarmé tended to pass without warning from "an inflexible and pure classic form, almost naked, to the most insane preciosity." His overall judgment of the leading exponent of French symbolism

---

[359] Marcel Proust, Correspondance avec sa mère, 1887-1905, ed. Philip Kolb (Paris: Plon, 1953) 68-69. The reason why Proust was worried about his mother's reaction to the article at this moment was that her father had died at the end of June.

[360] Léon-Pierre Quint, Marcel Proust-Sa vie, son œuvre (Paris: Simon Kra, 1925) 36.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was anything but onesidedly negative. The great pleasure to be extracted from Mallarmean verse, he said, consisted in "finding so much archaism, grandeur, mythology, taste and nature in a sort of brief family letter. That is its charm 'in the final analysis'. It is moreover the charm of Mallarmé and the role of the poet, to lend solemnity to life."[361]

"Against Obscurity" begins by addressing what Proust calls two types of obscurity in literary composition: obscurity of ideas and images, and grammatical obscurity. He then summarizes what he takes to be the principal rationale for symbolist obscurity, that offered by many young poets and writers who claimed that "in language everything new is obscure," since it reflects new thought and feeling. This is an argument quite similar to the one advanced by some poststructuralist theorists, namely that their writing is difficult not because they write poorly but rather because of the difficulty of their thought and way of reasoning. Proust argues in this respect that too often contemporary writers defend their "obscurity" by connecting themselves to figures in the past who were also at first quite "obscure" to their audiences. But Proust rejects this line of reasoning, asserting that the obscurity of writers in the past, such as Racine, was very different from its contemporary manifestations, which was really something recent in literary history. Here Proust was speaking of language used in such a way as to wrench it free of all the conventional forms and constraints to which readers are accustomed. In any case, his main point in this opening section of the article was that "the laws of the world and of thought" would not change simply because a group of writers wanted them to change, thus allowing themselves to think that "masterpieces from now on would be what they have never been through the centuries: virtually unintelligible."

---

361 Marcel Proust, Lettres à Reynaldo Hahn, ed. Philip Kolb, 9th ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1956) 63-66.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Proust's argument then takes a turn of considerable theoretical importance, namely that the language of philosophy and the language of literature are two different things. For the former, as seen in the writing of Spinoza, Kant and Hegel, one encounters thought that is as obscure as it is profound, or rather that is obscure because it is profound. Literary expression, on the other hand, follows a different path, and uses different tools to convey difficult thought. Those who defend the obscurity of symbolist poetry by comparing it with difficult philosophy forget, Proust maintained, that if the writer and the poet can, in effect, go as deeply into the reality of things as the metaphysical philosopher, they do so with other means not based primarily on logical reasoning, which "paralyzes the elan of feeling that alone can take them to the heart of the world." In other words, Proust was saying, literature uses imagery and metaphor to express its conception of life; it uses figurative language drenched in the imaginative and fantasy life of human beings, where "concepts" and "logical reasoning" are felt to be alien presences. Literature is not addressed to our "logical faculties," and it is by other means that such masterpieces as Macbeth acquire their "philosophical" power. Philosophy is not absent from literature, but it is philosophy communicated via devices of style, figure and rhythm that appeal to universal sentiments and concerns. While philosophy must speak a special language, Proust continued, poetry cannot do so, for words are not pure signs for the poet. Each word contains within itself "the charm of its origin or the grandeur of its past; the poetic word appeals to our imagination and sensibility through an evocative power at least as great as its power of strict signification."

The problem with this point is not that it is groundless but rather that it is of limited relevance when we recall the whole history of philosophy and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of literature, particularly some of the major trends in nineteenth century philosophy and literature. Many nineteenth century philosophers employed a language that was basically emotive and imagistic without abandoning the name philosopher; one thinks, for example, of Emerson, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. At the same time, philosophical poetry was of fundamental importance in the Romantic movement; without a good grounding in philosophy, understanding Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley and other English poets of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century is an impossible task. True enough, these highly conceptual Romantic poets, like their forebears Dante, Milton and Donne, like Shakespeare and Lope de Vega, made their primary appeal to the emotions, but that does not mean that one can understand their work without a solid foundation in philosophy. In sum, this part of Proust's argument was of questionable value if taken out of the immediate context within which he entered the debate about symbolism.

The last part of the article argues that symbolism's claim to disregard "the accidents of time and space" in order to show the reader only "eternal truths," failed to grasp another law of life, which was to realize the universal or eternal, but only through the depiction of individuals. Citing War and Peace and The Mill on the Floss--a rather odd move in an essay devoted mainly to poetry--Proust concluded that it was when these two novels were most themselves that they realized most fully the "universal soul." Tolstoy had illuminated "the deepest mysteries of life and death" by focusing intensely on the lives of specific individuals in specific places and circumstances.

I don't fully agree with Compagnon's view that, in "Against Obscurity," Proust mainly rehashes notions that had already been served up by Gustave Lanson and Ferdinand Brunetière, both of whom, in the name

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

respectively of historicism and cultural traditionalism, were unresponsive to the new trends and personalities in French literature.[362] My disagreeement is based simply on the premise that, as Compagnon himself explains, Proust was among "the last writers (with Paul Bourget) for whom criticism is still literature, not yet given over to history." [363] In other words, Proust's commentary on symbolism was that of a writer committed to the crucial difference between logical and metaphorical ways of communicating the basic laws and principles of life, as he saw them. Therefore when it was a question of analyzing the root causes of symbolism's failure to reach any but an "initiated" reading audience, he resorted to arguments that were at bottom and necessarily "Romantic" in nature, and adorned them with words of a distinctly "poetic" and allusive character. He looked askance at historicism and positivism when applied comprehensively to works of art.

Would a historicist or a positivist say, for example, as did Proust, that "the poet renounces the irresistible power of awaking so many Sleeping Beauties" in readers if he speaks a language that they do not know? Would historicists and positivists rush to accentuate the difference between "living symbols and cold allegories," or say that all appeals to the vulgar, whether to flatter or to confuse, gave the wrong signal to "the divine archer"? Would they take note, as Proust did, concerning the relationship between the obscure and the visible, that "nature does not hide the sun from us, or the thousands of stars that shine without veils, brilliant and undecipherable to almost everyone's eyes"? Consider the penultimate paragraph of "Against Obscurity":

> Poets should take inspiration more from nature, where, if the essence of everything is one and obscure, the form of everything is individual and clear. With the secret of life, she will teach them disdain for obscurity. Does nature hide the sun from us, or the

362 Compagnon, La Troisième République des lettres 216-217.

363 Compagnon, La Troisième République des lettres 17.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> thousands of stars that shine without veils, brilliant and undecipherable to almost everyone's eyes? Doesn't nature make us touch, rudely and nakedly, the power of the sea or of the west wind? To each man she gives the ability to express clearly, during his passage on the earth, the deepest mysteries of life and death. Are they for that reason pervaded by vulgarity, despite the vigorous and expressive language of desires and muscles, of suffering, of the flesh rotting or in bloom? And I ought to refer above all, since this is nature's true *time for art*, to the moonlight where for those alone who are initiated, even though it shines so sweetly on everyone, nature, without neologisms, for so many centuries, has made light with darkness and has played the flute in silence.[364]

This paragraph is shot through with images, mythical allusions, contrasts, metaphors, in sum a richly expressive language typical of a writer who bridles at the restraints of conventional critical discourse. For this reason, to place Proust in the same category as a Lanson or a Brunetière, despite the similarity of some of his arguments with those of his two older contemporaries, strikes me as misleading. One senses in this article an urgent impulse to liberate criticism from "logic" in favor of precisely the kind of discourse that Proust claims is typical of the literary imagination.

Mallarmé's reply to "Against Obscurity"[365] did not mention Proust's name, but it did allude twice to the accusation of "obscurity," which Mallarmé turned back against Proust, and more generally against symbolism's detractors, by reasserting his belief that "there is something occult at the basis of everything" which it is the duty of poets to reveal beneath the surface of things:

> I know, in fact, that [symbolism's detractors] push themselves onto the stage and assume, in their display, a humiliating posture; since to argue on the basis of obscurity--or, no one will grasp it if they don't grasp it and they do not--implies a prior renunciation of the act of judging.

---

[364] CSB 394-395.

[365] Stéphane Mallarmé, "Le Mystère dans les lettres," Œuvres complètes, ed. Henri Mondor and G.-Jean-Aubry (Paris: Gallimard, 1945) 382-387.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mallarmé's critique of Proust's position was based on the assumption that appeals to the need for clarity in writing at all costs were tantamount to adopting a "journalistic" attitude toward language, and in so doing aligning oneself with the benighted readers of the popular press. He reminded Proust of the power of music, which of all the arts made manifest the extent to which human beings sought contact with the mysterious essence of things. Language that aspired to this same power by other means necessarily demanded from the reader an effort of decipherment that the exponents of "clarity" would never appreciate. "I prefer," Mallarmé said, "in the face of this aggression, to retort that our contemporaries do not know how to read."

The lines of battle were drawn, the terms of debate made quite clear, yet I think Tadié is right when he observes that, in reality, Proust and Mallarmé were much closer to each other, philosophically speaking, than either one realized.[366] They differed in their views concerning the role of the writer vis-à-vis the reading public. Where Proust saw universal laws intelligible to all thinking beings, Mallarmé envisioned a more recondite domain where the deepest truths of human life and destiny could only be discovered by moving beyond the limits of ordinary consciousness. Yet they were both fond of the word and the concept of "mystery," which crops up as often in Proust's writing as it does in Mallarmé's. Proust's unfinished essay titled "Poetry or the Mysterious Laws" is an example. In addition, Proust was just as devoted as Mallarmé to the cult of music as the ultimate expression of humanity's deepest reserves of thought and feeling. (See chs)

"Poetry or the Mysterious Laws"[367] is a rambling meditation on the nature of the poet's and the artist's inner life, the "mysterious laws" that exist

366 Tadié, Marcel Proust 307-308.

367 "La Poésie ou les lois mystériuses, CSB 417-423.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

within the soul of a creator who finds himself quite suddenly in the presence of a thing of beauty, be it something natural or something fashioned by the human hand. In such a presence, the poet or artist establishes a particular relation with beauty, a bond is created between the creative imagination and the thing that attracts it. Proust's point in this strangely meandering piece is that, by virtue of these "mysterious laws" within the poet or painter, the resulting vision will be so complete and persuasive as to make us think that what that particular poet or artist sees is the only beauty in the world, the only truth. But that feeling of exclusiveness is merely the enchantment resulting from participating in a particular vision of things. Proust uses the example of two very different painters, Jean Chardin and Gustave Moreau, to illustrate the fact that each fresh new artistic vision takes possession of us with tremendous force. When one looks at a Chardin, Proust observes,

> . . . .not only do you see the beauty of a middle class meal, but you believe that poetry exists only in rustic dinners and you turn your eyes away when you sees jewels. But when you. . .have seen a Gustave Moreau, you look for diamonds and precious stones as things that are just as beautiful, when you have seen a Moreau, after believing that things were only beautiful in their spontaneity like flowers in the field and animals in their life, thus disdaining every kind of art object and leaving them to the rich without imagination, when you have seen a Moreau, you acquire a taste for sumptuous dressing tables, for things turned away from their natural grace and taken as symbols. .

The "mysterious laws" reside in each and every authentic artist, and they manifest themselves whenever the artist comes upon an "occasion" or situation which prompts him to express them in works of art. This process is "singular and inexplicable;" it unfolds in a manner similar to what occurs in the insect world, where creatures die after laying their eggs. Proust was comfortable with biological analogies whenever they helped to clarify a process rather than

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

an isolated fact. What was at issue here was a process of "procreation" that could most readily be grasped by comparing the creative act of an artist to generative acts in the natural world.

"Poetry or the Mysterious Laws" provides a good transition to the more ample essay "Chardin and Rembrandt." [368] He was almost certainly referring to it in a letter of late November, 1895, to Pierre Mainguet, where he says that he had just written "a little study on the philosophy of art. . .in which I try to show how great painters initiate us into the knowledge of the external world. . .It is the work of Chardin which I take in this study as an example, and I try to show his influence on our life, the charm and the wisdom he diffuses on our humblest days by initiating us to the life of still-life painting."[369] Mieke Bal makes much of this essay, claiming for it an absolutely indispensable place in the evolution of Proust's painterly vision of the world. She believes that this essay prepares us for what was to become "the central project of the Recherche," which was "to write the image," to employ the visual poetics of Chardin in the literary exploration of private life in the Illiers, the Cabourg, and the Paris of the years leading up to and immediately following World War I. Whether Bal has been entirely successful in relating Proust's poetics so closely to painting is hard to say. Her evidence in any case is copious and eloquent with regard to Proust's descriptive and psychological methods in his great novel. Her arguments are too technical for discussion here; but the general tenor and direction of her thinking appear to me to be sound. She is convincing in her analysis of how Chardin's famous domestic scenes, especially "The Skate," were utilized by Proust as exemplary of the kind of transfiguration of

---

368 "Chardin et Rembrandt," CSB 372-382. The essay was first published in Le Figaro Littéraire, March 27, 1954.

369 Correspondance, t. I, 446-447.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ordinary experience he wanted to achieve in the Recherche. She makes a comment relevant to our immediate interest when she says, of the essay "Chardin and Rembrandt," that it "should be read as a 'novel': reading in the grain of the text, it seems more like a narrative or a poem than the elaboration of an argument."[370] This is another way of saying what I pointed out above in characterizing Proust's writing in "Against Obscurity" as often much closer to the language of poetry than to customary critical or philosophical discourse.

Bal was not the first to attribute such central importance to Proust's pictorial aesthetics, although her analysis is far more scholarly and rigorous than that of one of the pioneering figures of this critical view, Samuel Beckett, and more detailed in attaching particular features of Proust's method to the work of Chardin and several other painters. In 1931, Beckett put his finger on the painterly nature of Proust's poetics, when, after situating him on the "outskirts" of symbolism, and after placing him *grosso modo* in the history of modern relativism and impressionism, he went on to explain that by impressionism, he meant Proust's "anti-intellectual" and "non-logical statement of phenomena in the order and exactitude of their perception, before they have been distorted into intelligibility in order to be forced into a chain of cause and effect."[371] It seems strange to speak of Proust as "anti-intellectual," but this is one way of conveying the idea that he belongs essentially to the culture of Romanticism, for which feelings are of preeminent importance, the imagination is held to be the primary seat of artistic creativity, and art and literature are felt to be instruments of visionary insight into the secrets and mysteries of existence. Here again, Beckett was on the right track when he said that "For Proust, as for the painter, style is more a question of vision than of technique."

---

370 Bal 50-51.

371 Beckett 66.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Another useful study of Proust's poetics in relation to painting is Simone Kadi's La Peinture chez Proust et Baudelaire. She discusses the work of many painters who charmed Proust, from Vermeer to Delacroix, from Leonardo to Watteau, from Rubens to Renoir. But her most telling observations as far as the subject of this and the next chapter are concerned, are on Proust and Monet.[372] It was Monet whose painting "Impression, Soleil levant" probably induced Louis Leroy in 1874 to use the word "Impressionist " for the first time,[373] which marked a crucial moment in the history of the relationship between painting and a new dynamic concept of light as a manifestation of energy. Between the mid 1870s and March 17, 1905, when Einstein submitted his epochal paper on the interaction of light and matter to the Annalen der Physik,[374] a profound change of perspective concerning the ways in which the personal perception of objects is influenced by the action of light on the senses of the viewer had led to the increased awareness of the subtlety and complexity of visual experience.[375] In the resulting debate between those who adhered to a basically "materialist" conception of light and those who continued to believe that the "impressions" of sensitive artists consisted of more than mere sequences or memories of sensations, Proust stood in the latter camp, and he did so in the name of the "primacy of the spiritual" embodied, as far as he was concerned, in the work of painters such as Claude Monet.

Proust's conception of the new painting reflected, perhaps

---

372 Proust met Monet on at least one occasion, in July 1895, when with Reynaldo Hahn he visited Madeleine Lemaire in Dieppe and was introduced to the great impressionist painter. Album Proust-iconographie réunie et commentée par Pierre Clarac and André Ferré (Paris: Gallimard, 1965) 145-146. A traceof this meeting and of the effect on Proust of the Normandy landscape in the summer of 1895 is found in the prose poem "Sous-Bois" ("Forest scene" in the Dupee edition of PJ), which is dated "Petit-Abbeville (Dieppe), August 1895.

373 Schapiro 21.

374 William R. Everdell, The First Moderns-Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997) 228.

375 Schapiro 24.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

unconsciously, the notion of "energeticism" which shifted the emphasis in physics away from the centrality of matter to that of energy.[376] According to this notion, light was a form of energy, and could not, therefore, be adequately explained by the "materialist" science of the time. Kadi places Monet at the center of this "energeticist" current of thought, and she traces Proust's particular affection for him to this current. She probably goes too far in drawing a parallel between what Monet achieved in painting and what Proust was later to achieve in literature,[377] but she is certainly right in saying that Monet contributed decisively to the choice made by the Impressionists "to celebrate one of the manifestations of energy that eludes form--light," and that with this choice "we are at the threshold of something new." [378] The "something new" in phsyics was Einsteinian theory, but it can also be said that an equally significant and related breakthrough was being made in the arts, where Monet and Proust were among the leading figures. They gave to the term "impressionism" a psychological and philosophical meaning that, while based on a sensualist epistemology, also transcended it to include the "spiritual" essence and creative powers of the human mind. I would say that this new "energeticist" theory of light as energy is as important and as pervasive in Proust's writing as it is pictorially in the work of the Impressionist painters. For Proust, as for Dante, images of light are what binds his depiction of the natural and human worlds to the source of all creation: for Proust, the sun, for Dante, God. Metaphorically, in Proust's case, the epiphanic moments triggered by certain sense experiences (the taste of the madeleine soaked in tea etc) spring from memories that are "involuntary," they

---

376 Hauser speaks of "the energizing of vision" as "the essence of Impressionism," in The Social History of Art, vol. III, (New York: Vintage Books, 1957)175.

377 In his essay "Ruskin à Notre-Dame d'Amiens" Proust dwells lovingly on the effects of sunlight on the Cathedral at different moments during the day. Several of Proust's biographers, notably Tadié, in Marcel Proust 435, describe Proust contemplating the facade of the Rouens cathdral.

378 Kadi 228.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

cannot be willed into existence. These sudden illuminations of insight and understanding belong to a psychological realm as important and indispensable to Proust's world view as the sunlight is to the physical universe. Beckett calls involuntary memory in Proust a "brightness" that reveals "what the mock reality of experience never can and never will reveal--the real."[379]

An arresting feature of the essay "Chardin and Rembrandt" is that it forms a bridge precisely between ordinary experience, where a scene such as a dining room that appears "trivial and ugly" to a young man who has just finished his meal and is unaware aesthetically of his surroundings, becomes transfigured when that same young man, guided by the first-person narrator of this essay-as-prose-narrative, visits the Louvre and sees for the first time the humble domestic scenes painted by Chardin. If these interiors now seem beautiful to behold, it is because "Chardin found them beautiful to paint." The pleasure that his paintings give the young man is the pleasure distilled from an instant of life that was "studied in depth and eternised" by the artist. But the process of transfiguration does not stop there for Proust. It continues in the subsequent life of the young man who now, having been touched by the genius of Chardin, will look upon ordinary quotidian things with a new appreciation of their ability to "reveal mysteries."

Following this introductory section of the essay, Proust proceeds to give fairly detailed descriptions of some of Chardin's paintings, concentrating especially on his still lifes, and noting, as he does so, that the tourist or pilgrim who allows himself to be guided by Chardin will find in his work the same inspiration and enlightenment that Dante drew from Virgil. He then pauses to

---

379 Beckett 20. This should be understood as meaning that everyday experience is rescued from oblivion by art and the recollecting mind, not that experience is inherently unreal.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

consider another master, Rembrandt.[380] Whereas Chardin proclaimed "the divine equality of all things in the presence of the mind, the spirit that looks upon them, in the presence of the light that beautifies them," Rembrandt virtually "surpasses reality." Proust speaks in particular of "The Two Philosophers" and "The Good Samaritan" as examples of the idea that beauty does not reside in objects, for if that were so, he reasons, beauty would not be so profound and so mysterious. Objects are nothing in themselves, "they are like empty spaces illuminated by the changing expression of light, the reflection given to them by beauty, the divine gaze."

We recognize in the words "mystery," "obscure power," and "divine," an aesthetic ideology that borders on mystification. Art has indeed become a substitute for more conventional types of religious faith, a "residence for ideality" rather than a form of production that combines mental and physical labor designed to satisfy human needs and change the quality of consciousness. The essay is a monument to the new exalted status which artistic creation was enjoying at the end of the nineteenth century, when a wedge was driven between the worlds of material and aesthetic production. On the one hand, Proust was attached ideologically to the method of Impressionism and its "Heraclitean outlook,"[381] which treated reality not as being but as a perpetual becoming, yet on the other hand he raised artistic creation to such a lofty plane that it could be said to lose touch with the workaday reality of movement and change. The fact that aesthetic values could, in Proust's philosophy, be translated into worldly terms, where "young men" like the one he

---

380 This is not the only article Proust devoted to Rembrandt. See "Rembrandt," CSB 659-664, whereProust describes his emotions upon seeing the elderly Ruskin at a Rembrandt exposition in Amsterdam. It is unclear whether Proust was describing a real experience in this article, or whether, as was his wont, he was blending fact and fiction in order to convey the intensity of his feelings for the great Dutch painter.

381 Hauser 169.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

introduces at the beginning of the essay constituted a link between art and practical life, saved him, in some measure, from the kind of "idolatry" against which he was to plead eloquently in his early writings on John Ruskin. Proust's philosophy of art was able to accommodate an urgent concern with moral issues, which was one of the aspects of Ruskin's thought that drew him to the English art historian.

One of the many things that attracted Proust to Ruskin was the latter's belief that artists and poets were the instruments of a creative force vastly more powerful than they. This was the feeling that led Ruskin, in his Modern Painters and elsewhere, to relate "the mental chemistry by which the dream associates its materials" to the "mysterious" process by which creative geniuses receive "new images" that flow from essentially "involuntary remembrances" rather than willed recollections.[382] This was obviously a feature of Ruskin's thought congenial to Proust's evolving conception of art and the artist, one that he was to place at the very center of his search for time past. Indeed, the Latin title of Ruskin's autobiography, Praeterita, meaning "the past, or things past," found its corresponding expression in the title Proust eventually chose for his novel. Proust was quoted more than once as having said that he knew this work "by heart," as a result of repeated impassioned readings.

Ruskin's religious beliefs and sentiments were Biblically inspired and were far more profoundly Christ-centered than Proust's. At the same time, his feeling for nature was rooted in a pantheistic vision of universal harmony that bespeaks a debt to British romantic poetry that Proust shared, but not to the same degree of intensity as Ruskin. He had a Wordsworthian confidence in the beneficence and fellowship of nature which Proust felt, to be sure, but not as

---

382 John Ruskin, The Art Criticism of John Ruskin, ed. Robert L. Herbert (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1964) 13.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

explicitly and as resolutely as did Ruskin. Proust gives us the natural world with a strong sense of indebtedness, but his gift does not spring from exactly the same cluster of attitudes that characterized Ruskin. But Ruskin's passion for medieval church architecture was matched by Proust's, as seen in his visits to Venice, Rouen and Amiens, and in his translation of Ruskin's The Bible of Amiens. The two men had a similar reverence for the early centuries of western civilization, when, they felt, whole human collectivities participated with religious and civic zeal in the building of cathedrals and in the enactment of social rituals and spectacles that nothing in contemporary life could equal.

I don't agree with Painter [383] and others who think that after an early period of enthusiasm for Ruskin, Proust's ardor quickly cooled. Proust did finally distance himself from Ruskin at a certain point, when some of his observations and value judgments struck him as symptomatic of a "fetishistic" attitude toward particular works of art. But these doubts and reservations never changed his basic conviction that Ruskin, despite regrettable faults, was, with Tolstoy and Ibsen, one of the three great "prophetic" figures of the nineteenth century, a man made in the "heroic" mould as that word was used by Thomas Carlyle in Heroes and Hero Worship, that is, a person with such supreme self confidence and native rough-hewn genius (like Dante and Goethe) as to leave the imprint of his personality on an entire epoch in human history. Just as Carlyle had placed poets and philosophers on the summit of human achievement, Proust looked to Ruskin as a veritable beacon to which all lovers of the arts and all people moved by moral passion could look for guidance.

With all of these traits and interests in common with the author of The Stones of Venice, one of Proust's favorite books, it is certainly no wonder that he reacted to Ruskin's death on January 20, 1900 with deep distress, but

[383] Painter, vol. II, 11.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

also with the determination to use his literary abilities to make him better known and appreciated in France. He was not the first to make such a commitment. Like some of his colleagues associated with prominent literary reviews and with the daily press, Proust apparently first learned of Ruskin in the early to mid-1890s, although it is possible that he knew of him well before that. By 1895, Ruskin was so widely known in France that Le Gaulois, a newspaper read by both intellectuals and socialites, complained in an article of December 1, 1895, that after other fashionable trends had come and gone, Ruskin was still the cynosure of the nation's cosmopolitan intelligentsia. This was said with considerable resentment, since Le Gaulois, in keeping with its immovable stand against a revision of the evidence against Alfred Dreyfus, felt that French intellectuals would do well to drop their "faddish" cosmopolitan tastes and return to the pure fount of French national culture. Ruskin was only one of many foreign authors now glutting the literary marketplace with indigestible ideas and silly crazes.

But it was the publication in 1897 of Robert de la Sizeranne's book Ruskin et la religion de la beauté that seems to have converted Proust's keen interest into a veritable passion that lasted for seven to eight years, up to and including the two translations of 1904 and 1906. It was La Sizeranne's book, supplemented then by the help of his mother and an English cousin of Reynaldo Hahn, Marie Nordlinger, both of whom helped him with his readings and translations, that allowed Proust to embark on this new phase of his literary career.

The two short obituary notices Proust wrote in the weeks immediately following Ruskin's death stress the English art historian's universality and his role as a "professor of taste." They speak of Ruskin's works

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

as "real breviaries of wisdom and aesthetics," thus manifesting a more and more pronounced tendency to transfer religious sentiments to the realm of art. The same tendency appears in the title Proust gave to the second of these brief notes, "Ruskinian pilgrimages in France." One cannot help but think of the reverential (but "idolatrous") feelings aroused in the narrator's young heart in the Recherche by the mere mention of certain French and Italian cities renowned for their painting, sculpture and architecture.

In two much longer and intellectually more significant articles[384] which appeared in April and August 1900, and which, as already indicated, were later incorporated into the introductory essays to the translations of La Bible d'Amiens and Sésame et les lys, Proust's affinity for Ruskin takes some intriguing turns.

First of all, Ruskin's writings helped young Proust to clarify his own understanding of art and nature as two irreducible yet interrelated "worlds" wherein "the universal plan within which our individuality is shaped" becomes apparent to the sensitive eye. Proust emphasizes Ruskin's belief in "the universal laws and patterns of existence," a belief which gave to his writings on art an unmistakeable dignity and even, at times, solemnity.

Second, as seen especially in the essay "Ruskin à Notre-Dame d'Amiens," we become aware of the extraordinary extent to which Proust identified himself with certain of the techniques and focal points of Impressionist painting. This can be seen above all in his evocation of the effects of sunlight as it moves from place to place on the cathedral of Amiens. It is at this point in the essay that we begin to notice that Proust has brought to it not merely a scholarly

---

384 I refer here to "Journées de pèlerinage--Ruskin à Notre-Dame d'Amiens, à Rouen etc." and to "John Ruskin," CSB 69-105 and 105-141. The first appeared originally in Mercure de France, April 1900, 50-88, the second in the Gazette des Beaux Arts, April 1900, 310-318, and August 1900, 135-146.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

interest in Ruskin and in the Amiens cathedral but also a real passion which found its natural expression in a first-person narrative. Proust displays no uncertainty at all about taking an autobiographical approach to the material of a critical essay. Just as Ruskin was a "generous and thoughtful guide," so Proust wanted to guide his readers in a manner worthy of his subject, and this could only be in the form of a first-person narrative infused with fresh sensory experience, aesthetic delight, and intellectual enthusiasm. It is Proust's personal involvement in the subject matter of these Ruskin essays that gives them their élan, their exceptional energy.

Third, Proust dwells admiringly on the part of the Cathedral which Ruskin called "the Bible," namely its western portal, which he compares with Hugo's literary treatment of the Biblical comparison in Notre-Dame de Paris, and which he explicitly compares here with Monet's paintings of the Rouen Cathdral. As he describes the various Biblical figures and episodes carved by the collective labors of thirteenth-century French sculptors and placed lovingly on the western facade, Proust returns to his principal subject, which is only apparently the Cathedral and its wondrous works of art. His essential subject is "the soul of Ruskin," which allowed him (Ruskin, that is) to rediscover the spiritual impetus that inspired the thirteenth century sculptors, even if he did not share all of their doctrinal beliefs. In the last several pages of "Ruskin à Notre-Dame d'Amiens," Proust articulates his spiritual conception of art in the following way:

> Understanding badly up to then the scope of religious art in the Middle Ages, I had said to myself, in my fervor for Ruskin: he will teach me, for he too, in some part at least, isn't he too the truth? He will allow my spirit to enter where it had no access, for he is the door. He will purify me, for his inspiration is like the lily of the valley. He will intoxicate and energize me, for he is the vineyard and life. And I felt in effect that the mystical perfume of the roses of Sharon had not yet vanished entirely, because one still breathes

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> it, at least in his words. And in this way the stones of Amiens took on for me the dignity of the stones of Venice, and were like the grandeur of the Bible when it was still the truth in the hearts of men and solemn beauty in their works. La Bible of Amiens was, in Ruskin's mind, but the first book of a series titled Our Fathers Told Us; and in effect if the ancient prophets were sacred to Ruskin, it is because the soul of the artists of the thirteenth century was still in them. Even before knowing that I would find it there, it was the soul of Ruskin that I was seeking there and that he imprinted as deeply on the stones of Amiens as those who sculpted them imprinted theirs, for the words of genius can as well as the chisel give to things an immortal form. Literature too is a "lamp of sacrifice" which consumes itself in order to enlighten posterity. I was conforming unconsciously to the spirit of the title: Our Fathers Told Us, in these thoughts and in the desire to read Ruskin's Bible there. Because Ruskin, for having believed in these men of another time, because faith and beauty were in them, had found himself also in writing his Bible, just as they for having believed in the prophets and the apostles had written theirs.[385]

In the concluding sentences of this essay, Proust returns to the theme of prophecy by speaking of Ruskin as a "prophet whose voice is no longer heard. But that is because he has finished saying all of his words. It is up to future generations to gather them up and sing them in chorus."

Some of the same ideas and perspectives of which I have spoken in this chapter appear also in "John Ruskin," but this piece has several features that deserve mention. One is that Proust's writing displays a regrettable tendency to windy verbiage, a certain vagueness of terminology, and an enraptured tone that now and then gets out of control. Religious analogies are pervasive, engendering in the reader a feeling of surfeit. "Aesthetic pleasure," Proust announces towards the end of this essay, "is precisely what accompanies the discovery of truth," but he is unable or unwilling to attempt an explanation of this phenomenon, limiting himself to the observation that "why this is so is difficult to say; it is itself mysterious." At a certain point this aura of

---

[385] CSB 104-105.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"mystery" and veneration surrounding Ruskin's writings becomes a way to avoid rather than confront the complex philosophical problems inherent in them.

Another unpleasant aspect of this essay is Proust's apparent acceptance of an insidious form of anti-Semitism, insidious because it expresses itself clothed in the garb of an aesthetic judgment. A propos of Ruskin's thoughts on Tintoretto, Proust cites without any disclaimers or qualifications the philosopher and critic Joseph-Antoine Milsand (1807-1886), one of the earliest French commentators on Ruskin. Milsand had said of Ruskin's analysis of two paintings by Tintoretto, a "Holy Family" and a Crucifxion scene, that in Ruskin's view the symbolism and genius of the former painting had shown that the birth of Christ marked "the end of the Jewish economy and the advent of the new alliance," while in the latter, "in the figure of a donkey grazing on some palm leaves in the background of Calvary, [Tintoretto wanted] to affirm the profound idea that it was Jewish materialism, with its waiting for a completely temporal Messiah and with the disappointment of its hopes at the time of the entry into Jerusalem, that had been the cause of the hatred unleashed against the Savior and, because of that, of his death."[386] To cite another writer's thoughts without comment is in effect to make them one's own. Moreover, in his own note to the Milsand reference, Proust spoke of the French thinker as "one of the first to speak of Ruskin, in the order of time, and in the force of his thoughts. He was a sort of precursor, an inspired and incomplete prophet who did not live long enough to see the development of the work he had announced."

The essay also has two features which, although not entirely new in Proust's thought, are expressed with uncommon vigor. One of these is that his moral preoccupations step decisively to the foreground of his field of vision.

---

386 CSB 107.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Calling his age one of "dilettantes and aesthetes," he defends Ruskin against the charge of vaporous aestheticism by distinguishing him from his contemporaries as a man made in the Carlylean mould, a true hero of our time. Pleasure was not what Ruskin sought in art, Proust argues, but enlightenment, and moral passion. As Ruskin understood it, Proust averred, but in a typically (at least in this essay) vague manner, beauty was not something to bring pleasure, but "a reality infinitely more important than life, for which he would have given his own."

The other noteworthy feature of "John Ruskin" is the connection Proust makes between self-discipline and freedom, between self-sacrifice and the realization of a purpose more important than one's own individual existence. Here Proust redeems the fuzziness of some of his earlier formulations by holding Ruskin up as a moral and creative example which, implicitly, he intended to follow. "Voluntary servitude," Proust maintains, "is the beginning of freedom. . .We are free in life, but through having purposes: the sophism of freedom by means of indifference was revealed as such a long time ago." He then makes a statement that introduces the last paragraph of this essay, a statement that allows us to feel the confidence that Proust had at the age of twenty-nine in his own latent powers:

> The novelist's subject, the poet's vision, the philosopher's truth are imposed on them in an almost inevitable way, as if they were external, so to speak, to their thought. And it is by submitting his mind to rendering this vision, to approaching this vision, that the artist truly becomes himself.[387]

What follows these sentences is a paragraph too long for citation here, but whose kernel of thought can be said to reflect the writing of Jean Santeuil and to presage the writing of the Recherche. Its essential idea is that it

---

[387] CSB 140-141.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

is only when certain periods of our life are closed forever and no longer bear any immediate relevance to our present existence, that we feel the impulse to gather together at least the ashes of that past life. It is then that our memory of this past tells us: "you were such and such a person" without allowing us to become that person again. By affirming to us the reality of a "lost paradise" instead of giving it back to us in memory, we feel the need at least to describe our past life and to "establish the basis for a true understanding of it."

In the Ruskin essays, Proust wrote as both a critic and a novelist concerned essentially with the same problems of existence. The scattered pages of Jean Santeuil,[388] which Proust abandoned after more than four years of work, were found in the late 1940s by Bernard de Fallois, who performed the task of sifting through them and of cobbling up a manuscript that could be said to cohere in some fashion. The last chapter of this study will be devoted to the relations between literary text and ideology in this unfinished work.

---

388 I shall be citing two editions of this work: Marcel Proust, Jean Santeuil, trans. Gerard Hopkins with a preface by André Maurois (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), and Marcel Proust, Jean Santeuil précédé de Les Plaisirs et les jours, ed. Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 5-879.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter Twelve

Literary Text and Ideology in *Jean Santeuil*

I) Critical Issues

Critical controversy about JS was particularly intense, naturally enough, in or shortly after the years when the two major French editions of the book appeared, 1952 and 1971.[389] The principal contentious issues were the methods used by Bernard de Fallois and Pierre Clarac in preparing their editions, the structure and form of the work, and its place in Proust's development as a writer. There was also disagreement about its dates of composition, some critics believing that the book was composed intermittently from 1895 to 1899, while others, notably Antoine Adam,[390] pointed to historical references in the book to back up their claim that Proust had continued to work on it sporadically as late as 1905.

These controversial issues are reflected in one of the few book-length studies of JS, by Mireille Marc-Lipianski.[391] She takes note of the book's fragmented and incoherent treatment of plot and character development, and therefore judges it to be a failure as a novel. She is certainly right, but the basic condition required to fully legitimize her judgment is that this massive "baggy monster" of almost 750 printed pages is in fact a novel that should be evaluated

---

389 Marcel Proust, Jean Santeuil, 3 vols. ed. Bernard de Fallois (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), and Marcel Proust, Jean Santeuil précédé de Les Plaisirs et les jours, ed. Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).

390 Antoine Adam, "Notes sur deux livres récents," Revue des sciences humaines, October-December, 1952, 359-365.

391 Mireille Marc-Lipianski, La Naissance du monde proustien dans *Jean Santeuil* (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1974).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

like any other fictional narrative aspiring to take its place in the history of the genre. That this is not the way to read JS is borne out, I believe, by several weighty considerations that have been discussed by various Proust scholars.

A basic problem is the extreme and probably insurmountable difficulty that Fallois and Clarac had to cope with in piecing together thousands of fragmentary, often disconnected pages[392] hastily written on odd scraps of paper, sheets of stationery, and notebook pages that were found in the late 1940s in a carton that had been stored away for many years in a basement and presumably discarded by Proust as no longer usable for integration into a novel. Moreover, because of the inherent difficulty of this task, Fallois apparently took certain liberties in ordering this material for publication that, it was widely felt, violated accepted standards of literary scholarship. In a characteristically thorough and minute examination of the JS manuscript,[393] Philip Kolb observed that not only did Fallois (understandably) give a title to the manuscript where there was none but he "retouched some passages " which he did not reveal to the reader, added chapter titles that were not Proust's, arranged chapters by theme, a highly questionable type of editorial maneuver, and in effect "betrayed" Proust's intentions by making too many arbitrary changes of name, date, and other such interventions. Kolb's conclusions in his 1963 essay had been anticipated, although not documented in Kolb's fashion, by Antoine Adam, who in 1952 deplored the absence of a critical apparatus in the Fallois edition and accused Fallois of gross "negligence" in his manipulations of the text. After the appearance of the 1971 edition, Enrico Guaraldo (with the backing of the poet

---

392 A photocopy of these fragments, in three volumes, is in the Kolb-Proust Archive for Research at the Library of the University of Illinois in Urbana. Theoriginals are kept in the manuscript room of the BN.

393 Philip Kolb, "Historique du premier roman de Proust," Saggi e ricerche di letteratura francese. vol. iv, (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1963) 215-277.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Eugenio Montale) accused Fallois of having made a kind of "collage" of thousands of sheets of paper and then passing them off as a novel. In essence, Guaraldo felt that "Fallois had sought to give a homogeneity to Jean Santeuil that the work did not have." But Clarac did not escape unscathed either. While praising the considerably more trustworthy 1971 version, Guaraldo pointed out that Clarac had also relied too much on grouping the material in thematic units rather than on a "chronological criterion" of organization that would have taken into account the actual "order of composition of the various fragments."[394]

The upshot of all this is that, between Proust's own uncertainties concerning the structure and development of his narrative, and the frequent editorial interventions by Fallois and Clarac, what the reader had (and still has) in hand in book form are two texts whose amorphousness in some of its parts or, on the other hand, whose fake orderliness was imposed by the editors, make them unsuitable for conventional literary analysis.

We know that, as far as Proust himself was concerned, from the time he began writing JS in September 1895 [395] to December of 1899, when he told Marie Nordlinger that he had been working for a long time on "a book of large proportions, but without completing anything," [396] he *was* writing what he thought was a novel, and not simply a series of random jottings about this or that with the hope that, somehow and some way, he would eventually succeed in weaving them together in a formally satisfactory manner. Therefore, if we make Proust's intentions one of our criteria of judgment, we cannot but be disappointed. The only way to avoid such disappointment is by doing what

---

394 See Enrico Guaraldo, "Per una storia del Jean Santeuil," Paragone, 22, 260, October 1971, 89-126, and "Il volto nuovo del Jean Santeuil di Proust," Paragone, 23, 272, October 1972, 51-67.

395 This is the date given by Philip Kolb, Correspondance de Marcel Proust, t. II, 377n2.

396 Correspondance t. II, 377. The letter is dated December 5, 1899 by Kolb.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Lipiansky and others were finally compelled to do, namely to recognize that JS does not meet the minimal requirements of the novel genre, and that it makes much more sense to see it as an enormous collection of descriptions, sketches, dialogues and reflections written down in considerable haste in the hope that these diverse materials would fall into shape as an organic interconnected whole. This hope was not realized. Therefore Proust ended up by abandoning the project rather than try to reshuffle the more than one thousand five hundred pages of his manuscript. In effect, instead of continuing his work on the JS manuscript, Proust undertook his Ruskin studies, after which, in 1908,. he began composing the Recherche, where he reworked or integrated some of the materials of JS.

The gains are considerable if we reject the notion that JS is a completed novel and think of it instead as a series of amorphous and largely discontinuous episodes interspersed with hundreds of pages of description, commentary and reflection held together by only one crucial thread consisting of the consciousness of the main character, Jean Santeuil, whose "sentimental education"[397] is tracked over a period of approximately twenty-five years, from the 1870s to the end of the century. In this sense, it can be argued that the book does tell a story of sorts[398], but it is a story without a plot, a narrative lacking key components of plot development such as do exist in the Recherche. In the

---

397 Flaubert has often been mentioned as a probable influence on Jean Santeuil.

398 The narrator of JS stops on a number of occasions to remind us that his basic task is to tell a story, but as is often the case withProust, these interjections are couched in terms that leave the reader uncertain as to what exactly the work before him is trying to accomplish. Two examples occur in chapters titled "Henri de Réveillon" (167) and "From Sea to Mountain" (398): "The chapter now to follow would be just as worthy of a place in a psychological work dealing with different varieties of human ambition or in an historical study of the last years of the nineteenth century as in this far more modest story of Jean Santeuil." "He would talk to his mother then with warm sympathy, and the things he said would stir his feelings so deeply that his voice would tremble, and the tears come into his eyes. But my business is to tell a story, and this is not the place in which to dilate upon the laws of sensibility. . .")

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Recherche and JS, we follow the hero's life over roughly the same time period, but in the former, the first person narrator tells us how he comes to commit himself to his vocation as a writer in the context not only of the vicissitudes of his own personal existence but also in that of the society of his time, leading to the intertwining of the Guermantes Way with Swann's Way, a process of social and cultural amalgamation that marks the end of an era of French social history.[399] It is in these two contexts that all of the characters and episodes take their place as parts of an immense canvas which we can contemplate at any one of the many points of interest along the circuitous trail of Proust's narrative. Nothing of the sort takes place in JS. Although Jean, like Marcel, is an aspiring writer and poet, this aspect of his life does not assume the centrality that it does in the Recherche. Catherine Anne Baudino explains why this is the case: Jean does not really undergo any decisive changes of outlook and self-understanding. In JS, she observes, the various episodes and crises in Jean's life are not interconnected in such a way as to reveal any substantial "change of situation, character or thought." [400] Baudino lays stress on the intention signalled by Proust in his preface to the work, namely that he is going to deal with the "essence" of Jean's life. In doing so, he relies on episodic incidents that contribute to our understanding of Jean's essential nature, but that do not add up to a rounded and complex story of development. The result of this "essentializing" technique is that the various episodes are as if insulated from each other. This same point was made by Justin O'Brien.[401]

I said above that the gains are considerable if we look at JS not as

---

399 There are pages of social history in JS as well, but they are not organically related to Jean's developing consciousness of himself as a writer committed to literary creation.

400 Catherine Anne Baudino, "A Narrative Analysis of Jean Santeuil," diss. London University, University College, 1976, 32-33, and throughout...

401 Justin O'Brien, "Jean Santeuil," The French Literary Horizon (New B runswick: Rutgers University Press, 1967), 29-32.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a failed novel but rather as a kind of workshop in which the young Proust took some important steps forward in his craft as a novelist and explored virtually all of the themes, character types, and moral problems that he was to interweave so much more amply and ingeniously in the Recherche. By putting aside any preconceived criteria of literary excellence in evaluating JS, we can better appreciate some of the book's noteworthy accomplishments. Let me point out several of these while referring to what some Proust scholars have had to say about JS in comparison with PJ and with the Recherche.

First of all, despite the discontinuousness of the episodes, we feel that we understand some aspects of Jean's character better than we know Marcel, the narrator of the Recherche. He is a much less complex character, yet he is at the same time more palpable and accessible to the reader's imagination. Perhaps this is due to the device Proust used to create distance between the character Jean and the reader. He accomplishes this by beginning his story with an introductory encounter between two young friends on vacation at a seaside hotel in Brittany and the renowned writer C. Several years after this encounter, C falls ill and summons the two friends to his bedside. Their conversation reestablishes the intimacy they had enjoyed at the hotel. For this reason, after C's death the narrator decides to publish a copy of C's unfinished manscript, since no mention was made in the obituary of a novel having been found among C's papers. The manuscript is the story of Jean Santeuil. This conventional and time-worn device of a found manuscript turns out in some respects to yield a more recognizable portrait of the protagonist than does the confessional first-person voice of the narrator of the Recherche.

Germaine Brée[402] observed that JS signalled a shift of interest on

---

402 Germaine Brée, "Proust et l'Affaire Dreyfus, à la lumière de Jean Santeuil," Marcel Proust-A Critical Panorama, ed. Larkin B. Price (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 1-23.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Proust's part away from the "confessional" mode of PJ to concern with broadly historical trends and conflicts. She singled out in particular Proust's effort in JS to underline the moral and political significance of the Dreyfus Affair, although in JS the event is treated almost like a piece of reportage, whereas in the Recherche it is revealed more subtly through dialogue and character analysis..In any case, while the presence of historical personalities in Proust's writing was not in itself new, his treatment of these characters as an integral part of an historical period was innovative, as far as his own growth as a novelist is concerned. Philip Kolb commented in particular on Proust's portrait in JS of the socialist parliamentary deputy Couzon, whom Kolb identified as the French socialist leader Jean Jaurès.[403] It was through this character, Kolb concluded, that young Proust conveyed his initial attraction to French socialism, an attraction which lasted for only a short time since, as we shall see in his handling of the Couzon episode, he came to see its foremost figure as merely another rather crass political opportunist.

Second, JS brings us into touch with the young Proust's reverential conception of nature, a conception that will be amply elaborated in the Recherche. Both the differences and the similarities between JS and the Recherche in this regard have been noted by Georgette Tupinier, Larkin Price, and Catherine Anne Baudino, among others.[404] They were all struck by the connection Proust tries to make in both works between the protagonists' education as apprentice writers and their intense response to the natural world. What all of these scholars have commented on is the still rather inconclusive

---

403 Philip Kolb, "Proust's Portrait of Jaurès in Jean Santeuil, French Studies, XV (Oxford: Basil Blackwell) 338-349.

404 Georgette Tupinier, "La Digitale de Jean Santeuil," Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France, 55-56, 1971, 950-964, and Larkin B. Price, "Marcel Proust's 'Dieu déguisé': The Artist-Myth in Jean Santeuil," L'Esprit Créateur, 9, 1, Spring 1971, 61-73. For Baudino, see n 392.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

manner in which Proust evokes natural forces in JS, whereas in the Recherche these evocations and descriptions are organically related to the narrator's growing awareness of himself as a writer bent on connecting all manner of phenomena, human and non-human, within a single, unifying vision of life. Sensitivity to nature is an integral part of Marcel's aesthetic and philosophical education, while in the scattered pages of JS it seems to be an end in itself, almost a descriptive ornamentation. Nevertheless, Price characterizes JS as a work in which, excepting a few rudimentary hints in PJ, Proust deals seriously for the first time in his writing with "the artist-as-a-young man" theme wherein the evocation of nature, with the sun metaphorically and philosophically at its vital center, forms part of a mythic and essentially "symbolist" vision of life; a vision which drew inspiration primarily from the poetry of Charles Baudelaire. Price points to the extensive presence of the sun in Les Fleurs du mal as a symbol of life-enhancing energy and especially of artistic creativity. He argues that for Baudelaire and for Proust the sun is the greatest of intermediaries, together with the elements and the entire vegetative kingdom, between the ultimate source of spiritual power and human beings. There is even a sense, Price believes, in which one can speak of certain passages in JS as an expression of Proust's indebtedness to those of Baudelaire's poems, such as "Paysage" and "Le Soleil," where the poet is explicitly compared to the sun.[405] Hence the presence in Proust's fictional universe, from PJ to the Recherche, of the myth of

[405] In the last six verses of "Paysage," Baudelaire specifically evokes a renunciation of political action in favor of the more intimate and deeply personal realm of poetic creation, in which the image of the sun is paramount: "L'Émeute, tempêtant vainement à ma vitre,/Ne fera pas lever mon front de mon pupitre;/Car je serai plongé dans cette volupté/D"évoquer le Printemps avec ma volonté,/De tirer un soleil de mon cœur, et de faire/De mes pensers brûlants une tiède atmosphère." Similarly, and even more explicitly, in the last quatrain of "Le Soleil," Baudelaire, speaking of the sun, writes: "Quand, ainsi qu'un poète, il descend dans les villes,/Il ennoblit le sort des choses les plus viles,/Et s'introduit en roi, sans bruit et sans valets,/Dans tous les hôpitaux et dans tous les palais." The idea of poetry, and art generally, as capable of endowing even the humblest and most obscure aspects of life with a special beauty, is one of the great Proustian amplifications of an essentially Baudelairian theme.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Apollo, god not only of the arts, particularly music and poetry, but also of light.[406] We shall be looking critically at some of these passages in JS in terms of what they reveal about the ideological perspective from which Proust approached his task as an aspiring novelist in the late 1890s.

Third, while it is true that the great theme of sense experience and its impact on the narrator's memory and the flowering of his creative imagination is superbly developed in the Recherche, this theme is already present in JS in great blocks of rich philosophical reflection. In the Recherche, the rough edges of these reflections have been smoothed and recast in a far more formally expert manner, yet it is not unreasonable to observe at the same time that, from both a poetic and an intellectual point of view, JS offers an abundant and nourishing fare to the attentive reader who does not feel constrained constantly to compare JS with the Recherche and consequently to find it wanting. It seems to me more relevant to compare JS with PJ. Cocking has pertinently observed in this regard that the polished prose and prose-poetic pieces of PJ yield to the "shapeless mass" of material in JS on which Proust was "practicing his novelist's craft,"[407] after the significant but limited achievement of his earlier writings. When we enter the workshop of JS, Cocking avers, we discover that it was there, and not in PJ, that "the real labor" was going on,[408] in that JS is a much more disorderly but also a more vital text than PJ, whose relatively small dimensions and whose socially elite readership were inherently constraining factors.

Another feature of JS that shows it in a not entirely unfavorable light in comparison with the Recherche is its persistent sense of life as a cyclical

---

406 See "A Walk" in PJ for a prefiguration of this theme.

407 Barker100.

408 J.M. Cocking, Proust (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956) 12.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

process which--Proust seems to believe-- the novelist should look at *sub specie aeternitatis*, in order to gain a properly distanced perspective on the totality of human existence unfolding against a background of cosmic forces symbolized by the sun, the sky, the clouds, the wind, the moon, the oceans, the tides, the alternating rhythms of stormy and serene days, in short, all of the elements as manifestations of an unknown supernatural power. There is a strong feeling in JS of the implacable passing of time and its effect on everyone without exception, of the seasons following each other in a ceaseless round of heat and cold, of growth and decay, of life and death. JS is perhaps a more resolutely metaphysical work than the Recherche. The forces of nature are brought into intimate touch with daily life; using a variety of tropes, Proust endows these forces with a human face in a manner not essentially different from the way they were figured by the ancients, on whose dominant myths he relies throughout the text. The elements become characters in some respects; their presence is keenly felt, their absence noted, like close friends. Because of these characteristics, it is possible to view JS as a visionary work in which the author has attempted (ironically, given the fragmentary nature of the text) to include all of the fundamental aspects of existence in a sort of cosmic embrace.[409] Young Proust was nothing if he was not ambitious and courageous.

In JS we see the partnership between literature and philosophy in a more elementary way than in the Recherche. Philosophically speaking, Anne Henry considers JS to be an expression of young Proust's "Spinozist pantheism," which in turn rests on a "dynamic" vision of the universe bound together by laws of existence that are only dimly and partially accessible to human intelligence.[410] She astutely characterizes JS as a work whose "deep

---

409 I deal with this Proustian "cosmic" vision in my concluding remarks.

410 Henry, Marcel Proust--Théories pour une esthétique 109.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

subject" is the poetic contemplation of the world. This prefigures some of what I shall be saying further on in this chapter concerning the ideological substructure of JS, wherein a kind of transfer takes place from the realm of human society to that of nature in such a way that the aporias of otherwise unreconcilable socio-political and moral contradictions can in some measure be, if not resolved, then at least held in precarious balance.

Henry also touches on an aspect of Proust's writing in JS which would have surprised readers at the time who knew him solely as the author of PJ, namely his almost obsessive emphasis on "provincial" life, which made it possible for him to articulate his feeling for nature in many of its essential moods and manifestations. In PJ, and later in the Recherche, there are certainly many pages devoted to natural description, but not in as constant and as joyous a way as in JS. This was not Proust's tendency alone; he drew from rural life in ways that were not basically different from the writing of a Barrès or a Gide, both of whom exalted country life and the elemental forces of nature.

Still another aspect of JS that deserves brief comment here is that it marks a distinct transitional moment in the evolution of Proust's style, from the relatively simple and straighforward writing of PJ to the ultimately complex and, at times, tortuous prose of JS, in which there are sentences that run on for up to three hundred words. Most scholars agree that it was John Ruskin whose prose style Proust began trying to emulate in JS, and which he later perfected (with some inevitable lapses) in the Recherche. Enrico Guaraldo called the step that Proust took in JS a "stylistic revolution,"[411] one that brought him out of the "hothouse" world of PJ and into the great current of socially and historically grounded narrative fiction.

In the following analysis, I shall be quoting mainly from the English

411 Guaraldo, "Il volto nuovo del Jean Santeuil di Proust."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

translation of JS published in 1956, but also now and then from the first critical French edition of 1971. The English translation was based on the first French edition published in 1952 by Bernard de Fallois. It was therefore subject to the distortions and errors of that edition. Nevertheless, for the purposes of my analysis, I do not think that the Fallois edition is without distinctive merits, especially in the passages I cite to illustrate various points. These belong to six types of writing: 1) "dramatic" scenes of interaction and dialogue between Jean and a long series of individuals with accompanying coordinates of time, place, and circumstance; 2) moral commentary; 3) philosophical reflection; 4) psychological sketches and portraits of Jean, his parents, his friends, and his social acquaintances; 5) evocations of landscapes and the forces of nature; 6) descriptions of social gatherings and events attended by members of the Parisian upper middle and aristocratic classes. Physical description is kept to a minimum. For example, we are not told what Jean looks like until page 715 of a 744 page book, and when we are told at that point it is Jean as seen by a portrait painter. Many of Jean's most important experiences are mediated by painting and poetry, as we have already seen in the case of Baudelaire. Proust loved sunlight, but it is a light to which he had first been sensitized by French, Italian, and Dutch painters.[412] He loved flowers too, but they are flowers whose special qualities had first been brought to his attention by Robert de

[412] But in his study of the Recherche, Splitter adds an important psychological insight to these aesthetic explanations of Proust's obsession with sunlight. He notes Marcel's almost primitive faith in the virtue of sunlight, "which illuminates the phenomenal world and wards off the fear of total dissolution that darkness implies." Splitter 14

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Montesquiou.[413] Nature and art are inextricably bound up with each other in JS[414] , as they will be in the Recherche. It can be said that in Proust's fictional writing, natural phenomena do not acquire their significance until they are seen and transfigured by an artist's or a writer's creative imagination. He had the eye of a scientist, but the heart of a poet.

II) An Ideological Critique of Jean Santeuil

In my view, the ideological perspective from which young Proust approached his task as an apprentice novelist in JS was in large part that of a writer and thinker imbued with the sensibilities of European Romanticism. Many decades ago, Jacques Barzun and Henri Peyre warned against the pitfalls of the term "Romantic," citing its variegated features and historically diverse meanings and applications.[415] Duly warned, I would nonetheless stand by my choice of the word Romantic as well suited to convey the qualities of Proust's portrayal of his hero in relation to the society and customs of his time, his conception of nature, his theory of memory and creativity, his attraction to the

---

413 In a chapter of JS titled "Le Jardin des oublis," the narrator writes of Jean: "Gradually, and at a later date, he came to know many flowers. An artist it was, who, with the prestige of his authority and the power to reveal beauty to unsuspecting eyes, gave him the *entrée* to their loveliness, as he did to that of many works by writers and painters. For Jean's mind, as the years passed, was without companionship and needed direction. Often when he saw a flower in Monsieur de Montesquiou's button-hole, and remarked upon it, that consummate connoisseur of Nature could, with a word, set him on fire with passion for the moss-rose, the deep blue of the gentian, and the rich pigmentation of the cineraria." (133)

414 In the chapter "Tempest at Penmarch," a village in Brittany where Jean has gone to witness a storm at first hand, there is a particularly good example of how Proust mixes nature and art in his descriptions: "An enchanting study of sunlight by Harrisson--given to the landlord as a parting present, in which affection and talent had combined to convey the local landscape to those who as yet did not knot it, with all that could be revealed only by a continuous process of concentration and an intensity of sympathy which remained in the eye of the spectator as a memory long after he had ceased to look at it--was now touched by this same sun which, playing about the painted image of itself with a bright fondness, gave to the luminosity reproduced upon the canvas a quite indescribable brilliance." (388)

415 Jacques Barzun, "To the Rescue of Romanticism," The American Scholar, 9:147 (1940), and Henri Peyre, Romanticism and the Modern Ego (Boston: Little Brown, 1943).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

idea of a single "universal" substance animating human beings in all times and places, and his feeling that art and spiritual inwardness alone can redeem a life filled with disillusionment and disappointment.[416]

Jean Santeuil is a romantic hero as Georgy Lukàcs defined such a character, namely a person whose soul and vision of life are so much larger, so much more expansive and generous than the social order in which he finds himself that, like Goethe's Werther, Foscolo's Iacopo Ortis, and De Vigny's Chatterton, it is all but preordained that he will withdraw into himself or come to a tragic end. Jean, as it happens, does not come to such an end, due to his life-sustaining relationships with family, friends, and intellectual mentors, and to his ability to find beauty in the natural world as an antidote to the prevalent corruption of the socio-political milieu in which he lives. Like his three famous literary counterparts just mentioned, Jean is a young man of keen aesthetic sensibilities and lofty ideals. Art and nature are the bedrock of his faith in life and in his own eventual liberation from the snares of a superficial and false optimism based on worldly success, wealth, and social position. But much more intensely than his three counterparts, Jean is also attracted to the very society, the very glitter and elegance that so offend him. He is a person of decisively

---

[416] This Romantically influenced reading of Proust was brilliantly anticipated by P.-V. Zima, in his Le Désir du mythe-une lecture sociologique de Marcel Proust (Paris: Editions A.-G. Nizet, 1973), which I was not aware of until recently and did not have time to review thoroughly before presentation of this study. One of the points Zima makes about Proust's "romantic" sensibilities is that, like so many of his counterparts in nineteenth century European literature, the character Jean Santeuil turns away from the world of "reality and action" in order to realize himself in the realm of the spirit, in art, philosophy, and meditation. He is caught by the "antinomy" between the "objectivity of the real and the subjectivity of the dream. In the clash between concrete reality and the dream, one must reverse relations to save the dream, hence the inevitable withdrawal from practical political concerns. But Zima's larger and over-arching point is that JS is presided over throughout by what he calls "a realm of myths where the birth and the death of myth are the essential events, the principal subjects of the novel's discourse." (94) Proust's world in JS, Zima concludes, does not really have the solidity of a Balzacian construction, but rather is composed of "myths, illusions, fabrications, and an attachment to form. The "mythic" formulations that dominate JS also affect the treatment of social classes, where the characteristic features of these classes tend to become absorbed by a sort of all-encompassing "feudal" atmosphere and mystique that blur the real historical distinctions involved.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

middle-class background who enjoys moving in aristocratic circles, and often thinks and expresses himself in a worshipful manner when in the company of that class's most gracious and distinguished personalities. Indeed, his closest friend, Henri de Réveillon, is the scion of one of France's ancient noble families. His château in the Marne is the locus of some of Jean's happiest, most blissful moments.

Jean is a Romantic hero in his recourse, ultimately, to a form of extreme individualism which allows him to cope with the many sorrows and disappointments of life by seeing himself as superior to the callousness and hostility of his school companions, the opportunism of some of his hitherto revered political leaders, and the moral compromises of virtually everyone around him, be they business people, government workers, landowners, artists, or intellectuals.

In a scene that typifies Jean's discomfort and alienation when confronting individuals who occupy high positions in the Government and the professions, we see him walking down the rue Royale in Paris with his father and dearest friend, Henri. The three happen upon the brilliantly versatile Monsieur Duroc, a young man who has already obtained success in three fields of endeavor, medicine, literature, and Government, specifically the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where Jean's father is also employed. Seeing Jean's hesitancy when he asks him what he wants to do with his life, Duroc quickly tries to coax Jean into opting for a career in the diplomatic corps, or in some other branch of government service. Jean is uncertain about his future, but he already knows what most Romantic heroes know in their viscera, that his life would be a worthless bore to him if he were to follow the path marked out for him by Duroc. In a long and grandiloquent discourse, Duroc urges Jean to continue writing

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

poetry, but as a sideline, a hobby with which he could escape the pressures of his public life in his time away from the office. The narrator (of uncertain identity, a creation of the novelist C but assuredly not C in any case) observes of Jean at this point that he "had never regarded poetry as some sort of seasoning to be added at will to matters of business." Jean, although intimidated by Duroc's extraordinary eloquence and self-confidence, nevertheless musters up the courage to make a little speech that resonates with the values we have come to associate with Proust: ambivalence towards "Society," a need to "concentrate my mind, to dig deep into myself," and a commitment to "find out the truth of things, to express the whole of myself, to occupy myself with what is genuine, and not, like what you have been describing, essentially futile" (190-191).

Jean's answer is significant in that it serves to point up Duroc's pretentiousness and pedantry. Duroc sees life as basically a game of power and manipulation, and cannot understand what is going on inside the mind of his idealistic interlocutor. But the scene does not end there. Before Jean leaves Duroc, two things happen. First, Jean reveals that a career in diplomacy would require separating himself from his mother, whom he dearly loves and needs, for she is part of his "soul." On hearing the word "soul," Duroc makes a few snide remarks showing the disdain with which he, a philosophical materialist, holds such ideas. Then, as they are about to take leave of one another, the three men see a policeman arguing with a cab driver and then striking him with such force that the man falls back reeling against a lamppost. Duroc shouts words of encouragement to the policeman, provoking in Jean and Henri "an indescribable sense of discomfort." Two worlds confront each other here, one, that of Duroc, in which law and authority are always right, and anyone who might resist their rule is seen ipso facto as inferior and culpable; the other, that

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of Jean and Henri, where sensitivity to pain and insult and sympathy for the weak take precedence over their loyalty to the established order of things.

The Duroc encounter is one of various chapters in JS that deal, for the first time in Proust's fictional writings, with explicitly political figures and issues. I shall argue later on that it is not really in this explicitly political domain that the most important aspects of Proustian ideology reveal themselves in this work, but rather in his way of figuring and imagining the natural world; nevertheless, the directly political theme in JS is of sufficient interest to warrant a more detailed analysis of how it plays itself out in the work.

Proust's representation of political personalities and issues in JS is pervaded by an abiding pessimism about the existing social order based on what we have already observed in Jean's remarks to Duroc, namely his devotion to spiritual truth, to interiority, and to his mother, who is not only the central figure in his affective world but also the living embodiment of a conception of life in which familial sentiments and responsibilties are felt to be vastly more essential and important than any conceivable public project, especially if and when, as often happens in JS, such a project is contaminated by overweening ambition, self-interest, greed, and dishonesty. It is always by celebrating Jean's love for his parents and for a few close friends and teachers that Proust conveys his fundamental dislike and suspicion of political man, even when political energies are directed to socially beneficial goals. His loyalties are to personal qualities, not to political programs, to the unselfishness and durability of a mother's love for her son, and of a son's love for his parents, not to the ideas of politicians. What we are dealing with here is a mixture of Romantic individualism and spiritual idealism which are pitted, in grossly unequal combat (but Romantic heroes are always faced by adversaries far

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

more powerful than they) if considered from a purely material point of view, but a combat worth fighting since the prize, the entity at stake, is nothing less than the protagonist's soul.

In JS Proust recounts a series of politically explosive episodes loosely connected by just one thread, and that is Jean's consciousness of himself as an individual caught between the blandishments of a fairly easily acquired worldly success (since his father has influence at the Ministry) and the uncertain outcomes of a life devoted to poetry and moral self-scrutiny. JS is a modern version, in some respects, of the medieval morality play. Jean's understanding of good and evil is substantially different from the accepted Christian one,[417] but it unfolds and develops in connection with the same kind of *agon* that occurred in the moral literature of earlier centuries.

The vicissitudes of four characters, one of whom, Colonel Georges Picquart, is a real historical personage, serve to highlight the political and moral conflicts to which I have alluded. The characters who act out these conflicts are the zealous reformer Lepic; the socialist Couzon; the liberal cabinet minister Charles Marie, around whom a financial scandal (based on the Panama scandal of 1891-1893) develops that consolidates Jean's growing pessimism about public life; and Colonel Picquart, whose courageous revelations of the schemes and prevarications that underlay the accusations against Captain Dreyfus were motivated, in Proust's interpretation of those events, as much by

---

[417] Proust's conception of good and evil in JS is a rather narrow one, especially if considered in relation to what we have come to know as evil in the twentieth century. It is expressed indirectly towards the end of the book, where Proust introduces the figure of a middle-aged writer named Silvain Bastelle, whose musings on life and art are sprinkled with reflections on good and evil that probably come close to Proust's own views on the matter (although it is always important not to confuse a character's views with those of the author). For Bastelle, the narrator tells us, "evil" is whatever "dries up" the sources of creative inspiration, while "good" is whatever does not weaken it. What he calls "the real, the basic evil" is the squandering of time on trivial social amusements: "Evil for him became what hardened the spirit by making it prey to noble names, witty talk, material facts, formulae learned parrot-wise, commonplace desires, aimless to-ings and fro-ings, and idle chit-chat." (718-719).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

his philosophical turn of mind as by his political convictions. It is known that Picquart harbored anti-Semitic attitudes, and that he came to Dreyfus's defense more from scruple as an honest army officer than from principled opposition to discrimination against Jews. Lepic, Couzon and Marie, regardless of their otherwise laudable political intentions, represent forms of moral compromise that Jean finds unacceptable. Picquart is portrayed with great sympathy and admiration, a reflection, no doubt, of the fact that Proust was passionately involved in the cause of Dreyfus's defense, in the early months of 1898, while working intensively on JS.

The Lepic character serves to underline one of the fundamental themes of JS, that lurking behind the most benevolent public images there are often extremely ugly realities which most people tend to disregard whenever possible. This theme is first announced in connection with the Santeuil family's cook, Ernestine, in a reflective aside that recalls Françoise in the Recherche. The aside concerns the tolerance most people display for horrible acts of injustice and cruelty provided that their own needs and creature comforts are the outcome of these acts. The animals daily slaughtered for the pleasure of refined palates suffer "an agony we endure without giving it a second thought because it is necessary to our enjoyment." To this the narrator adds a remark with implications not dissimilar from a famous comment attributed to Walter Benjamin, that "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism." Proust's narrator puts this point as follows:

> And so it is that the sheep, the chickens and the bullocks, whose agony we endure without giving it a second thought because it is necessary to our enjoyment, are not the only guileless victims who we daily allow to be sacrificed. Well-being, vanity, greed and superfluity are pleasant masters whose innumerable crimes, daily committed through the centuries and never punished, ensure the happiness of those who profit from them and guarantee their own continued dominance. (88)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In passages such as this, relatively rare in Proust's writings, one feels the wrath of a conscience offended by the hypocrisy and arrogance of the privileged elite. However, Proust's response to injustice does not remain very long on the level of anger expressed by this passage, which would have had the effect, possibly, of forcing him to be more directly engaged with the victims than he ever showed himself to be. Instead, he chose to address himself to individual cases of injustice, such as that of Monsieur Lepic, whom the narrator describes as a "great reformer" who had always fought for the rights of the downtrodden, yet who, at the same time, in his private life, was "a fool who tyrannized over his wife." Because of his complete indifference to his wife's feelings, in three years of marriage Lepic has made her into a "melancholy, ugly woman turned into herself."

Appearances in JS are not only usually false and misleading, but frequently nothing but cover-ups of cowardly and disloyal behavior. The Socialist Couzon, for example, is shown at first in a favorable light, as a champion of the working class. But later on, when the Marie scandal breaks out, Jean comes to Couzon in the hope that he will defend the good name, not of Marie, who is under investigation for fraudulent abuse of his office, but of his father, Monsieur Santeuil, who has been dragged into the scandal surrounding Marie because Marie is his closest friend and a man with whom he has worked on numerous committees and other official business. Jean wants Couzon to go on record as believing in Monsieur Santeuil's innocence of any and all charges connected with the Marie affair. Couzon refuses to do what Jean asks, insisting that he must place his "ideas" and party affiliations before personal friendship. For Jean, on the other hand, it is not so much that personal affections and loyalties come before politics as that they are the very essence of what true

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

politics should be all about. He envisions a world in which personal and political values go hand in hand, for the same reasons that led Socrates to sacrifice his life for his conception of loyalty to the Athenian polis. Couzon blames M. Santeuil for having continued to see Marie even after the accusations against him had been made public. Jean replies that it was precisely friendship that had motivated his father's continued association with Marie. Couzon appeals to "the common good," which he says requires that he abstain from all personal intervention in the affair. Jean is appalled at Couzon's failure to make good on the promises and commitments of earlier times. He accuses the Socialist leader of cowering before the blackmail and threats of the scandal sheets, in order to advance his own political career. Furious and deeply hurt at the same time, Jean is concerned above all with the feelings of his mother and father, now victims of a scurrilous daily press that has "turned a great many of the people who read them into evil creatures--and that is perhaps worse!"

As far as Marie is concerned, once again Jean reveals that for him politics can only be understood in moral terms. In this instance, the moral issue is not Marie's guilt or innocence, since he had done some of the things of which he was accused, as a result of which, although avoiding incarceration, he loses his cabinet post. The issue for Jean is whether everything good and socially beneficial that Marie had done in his life was negated by his occasional dishonesty and financial opportunism. He thinks not, and develops an argument that shows him to be more amenable to ambiguities than one would think from the way he behaves vis-à-vis Couzon. But in this case he is weighing the public response to Marie's misdeeds against the inherent qualities of Marie's life. Yes, he admits, Marie should pay for his dishonesty, but does this dishonesty warrant

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"the scorn of a thousand gloating eyes, the drunken frenzy of a million hatreds"? The answer, to Jean, is self-evident, and is based on his belief that, amidst all of this public defamation and scandal, there are personal loyalties to be protected, private worlds of affection that will endure far beyond the limited and contingent considerations of political life. The death of Marie's wife shortly after his removal from office, and soon thereafter of Marie himself, serves to emphasize the polluted moral atmosphere that surrounds Jean and his family.

The Jewish question comes to the fore here in two ways. One hinges on the fact that Marie's wife, a Jewess, had been the closest friend of Jean's mother, who is grief-stricken by her loss. Despite her own family's history (unlike Proust's own mother, who was Jewish) that is steeped in anti-Semitism, she had overcome her prejudices through her admiration for Madame Marie's virtue and goodness. The other, of course, is through the Dreyfus Affair, in which Jean's mother is again portrayed as sympathetic to Dreyfus and deeply offended when Colonel Picquart, whom she respects, is vilified by his accusers in the Army and Government, and by millions of intransigent French supporters of the Army. The Dreyfus Affair is not as central to JS as it is to the Recherche, since the former lacks the extended scenes of Parisian salon life where discussions about the Affair often reveal aspects of the various characters' political viewpoints in surprising ways. But the Affair is sufficiently present in JS to allow the reader to get a fairly good crosssection of opinion at the time.

I have already alluded several times to the underlying pessimism--even, at times, cynicism--of the view of politics that pervades JS. The fact is that in this work, Proust, via his narrator, makes it clear that the only politics he believes in is the politics of the family, the politics of affection and love between human beings who care about each other as individuals, and who give

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

something of themselves to their loved ones that no strictly political act, in the conventional sense of the term, can ever give. At about the mid point of the book, the narrator sums up his feelings in this regard by stressing what he takes to be the irremediably tainted nature of the customary political acts that are taken to be signs of civic virtue: voting, campaigning for candidates, signing petitions and manifestoes, forming alliances, in short, the public acts of political man. In Proust's eyes, as we have them voiced by the narrator (if we can assume some degree of congruence between the views of the author and his narrator in this instance) politics almost always takes on a demeaning and degraded character, if for no other reason than that these acts "are strictly speaking of no importance whatever, since nothing of our true selves goes into them" (328). The theory of a genuine "inner self" and of an outer superficial facade that depends for gratification on the rewards of status and wealth has rarely been expressed as clearly by Proust as in this section of the book, which is devoted largely to Colonel Picquart. To set one's name to a manifesto, asserts the narrator, no matter how fine the sentiments behind it may be, "says nothing that is genuinely personal to ourselves." In contrast, an act of kindness to one's parents or to a friend, although unheralded, will remain a vital force for good in the lives of its recipients. Most publicly acknowledged actions are, in the narrator's opinion, ways of escaping from "the dread necessity of turning our eyes inwards, . . . [they are] refuges from introspection and responsibility" (330).

In JS, we have moved to the polar opposite of the classical Ciceronian and the Renaissance humanist concepts of political engagement as a true sign of moral excellence. The value system that prevails in Proust's fictional world exalts the private and the personal, while mocking or otherwise

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

belittling the political.[418] Yet needless to say, personal honor is of paramount importance to Jean. He is ready to risk his life in a duel after being insulted by a man at a dinner party who accuses him, unjustly, of cheating at cards. In this case, a publicly visible act on Jean's part is called for, since what is at stake is his reputation as a man of honor. But the duel does not clear his name. He is made the butt of crude jokes, people look away when he enters a room, former friends and associates distance themselves in subtle and hurtful ways. Once again, even in this instance where honor is at stake, and publicly accepted norms of moral conduct are agreed upon, Jean is the victim of a society capable of making his life a living hell. Dantesque images abound when Jean is pictured making his entrance at a party given by a Mme Lustaud. He imagines all of the "hideous business of social excommunication" to which he would be subjected. Fortunately, the party turns out to be less excrutiating than he had imagined, but not before the narrator presents us with a little excursus on the relations between "masters" and "servants" whose core idea is that servants, like all social inferiors, will lose respect for you if you treat them "amiably." Amiability is incompatible with respect.

There is an interesting alternation not only of moods but of visual and philosophical perspectives in JS through which Proust changes his focus

---

[418] An Italian Marxist critic, Alberto Beretta Anguissola, caught this aspect of Proust's world view quite well when, in response to the 1971 Pléiade edition of JS, he cited Proust's mistrust of political thought and action. For Proust, the intellectual considered as a "creator of universality and history" had in a sense to "make himself ignorant" in order to realize himself in the spiritual and creative domains. Looked at in a broad sense, Anguissola said, what was at work in Proust was "a real refusal of the political and social dimension of human existence." Proust was, to be sure, a "humanitarian" which however took an entirely unpolitical form, since for Proust, as seen in JS, "what is still possible for man is the realization of self through family life, friendship, love, and above all through artistic expression. In effect, underlying all of this,a ccording to Anguissola, was a conception of human life based on the assumption that nothing essential in the human condition changes through time. History is the realm of the contingent, which gives the appearance of change, but which conceals a fundamental unchanging and "essential" reality. See Alberto Beretta Anguissola, "Storia, scienza e società in Proust," Paragone, 22, 260, October 1971, 61-89.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

abruptly from intense close-up shots to panoramic vistas of vast dimensions. He moves his lens in such a way as to never allow the reader to become too sure of his bearings, too secure in thinking that this, and this alone, is the point of view governing the fictional universe before him.[419] For example, an intimate love scene that culminates in an outbreak of jealousy is followed immediately by a passage in which the narrator looks with pity on his lovers who, he reminds us, as in a Shakespeare comedy, are but two poor mortals reenacting a drama whose antecedents go back in time many millennia. Or a crisis in the life of a character is not allowed to speak for itself. The narrator is right there with a commentary that forces the reader to back away from the incident itself to survey the whole sweep of human history, where one observes the sorry spectacle of human beings through the ages forever gloating over the misfortunes of those they claim to esteem but secretly dislike, or even hate, as in the case of Charles Marie. His enemies had had to wait a long time before his star began to fall, until finally, "when as the result of the turn of Fortune's wheel which sooner or later makes every possibility actual--it being the fate of all men and of all human institutions to decay--Marie and his Party fell as resoundingly as the most fantastic hatred could have desired" (311-312).

These sudden shifts in temporal perspective, mixed with the tone of fatalism and resignation to the inevitable follies and miseries of human life that predominates in the explicitly political moments of JS, create a rather somber atmosphere which, however, is alleviated and, in a sense, redeemed by the approximately one hundred fifty pages in which Proust throws aside all inhibitions and restraints to celebrate his particular poetic vision of the natural

---

[419] Inasmuch as Proust was writing his novel during the years in which the Lumière brothers and others were experimenting with the first moving pictures soon to imensely expand both visual and verbal means of communication, one wonders to what extent his writing in JS reflected this new development.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

world, a vision singularly free of the desolate pessimism and negativity that mark other sections of JS. It is in the course of his visionary evocations of nature in all of its moods and manifestations that Proust is able to find a home for his idealism, a safe refuge for hope and optimism. I think that it is in this context of burgeoning nature, where images of light, sweetness and dynamic energy abound, that we find a more significant expression of Proust's ideological stance as a writer and thinker in late-nineteenth century Europe. All of his passionate longing for spiritual communion and universal harmony which he was able to envision, but which he despaired of finding, in human society, is transferred by him to the domain of nature.

But before looking concretely at Proust's way of depicting the natural world, it will be helpful to consider several of the ideas developed by Fredric Jameson in a path-breaking book published in 1981.[420] Whether these ideas are, as Jameson thought in the 1980s, applicable to all of world literature, is far too vast and complex a question to be considered here. What seems to me to be indisputable, on the other hand, is the relevance of some of Jameson's insights to Proust's treatment of nature and to his way of investing nature with ideals that had no outlet in the socio-political domain.

In the first chapter of The Political Unconscious, "On Interpretation: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act," Jameson borrows from Northrop Frye in raising "the issue of community" in its various guises in literary texts. At this juncture in the chapter, Jameson does not speak of nature as the repository of "the political unconscious" but rather of religion, behind whose mythic narratives and ritualized acts we discover

> . . . .the symbolic space in which the collectivity thinks itself and celebrates its own unity; so that it does not seem a very difficult

420 Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious--Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> next step, if, with Frye, we see literature as a weaker form of myth or a later stage of ritual, to conclude that in that sense all literature, no matter how weakly, must be informed by what we have called a political unconscious, that all literature must be read as a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community.[421]

I am not prepared to argue that the cult of nature served exactly the same purpose in the France of the 1890s as religious belief; that nature was in a sense a *point de repère* of French writers and intellectuals in the same order of magnitude as religion. Yet if we take into account the writers and poets who have an important place in JS--the Balzac of Le lys de la vallée, Musset and Hugo, Verlaine and Leconte de Lisle, Lamartine and Vigny, as well as the English and American writers Ruskin, Carlyle, George Eliot and Emerson, and the Greek pastoral poet Theocritus--we can begin to see that it was the Romantic and neo-Romantic traditions that probably inspired young Proust's striking concentration on nature as a beneficent force, as a repository of vital energy, and as a source of wisdom and solace almost in the Wordsworthian meaning of those words. For Proust, as for many of his Romantic predecessors, nature became a great restorative and a spiritual guide in life, not only in its unspoiled, unrestrained manifestations but even in its tamed state, in gardens, parks, and in private residences, where one feasts the eye on beautiful life forms in all their freshness and innocence. Lamartine's poems such as "Le vallon," and Leconte de Lisle's Les Poèmes antiques (1852) are filled with the kind of imagery we find in some of Proust's landscapes. Even in the writing of the great realist Balzac, who documented with such scrupulousness the rise of a new money-obsessed middle class that he so much disliked, one can find passages that prefigure Proust's adoration of nature. As he looks out on the countryside of his beloved Touraine, the hero of Le lys dans la vallée, Félix de

---

[421] Jameson 70.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Vandenesse, addresses the reader with these words:

> . . . .Si vous voulez voir la nature belle et vierge comme une fiancée, allez là par un jour de printemps; si vous voulez calmer les plaies saignantes de votre cœur, revenez-y par les derniers jours de l'automne; au printemps l'amour y bat des ailes à plein ciel; en automne, on y songe à ceux qui ne sont plus. Le poumon malade y respire une bienfaisante fraîcheur, la vue s'y repose sur des touffes dorées qui communiquent à l'âme leur paisibles douceurs. En ce moment, les moulins situés sur les chutes de l'Indre donnaient une voix à cette vallée frémissante, les peupliers se balançaient en riant, pas un nuage au ciel, les oiseaux chantaient, les cigales criaient, tout y était mélodie.[422]
>
> . . . .If you want to see nature as beautiful and virginal as a betrothed young woman, go there on a spring day; if you want to calm the bleeding wounds of your heart, go back there in the last days of autumn; in the spring, love beats its wings there in the open sky, in the fall one thinks of those who are no longer with us. In that air sick lungs breathe a healthful freshness, one's eyes rest on golden haystacks that communicate their peaceful sweetness to the soul. In this moment, the mills situated on the banks of the Indre gave a voice to this rustling valley, the hovering poplar trees were laughing, not a cloud in the sky, birds were singing, cicadas were chirping, everything was melody there.

Balzac, and even more the French Romantics mentioned above, spoke of nature with almost the same vocabulary and the same feeling of nature's majesty, beauty and mystery as that of Proust in JS. Note the use of the verb "laughing" to designate the poplar trees "hovering" in the air, an image of playfulness that has a central role in Proust's own conception of what nature offers to human being able to appreciate her. The connection between Proust and his predecessors seems obvious and eloquent when we try to interpret the meaning of Proust's exultation in contemplating the natural world around him.

It is in this literary and philosophical context that Jameson's idea of literature as "a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community" takes on a special pertinence to the writing of young Proust. He found the "community" he

---

422 Honoré de Balzac, Le Lys dans la vallée, ed. Nicole Mozet (Paris: Flammarion, 1972) 61-62.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was looking for, but only in a very limited way, within the intimate circle of family and a few friends, not in the larger political community. As a consequence of this contradiction, he transferred his frustrated idealism to the realm of nature, where he could freely indulge his fantasy life by investing nature with all of the qualities missing in human society. This point brings up the second of three insights in Jameson's The Political Unconscious which I see as relevant to JS and, in general, to many of Proust's fictional works. It has to do with the significance of what Jameson calls "the aesthetic act," through which, he argues, we can begin to comprehend the multiple connections between literary texts and ideology; for, Jameson continues,

> the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal "solutions" to unresolvable social contradictions. (79)

The impulse to "invent" imaginary literary solutions to problems is part of that "unconscious" process by which, in a way analogous to the psychogical role of the unconscious in dealing with unacceptable and unresolved inner conflicts, writers cope with the contradictions posed by the socio-political order in which they carry on their daily lives. By linking literary texts to this process of "unconscious" reconciliation, Jameson brings his readers back to the admonition with which he opens his book, i.e. to "always historicize!." In other words, if we move from the psychological dimensions of reality and attempt, as Jameson would have us do, to account for broad ideological and social themes in literary texts, we must obviously move beyond the exclusively personal and individualized approach to the task of interpretation and to apply the methods of what Bakhtin called "historical

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

poetics."[423]

Another insight I find relevant to Proust in The Political Unconscious concerns precisely this admonition to "always historicize." In chapter five, "Romance and Reification," which deals with Joseph Conrad, Jameson places both positivism and impressionism in the context of the "historically concrete situation to which they are both responses: that of rationalization and reification in late nineteenth-century capitalism." With this statement, Jameson has released the genie from the bottle: the capitalist system, now free to roam the entire globe, altering and transforming ancient social systems, making of every individual not so much a citizen as a consumer, and putting an enormous burden on the shoulders of artists and writers seeking to make sense of their world in an era marked by unprecedented technological and civilisational change.

Proust has not bequeathed us an abundance of material with which to reconstruct his attitude toward world capitalism. But on the basis of his spiritualism and aestheticism, we can conjecture with reasonable certainty that he shared the widespread unease and disorientation that many of his contemporaries felt as the putatively peaceful *belle époque* gradually mutated into enemy camps further dividing France from Germany, and further exacerbating an ever more tentacular "materialism" even among men of letters. Proust frequently complained about and made fun of what he liked to call the "naive materialism" of some of his fellow writers and critics. We have argued at various moments that he was always essentially an idealist thinker, and a believer in the spiritual basis of all deep insight into the human condition, whether in painting, literature, music or the other arts. It is unnecessary to go

---

[423] See especially the central chapter "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel--Notes Toward a Historical Poetics," of Bakhtin's The Dialogic Imagination , ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) 84-258.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

back over this terrain again, except to say that it was from the vantage point of precisely this terrain that he evaluated current trends in the arts. Therefore, it is not at all unreasonable to think that what Jameson means by "rationalization and reification in late nineteenth-century capitalism" was what offended Proust as both thinker and writer. Indeed, in this respect, Jameson links Proust closely to Conrad. He says of his intentions in chapter five that

> . . .I want to show that Conrad may best be situated historically if we understand his practice of style as a literary and textual equivalent of the impressionist strategy in painting (hence his kinship with the greatest of all literary impressionists, Proust). (225)

Rarely has a modern writer equalled Proust's impassioned enthusiasm in JS for natural life, his feeling of exultant joy at the manifold beauty and infinite forms that nature presents to the sensitive eye. In the French tradition, Rousseau and Colette come to mind, but neither one was as constantly and, I would say, religiously absorbed by this great theme as was Proust. Behind his enthusiasm lay the doctrines of Stoicism and Epicurianism, the simple but profound vision of Saint Francis, the natural philosophy of Renaissance humanists such as Erasmus, the Newtonian concept of Nature as an orderly and beneficent whole, the lyrical odes and ballads of European Romanticism. No doubt, whether consciously or not, Proust drew from all of these sources to one degree or another. What he finally assimilated and expressed in his writing, in any case, was a vision of nature that was essentially poetic and contemplative, and as such similar to the understanding of nature that Marx found to be typical and deficient in the thought of Ludwig Feuerbach and his disciples. Marx inaugurated a "materialist" critique of idealism which sought to undermine the foundational principles underlying Feuerbach's (and Proust's) response to nature. Marx interrupted and redirected the long tradition

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of thought about nature to which I referred above. He did so simply by rejecting the contemplative and sentimental side of western philosophical idealism, and by developing his argument, in The German Ideology and other writings, that nature has no meaning at all unless understood in dialectical relations with the transformative labors of humanity through historical time. For Marx, man always has a double reality before him, an historical nature and a natural history, which interact on one another in the concrete phases and processes of time.

What Proust does is avoid entirely the disturbing and disruptive philosophical effects of Marxism and attach himself to his classical, idealist and Romantic heritages. But not entirely, as I have noted several times in this study. As evidenced in JS and in the Recherche, there is a conviction in Proust that, in the final analysis, when we stop to consider the millennia of time already transpired in human history, we must see that human beings in modern times are "made of the same substance" as the people of ancient Egypt or the characters of the Iliad, that "the basic substance of humanity, often invisible and as though intermitted, is still a living reality to be found where least we expect it" [424] . Moreover, when we stop to remember, not only within human time but from the point of view of universal time, we must become aware, no matter how much the spiritualizing impulses stirring within us may rebel against it, that "the human spirit is compounded of the same elements as Nature" .This last remark is made in connection with the Charles Marie scandal, where the narrator stops to consider that it is the fate of all men and of all human institutions to decay. The eternal laws of birth and decay, of life and death in the non-human world are as evident and unalterable as the laws governing the existence of the human species. For Proust, nature and spirit are finally parts of one and the same reality, whose elements act and react upon each other in endless cycles from

[424] JS 3-4.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

which no life form can escape. Thus, it is not quite accurate to say that Proust entirely abandoned the philosophy of materialism, even if he knew nothing or cared not at all about the writings of Marx and Engels. It is just that he arrived at his conclusions via other pathways, including that of the very scientific positivism he so often rejected, and which is embodied in JS in several characters, among whom is Jean's own father. Monsieur Santeuil had been educated by a generation of positivist thinkers in the lycées and universities of mid-nineteenth-century France. In his old age, he modifies his positivist belief system but never entirely discards it. Jean, on the other hand, is the product of a spirtualized generation looking for answers to the great problems of existence in another literature and another body of philosophical thought.

Proust was convinced that all members of the human species share substantially the same joys and sorrows, that they are shaped by common risks, perils and experiences and, as mortal creatures, share the same fate . This perspective is what gives JS and some of Proust's other writings their "democratic" and humanitarian ethos. It is quite different from the way Marx viewed society and history, yet I would not conclude from this that the philosophical worlds of a Marx and a Proust are so much at odds with each other as to preclude any common point of reference whatever. Still, the differences are plainly evident. Proust's characters do not participate in any kind of collective struggle, as they do, for example, in Zola's Germinal. What they have in common in Proust's writing is something more elusive and spiritual. In a revealing passage of JS, the narrator comments on Jean's response to his uncle, who had questioned him about his dreams:

> Jean could no more remember what he had dreamed than what had happened to him when he was two. But it made him happy to think that he*had* dreamed, that his uncle had dreamed, that at certain hours all men, imprisoned by an invincible power in dark,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> deep beds, within curtains smelling of lavender, all shared in a mysterious life in which the old were but little different from the very young, or from the superstitious inhabitants of the primitive world, and of which He, who had charge of them, was at pains to see that they should remember nothing.[425]

In JS (and for that matter in all of Proust's writings), the only time we see human beings engaged in what Marxist thinkers call a "transformative" relationship with nature is through minor working class characters such as cooks and gardeners. And when we do see them, they are engaged essentially either in artistic production, like the Santeuil family's cook, Ernestine who, prefiguring Françoise in the Recherche, is a creator, an inventor of original recipes that delight the palate, or in imitating nature, not dominating her, like Monsieur Santeuil's gardener, whose labor is explicitly compared to that of bees and butterfiles.

But the essential Proustian vision of nature is one where human intervention plays hardly any role at all. As vision, it is contemplative, and within the contemplative stance, it is poetic feeling, an effusive lyricism, that predominate throughout. In the three passages cited below we can feel how passionately Proust sought for a congruence between inner feelings and concrete sensual experience. In the book's introductory section, there is a hint of this when one of the two young men who have become friends of the writer C comments on the pleasure that C takes in his retreat on the Brittany coast during brief amiable conversations with the hotel maid. Proust uses the moment to paint the first in a series of highly animated natural scenes. The theme of nature's playfulness and the general atmosphere of well-being and gaiety are quite striking:

> It was a great pleasure for C to have her stay with him on these occasions, just as I imagine on mornings when the sun, freeing its

[425] JS 90.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> smiling face from the early mist, addresses a long and loving welcome to all nature, finding a pleasure in stroking the still empty sea, in warming the beaches, in playing among the branches rustling in the dawn wind, and in letting its friendly gaze rest on the sailor who has been afloat since the first light, filling him with a sense of well-being and happiness. [426]

At another moment, in a chapter titled "Le jardin des oublis," we see nature "hard at work" amidst an atmosphere of idyllic freedom. It seems likely that the following passage conceals a secret yearning for a world, a society, where one is free "to fly" wherever one wishes, instead of being compelled to mask one's feelings and desires behind hypocritical "unnatural" conventions.

> "Madame Leduc is not in her garden today, I see," said Monsieur Serciers. Yet one could not truly maintain that the garden was lacking in life. One had the impression that every single corner of it was a living dispensary where leaves were ever at work distilling balm, while all around the flowers gave off their heady perfume. Even at some distance from the railing one could catch a smell, so much more penetrating when gathered from the living plants by the breeze which rocked them, mingled them, composed them in a symphony, blew them apart and gathered them together, turn and turn about, than in the hot steam of infusions, or in a chemist's shop, the scent of lime flowers or acacia. Nature, too, was hard at work, taking advantage of the season and the time of day when every flying thing might go where it willed and the flowers lay open like palaces offering hospitality.[427]

The last paragraph of a chapter titled "Walks" is illustrative of the extent to which Proust invested natural phenomena with the emotions stirring within him. First, the narrator tells us that Jean had rarely if ever found a perfect correspondence between the pleasures he longed for and the joy that these pleasures actually gave him. But then there is an ecstatic moment of perfect fulfillment, as Jean contemplates the village and the surrounding landscape. It

---

[426] JS 9.

[427] JS 127-128.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

is in passages such as this that Proust's "political unconscious" was operative, where he in effect transferred to nature that longing for spiritual communion, for "oneness" with the universal "harmonious" order of things which he had despaired of finding in the social order. It is significant, it seems to me, that such a privileged moment should occur while Jean is walking with his close friend Henri de Réveillon, one of several characters in whom we see traces of Reynaldo Hahn, the "hidden god"[428] of JS:

> They went by the way of the vines which, glittering in the sun, seemed flooded with a joy not less than Jean's. They reached the farm where the stones before the door seemed stroked by the sun, giving back smile for smile. They sat down to drink beneath the apple trees which were now full of ripe fruit, having lost their springtime blossom, though they still retained in the tangled tracery of their delicate branches something of their former charm with its memories of youth. Wild grasses on the wall were carelessly confiding to the wind. Not now did Jean, as once he had done when saying goodbye to Mademoiselle Kossichef, wonder whether he would ever know happiness since nothing ever seemed to give him a pleasure that was whole and perfect, but always fell short of expectation, and no matter how lovely this or that might be, never chimed perfectly with his yearning heart, but made him feel misunderstood and impotent, a prey to misery and despair. Now however in his walks and in his dreaming everything seemed to outstrip the pleasure that he felt within himself and to answer it. The woods, the vines, the very stones, were at one with the brightness of the sun and the unblemished sky, and even when the sky grew overcast, the multitude of leaves, as in a sudden change of tone, the earth of the roads, the roofs of the town, seemed as though caught up in the unity of a brand new world. And all that Jean was feeling seemed without effort to chime with the surrounding oneness, and he was conscious of the perfect joy which is the gift of harmony.[429]

---

[428] In a letter to Hahn dated March 1896 by Kolb, Proust alluded to "the beginning of his novel" in the following manner: "How good you are Reynaldo. Mother was touched by your kindness and I thank you and embrace you with all my heart. I had brought you some little things by me and the beginning of the novel which Yeatman himself, at whose home I was writing, found very poney. You'll help me to correct what would be too much of that. I want you to be in it all the time but like a god in disguise that no mortal recognizes. Without [such a device] you would be obliged to write 'tear this up' all over the novel." Correspondance de Marcel Poust, Tome II, 52. "Poney" was one of the words Hahn liked to use to designate Proust.

[429] JS 269.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Nature alone has the restorative power to convert Jean's melancholy and loneliness into joy, his alienation into a feeling of comradeship and unity. But just as important is his frequent association of nature with the idea of freedom. Although the freedom involved here is not, of course, political in any ordinary sense, it is not unreasonable to see a political motive in his celebration of the elements when they are thrown into the kind of furious and chaotic turbulence he oberves one day during a storm that breaks out near Beg-Meil, on the coast of Brittany. Here we find a side of Proust's personality that is rarely in evidence, something he calls "the spirit of revolt" that is released when the stormy sea and wind, instead of retreating, advance with renewed fury. At such moments, there is "mingled with our pleasure something of that spirit of revolt which, when a trapped criminal is at the very moment of capture, makes us leap with his leaps and draw his strength into our own bodies so that we long for him to break the fierce circle of his enemies whom he can no longer avoid." The reason for this association between the encircled criminal and the wind is that "One cannot drive away the wind nor encircle it, nor make ourselves its masters. One cannot shoot the waves nor kill the sea. Suddenly the fury drops and calm returns. . .But until that moment comes, something within us swells in sympathy, towers with the waves to their topmost peak" [430] . It is of obvious "political" significance that immediately after this evocation of a furious and untamed wind, the narrator thinks of Colonel Picquart, to whom his supporters want to cry out, in sympathy with his struggle for justice, "Don't be discouraged! Don't weaken! Don't, when the Esterhazy case comes on, say you have no opinion, or let yourself be shut away!" The analogy is strained, but quite eloquent nonetheless.

Proust's vision of nature in JS revolves literally and symbolically

---

[430] JS 484-485.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

around the sun, for whose life-giving and life-sustaining presence he finds an abundance of images that appear and reappear throughout the text in many guises and many different moods. The word sun and its various derivatives and combined forms--sunset, sunlit, sun beam, sunshine, sunflower--is used about three hundred times, which attests to the fascination that light had for Proust. There is hardly a page without its solar images and evocations. These, together with many tenderly affectionate allusions to other forms of light--fire, candle, lamp--give to large sections of JS the character almost of prayer, of religiously inspired meditation. Whether this was Proust's conscious intent is difficult to say. But the fact is that, in accordance with the cyclical conception of life that informs the text, the sun, the moon, and manmade light are all enlisted in a paean of mythical and metaphorical exaltation not essentially different from the spirit that pervades the Psalms of David, the Canticle of Brother Sun of Saint Francis, and other sacred writings. What Proust brings to this tradition is the free imaginative energy of the modern poet, who is unafraid of diversity, tolerant of contradiction, and enamoured of sensuous images that appeal directly to the imagination.

In Proust's created world, the sun is a universal yet immediate and almost human presence. It has a "smiling face," it offers a "long and loving welcome" to nature. At dusk, it sets with "a sad and tender smile," and in the morning it brings "its brightness and warmth." It penetrates into our domestic lives, setting the wine glasses "twinkling" and "playing" about the knives and forks on the dinner table. From time to time, it is sent "scurrying" away by the cold, but soon returns with its "message of hope." We even hear "the music of the singing sun" when we feel sad, and we take note of its beams "playing" on the lilac leaves. The playfulness and gaiety of the sun are pervasive, but they are not the only dimensions of the sun's power in Proust's writing. Contrary to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

human time, the sun is permanent; it possesses a "changeless radiance." The "kingdom of the sun" is the origin of the masterpieces of nature, surpassing all human creations, yet closely allied with those creations, for all creative life has a common source.

An image of particular charm in JS, as in Proust's other writings, combines the words "sweet" and "light" in various ways, in order to convey what I think Proust felt was the quintessence of the life force; it is an image used for the sun, the moon, and for domestic light, and occurs on one occasion in what is probably the first reference to electric light in Proust's writing. Sweetness is a word used by Proust to describe light, air, music, the sound of church bells, poetry, memory, gaiety, affections, a caress, dreams, childhood, certain names, water, and last, but most primary, Jean's mother. Towards the end of the narrative, in his Paris residence, Jean absentmindedly puts on his mother's shawl, and instantly becomes aware of "a great sweetness" coming over him. This is one of several revelatory moments in JS, where for a brief moment a kind of psychological fusion between mother and son takes place that anticipates the relationship between mother and son in the Recherche. To Jean, his mother is the soul of sweetness itself, and it is this quality--connoting softness, tenderness, above all, unselfish love--that he momentarily captures while covered by his mother's shawl.

For Jean, no other love can hope to rival the quality of reciprocal devotion between mother and son, not even his friendship with Henri. But this absolute commitment of love between mother and son implicitly diminishes the power of all other love relationships, which, in Proust's view of things, are born, grow, reach their apex, and then inevitably decline and die, or at best, linger on but in such muted colors as to be virtually unrecognizeable when compared

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

with the first bloom of passion.

Proust's pessimism about love between men and women is based on the conviction that such a love, like almost everything people claim to hold dear in the world, becomes "adulterated by life" (582). At one point he compares the "illusions" of love to the fleeting charm that an agate marble held for him when he was a boy. Like love, the beauty of the agate marble was a value projected on to it by his mind and imagination. Far from possessing the requisite qualities that alone can sustain love, it quickly fades when the desired object loses its power to satisfy the lover's craving for fulfillment. A uniformly negative conception of love is one of the book's salient features. As already noted, the friendship between Jean and Henri is serene and even tender at times, but it fails to measure up to the perfect unselfishness that Jean seems to demand of love. The love that Jean professes to feel for several women, chiefly two women of the Parisian upper crust named Françoise and Charlotte, degenerates into tortured jealousy and possessiveness with such tragic inevitability as to fully justify the narrator's classification of it as something worse than an illusion: it is nothing but an "illness," a momentary "fever," an "impossible ideal" that falls in direct proportion to its initial elevation. JS contains several little disquisitions on the subject of love, where one finds a depressing litany of arguments dismantling all of the age-old sentiments on its behalf. Alma Saraydar believes that, in his theory of love, Proust was a "disciple" of Stendhal, whose treatise De l'Amour, she thinks, was a persistent source of Proust's "materialist" bias on the subject.[431]

As in the Recherche, homosexual love in JS is presented solely in the form of closeted and illicit desire. It is tainted by scandal, and ends in misery

[431] See Alma Saraydar, "Proust disciple de Stendhal--les avant-textes d'un Amour de Swann dans Jean Santeuil," Archives de Lettres Modernes (Paris: Lettres Modewrnes, 1980), 1-88.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and loneliness. The Vicomte de Lomperolles's underground sexual pursuits make him the object of a cruel game of blackmail, to which he succumbs without any hope of clearing his name, since at the time it took special circumstances to allow one to lead the kind of relatively worry-free homosexual life that Robert de Montesquiou led by hiring a live-in secretary who was also his lover. As for the lesbian side of homosexual life, it lies at the center of the tortured disagreements between Jean and Françoise, who is finally compelled to "confess" a lesbian relationship she had had years earlier by Jean's obsessively jealous insistence that she tell him everything about herself, even if it were to be deeply hurtful to him. Proust was incapable of depicting homosexual love as a choice of love object like any other, although he certainly deserves credit for bringing the subject into the open. That he always viewed homosexuality as something entirely "natural" to those born with such inclinations is well documented, but in his writing he was unable to break through the socially and religiously constructed prejudices that surrounded it. In this connection, it is sad to remember the spontaneity and pleasure the adolescent Proust associated with homosexual love. (See Chapter Three, 80-86)

The ideological implications of Proust's depictions of love in JS are not dissimilar to what we observed about his skepticism concerning public life in general. Love as manifested in society, especially between members of the middle and upper classes, is just as prone to corruption as any other aspect of social existence, and is no more likely to transcend selfish ambitions than in the world of politics. The only available and secure refuges from the painful disappointments of social life remain the intimate family nucleus, together with rare friendships (between men), and nature, whose "laws" are binding equally

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

on each and every human being, but in a fundamentally beneficent manner that transcends the fear ordinarily surrounding physical decay and death. For these inevitable events in the existence of all life forms are part of a vast design of some sort, made visible to us by "signs"--the seasons, the tides, the movement of the planets and stars, the "kingdom" of the unmoved sun, with its "changeless radiance," as well as the instinctual impulses of myriad flora and fauna--which connect human beings to Being. It is this idea, this vision of life and death, that lends a certain grandeur to the concluding paragraphs of this otherwise shapeless (and plotless) literary work. It is through death, the narrator asserts in the penultimate paragraph, that every human being "journeys into the infinite and into nothingness." It is the thought of death, the coming of death, that "opens for him a window on the mysteries of eternity." In the book's last sentences, we see Jean and his parents at home. His mother is looking intently at the sleeping figure of her husband, now reduced by old age to a shadow of his former self, breathing quietly, while Jean, suddenly aware of his mother's gaze, also turns his eyes toward his father. The life force still possesses Monsieur Santeuil, he is still sustained by it, and this fact gives comfort to mother and son, although they are aware at the same time how near to the end of his life the old man really is. The even sound of his breathing continues, and the narrator observes, calmly, and with a certain philosophical detachment: "The work of life and death, the work of time, proceeded on its course without a break."

III) Art and the Creative Process

I have reserved the last section of this chapter for a brief consideration of one of the great themes of Proust's life and work that appears,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

at least on a conceptual level, in quite a complete form in JS, namely the creative process through which the writer acquires the necessary understanding of himself and of the surrounding world to elaborate his or her conception of life. The twenty years in Jean's life described in JS are not as unambiguously related to his literary aspirations as are the same period in the life of Marcel in the Recherche, especially in the later work's concluding pages. Nevertheless, the essential insights of the Recherche are already present in JS.

Proust expounds his theory of creativity, memory and time most vividly in the chapter titled "Impressions regained" in the English translation, and "Souvenirs de la mer devant le lac de Genève" in the 1971 Pléiade French edition. First, the crucial Proustian concept of the difference between a deliberate, conscious attempt to remember an experience, which is bound to fail, and an involuntary remembrance of the same experience, which opens up not only a particular memory but a whole world of feeling and sensation, is announced in Jean's insight connected with a trip to Lake Geneva. The sudden sight of the Lake instantly recalls to his mind an earlier time at Beg-Meil, which he had once despaired of rediscovering because in that initial attempt, only his mind and eyes were involved. "Not to them," the narrator observes, "is it given to receive the message of aesthetic joy." Memory alone cannot recreate the past, something else is needed, the stimulus of a sense experience, to be sure, but reactivated by a power called the imagination. This is how the narrator theorizes this magical moment:

> Between the lake at which he was looking and himself what was it that had come to birth that never had existed between the sea and him, that never would have existed between this lake and him, had not something of the same feeling been present years before at the sea? Could it be that beauty and joy for the poet resides in an invisible substance which may perhaps be called imagination, which cannot work direct[ly] on immediate reality, nor yet on past reality deliberately remembered, but hovers only over

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> past reality caught up and enshrined in the reality now present? It is as though before the eye which sees it now and saw it long ago, there floats divine imagination, which is perhaps the source of all our joy, something that we find in books, but only with utmost difficulty in things around us. . . .What has happened is that behind the indifferent spectacle of the present we have found on a sudden a memory of the past revived, the feeling that filled it, a charm of the imagination which attaches us firmly to life and makes us part of it, as though the past, let slip by happiness, not understood by thought, and only vaguely reproduced by memory, had been recaptured once [and] for all by contemplation.[432]

This memorable passage is followed by another example of creative recollection as related to the sense of smell. When the smell of a house where one had once lived returns to us years later, and we are overwhelmed by a flood of memories, it is as if "the whole of that period of my life . . .were caught up and made present in that smell. And so it was that when it came to me again I felt a whole life rise up which my imagination had never known, but now after so long a space of time had battened on and savoured" (408).

It is easy to miss the almost imperceptible and surprising shift in voice from the third person, where it is Jean about whom the narrator is speaking, to the first person, where the narrator speaks of himself as having experienced this blissful moment of illumination regarding past and present. The shift occurs when the narrator feels compelled to address the reader as the "I" to whom this miraculous event has happened. It is not sufficient for him at this moment to maintain the fiction that he is writing about someone other than himself. He needs a more authoritative voice to say what he wants to say here. Even if hesitantly and perhaps unconsciously, Proust had already taken the step that would lead to his adoption in the Recherche of the first person authorial voice with which he will tell the story of Marcel's education from childhood to full maturity.

---

[432] JS 407-408.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

These same few pages also deal with the question of time, and how the memory of a past event, embodied in sense experiences, can be made to reveal its inner secrets, its core meaning for our lives. This is the complex of thoughts and emotions within which, the narrator says, "I find myself confronted by a reality liberated from the temporal circumstances of my life." What is liberated from time, for Proust, is the imagination, which now has a grasp of reality that no amount of reasoning or intellectual speculation could achieve.

Proust ends this chapter with a meditation on memory, time, and art that expresses the same feeling of certitude and transcendence I noted above in connection with the thought and actuality of death. Death and art are the only experiences that allow the individual to catch a glimpse of eternity, to break through the rigid barriers that otherwise impose upon us what he calls, in the concluding sentence of this chapter, "the slavery of the *now*, letting us be flooded with the feeling of life everlasting.".

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Concluding Remarks

I hope that my use in the title of Chapter eleven of the word "visionary" to characterize Proust's literary vocation is sufficiently supported by evidence drawn from both his critical and his fictional writings. He brought a well grounded education in literature, philosophy and the arts to the task of investigating the ordinary events of daily life, but always from a transcendent point of view. His was a perspective that kept his mind's eye focused on the eternal questions, while his intense and profound immersion in the life of the body and its sensations kept him attached to the physical universe. Proust's vision was idealist at its core, and rested on premises reaching back to Plato, to Saint Augustine, to seventeenth century philosophy, to Kant, and to certain thinkers and poets of the Romantic movement. He utilized this tradition for his own highly individualized purposes, remaining at all times faithful to the principles and aims he set for himself when still a very young man. This is why a study of his early writings turns out to be so useful for a proper understanding of his later years. Pleasures and Days, the critical writings of the 1890s on various writers and painters, especially those on John Ruskin, and Jean Santeuil, while valuable contributions in their own right, form the matrices within which Remembrance of Things Past could come to fruition.

It has been argued, rather persuasively, by Catherine Ann Baudino and Sylvia Sarah Beerbohm among others, that what primarily motivated Proust to write was, in the final analysis, his need to contrast seeming and being, to let us see the world in terms of the essentially Platonic distinction between the historically contingent realm of flux, change and appearance, and the permanent realm of ideal forms or essences. There are hints of this

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

dichotomy, certainly,.in PJ, where the embattled soul of various characters struggles mightily to emerge from its corporeal prison and win its freedom or lose it, as the case may be. We see it as well in the critical writings devoted to John Ruskin, and in an especially poignant way in JS, which can be considered the transitional text linking the aesthetisizing literary intellectual of the early to mid 1890s to the mature author of the Recherche.

Beerbohm attributes a vast "cosmic vision" to Proust. This is a fair characterization as far as it goes. It is a formulation that is too closely tied, however, in Beerbohm's unjustly neglected work, to "esoteric" doctrines which, even if acknowledged to have exerted an influence on Proust's thought, are not, in my opinion, the decisive and distinctive mark of his evolving conception of life. We need in addition a perspective on Proust's writing that anchors it in history, in its concrete socio-literary context, in its moment of time, within which esoteric doctrines did undoubtedly circulate and exert some influence on Proust's mind. Yet these doctrines were only a small part of a complex congeries of literary movements and intellectual currents to which young Proust responded and some of whose ideas he assimlated and made his own. In this sense, whatever types of esoteric "spiritism" existed in Proust's social world should be evaluated in historical terms, and not as independent and autonomous ideas whose impact somehow transcended the particular characteristics of an epoch in western civilization. The worldliness of Proust's ideas and ideals, even the most exalted and "cosmic," are of paramount importance, at least as seen from the point of view of this study.

We can agree with Beerbohm and others who have emphasized Proust's dream of achieving a unifying vision of life in which all the variations, differences, and conflicts marking historical man would fall away, revealing the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

common core of humanity across time and space. This vast syncretic conception rivals that of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in the fifteenth century. The Italian humanist philosopher strove to reconcile opposing religious doctrines by showing that, upon careful scrutiny, these doctrines would reveal that their origins were to be found in the same transcendent values of the Judeo-Christian tradition. It was this kind of universal perspective that allowed Proust to accommodate both the scientific and the spiritual realms of thought in his philosophy and, consequently, in his creative work. In this regard, Beerbohm makes a telling critical observation: Proust was a scientist, but he was also a poet. It might be said that the whole of the Recherche is a Platonic reconciliation of Proust's two facets: the scientific and the mystical. In other words, "the fusion of the ideal in the specifics of the real is the essence of Proust's vision."[433]

In a 1999 essay[434] Giorgio Baratta articulates with exemplary clarity the essential philosophical problem inherent in assessing Proust's ideological perspective concerning history and transcendence. For Baratta, implicitly, and in my view as well, all of the resplendent imagery of sun and light in JS and in Proust's other writings resonate with the core ideas of philosophical idealism, wherein the "worldliness" and historicity of thought are overwhelmed by powerful "metaphors of *sun* and *light*, which from the very beginning [of modern philosophy] applied to the concept of truth and accompanied the contemplative and speculative journey of Western philosophy." Such a tendency reinforced and helped to build "the modern, dualistic image of the world," which, in the Renaissance, only a few thinkers, Leonardo among them, effectively challenged. The great task that lay ahead

---

[433] Beerbohm 14.

[434] Giorgio Baratta, "The Individual and the World: from Marx to Gramsci to Said," Socialism and Democracy, vol. 13 (1), Spring-Summer 1999, 31-44.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was placed in the hands of those who adopted the socially and historically dynamic approach to reality characteristic of a new philosophy of praxis, of a new historical materialist criticism of all life processes, not only those occurring in the material world but those also that belong to the realm of the creative human spirit.

If we remember to situate Proust securely in his socio-literary context, to anchor his thought in the prevalent intellectual tendencies of his time, to give due consideration to his class affiliations and loyalties, and, finally, to connect him to those of his forebears and contemporaries from whom he derived inspiration, it seems to me that an historical-materialist interpretation of his writing can fruitfully, and with noteworthy results, appreciate what is distinctive and unique in the totality of his work, including his loftiest flights into the realm of the metaphysical and the transcendent. The "universal laws" which so fascinated and enchanted him throughout his life belonged at once to the physical universe and to the spiritual forces which animate and inform human existence.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Appendices A and B

Introduction

The purpose of the following two appendices is to give the reader a small sampling of the changes Proust made at two stages of his work on Les Plaisirs et les jours: 1) those he made in the course of writing and revising the manuscripts that then became the "pre-original"[435] versions published from 1892 to 1895 in various literary periodicals; 2) the type of textual changes (word choice, punctuation, verb tense, syntax etc.) that took place when he was preparing the pre-original pieces for publication in book form.

The edition I consider the definitive one is the 1971 Pléiade edition of PJ edited by Yves Sandre (Editions Gallimard, 1971) 1-178. But readers should note that the Laget edition of 1993 is scrupulously annotated, and contains as well some of the variants cited by the 1971 edition. The Pléiade edition is based of course on the 1896 *editio princeps* of PJ. In a sense, for our purposes, it is unfortunate that the Pléiade editors made some changes in spelling and punctuation from the 1896 edition. Nevertheless, with the exception of these changes, I am reasonably confident that the Pléiade version was the one actually approved by Proust for publication in final book form.

I have also cited the relevant passages of one of the two English-language editions of PJ, Pleasures and Days and other writings, edited by F.W. Dupee, in order to show what kinds of variants occurred when the French text became an English one.The individual pieces of PJ that I have selected to exemplify textual changes are as follows:

1. "Violante ou la mondanité" (first chapter)
2. "Olivian" (item XIII of "Fragments de comédie italienne" in its

---

435 I have used the term "pre-original" for texts first published in periodicals because it is the term adopted by Larkin Price in his study of Les Plaisirs et les jours.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

entirety)

3. "Personnages de la comédie mondaine" (about the first third of item XIV of "Fragments de comédie italienne")

4. "La Confession d'une jeune fille" (various passages).

The study of variants has a long history stretching back to the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, when printing replaced the painstaking labor of copyists as a means of reproducing texts. Since the 1950s, in the United States and elsewhere in the advanced industrialized countries, it has become a standard and widely cultivated field of literary scholarship and criticism. The basic aim of such study is "to establish as accurately as possible what an author actually wrote, or intended to be the final version of each work."[436] What I intend to do, with brief and concise examples, is to combine textual criticism with the procedure used in establishing a *variorum* edition. The 1971 Pléiade edition is a *variorum* edition in that it includes, along with rather detailed notes, passages cited from the original manuscripts in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the evolution of the individual pieces in question. The examples I offer below are based mainly on my own perusal of the manuscripts, not on the work already done by Yves Sandre, Thierry Laget, and other Proust scholars.

As far as the evolution from the "pre-original" to the definitive version is concerned, I have limited my review to a single work, "La Mort de Baldassare Silvande, vicomte de Sylvanie," from its first appearance in the periodical La Revue Hebdomadaire, in the issue of October 26, 1895, 584-606, to its definitive version as it appears in the Pléiade edition referred to above, 9-28.

---

436 M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 6th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1993 latest copyright) 41.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A. Selected Variants in the Manuscripts of *Les Plaisirs et les jours*

Abbreviations:

Ms. 1=first manuscript version (Ms. autographe N. 16612 in rare books and manuscript division of B.N.)
Ms. 2 = second manuscript version (Ms. autographe N. 16612)
P =the text as it appears in the 1971 Pléiade edition
D=Dupee English-language edition

In all of the passages examined in appendix A the words or phrases with a "strike through" means that they were crossed out by Proust but are still legible. Words and whole passages crossed out that were illegible will be indicated by an underline. Misspelled words and other errors have been left exactly as Proust wrote them in the mss. The word or groups of words in superscript marked on both sides by the character ^ designate those which Proust added as afterthoughts to the sentence.

The first of the four selected passages in PJ is the opening paragraph of "Violante ou la mondanité." The reader should note that in Ms. 1, after the word "régularité," four lines were crosssed out and are illegible. These lines resume with the word "laissèrent."

Ms 1.

Histoire de Violante

La Viscomte de Styrie était généreuse et tendre, et toute pénétrée d'une grâce charmante. ~~Le viscomte son mari avait~~ L'esprit du viscomte son mari était extrêmement vif et ~~de la~~ les traits de la figure ~~d'un~~ avaient une admirable régularité_____ laissèrent orpheline à quatorze ans leur fille Violante qui ~~était avait les nobles~~ unissait les nobles sentiments et la grâce séduisante de sa mère, l'intelligence et la beauté de son père. Vivant presque seule elle fit ~~à défaut~~ de ses rêves, à défaut d'amis, des compagnons charmants qui permettaient alors de lui être fidèles toute sa vie. Elle les promenait dans les allées, par la campagne, les accoudait à la terrasse qui fermant le domaine de Styrie regarde la mer. Sa joie était perpétuelle, interrompue_____de tristesses qui passaient la joie en douceur.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ms. 2.

Violante ou la Mondanité à M. Anatole France
Conte
Chapitre I: Enfance Méditative de Violante

La viscomtesse de Styrie était généreuse et tendre et toute pénétrée d'une grâce qui charmait. L'esprit du Viscomte son mari était extrêmement vif et les traits de sa figure d'une régularité admirable. Mais le premier grenadier venu était plus sensible et moins vulgaire. Ils élevèrent loins du monde dans le rustique domaine de Styrie leur fille Violante qui belle et vive comme son père, charitable et mystérieusement séduisante autant que sa mère, semblait unir les qualités de ses parents dans une proportion parfaitement harmonieuse. ~~Si son intelligence~~ Mais les ~~ardeurs de son imagination~~ aspirations changeantes de son ~~imagination~~ cœur et de sa pensée n' ~~avaient trouvé~~ recontraient pas en elle une volonté qui sans les_____, les dirigeat, l'empêchant de devenir leur jouet charmant ~~mais~~ et fragile. ~~Sa mère~~ Ce manque de volonté inspirait à la mère de Violante des inquiétudes eussent pu ^ avec le temps^ pu être fécondes si dans un accident de chasse la vicomtesse n'avait péri violemment avec son mari, laissant Volante orphéline à l'âge de quinze ans. Vivant presque seule, sous la garde vigilante mais maladroite du vieil Augustin, son précepteur et l'intendant du Château de Styrie, Violante ~~si fit de ses rêves~~, à défaut d'amis, se fit de ses rêves des compagnons charmants et à qui elle elle ~~semblaient devoir leur être promettaient~~ promettait alors de rester fidèle toute sa vie. Elle les promenait dans les allées du parc, par la campagne, les accoudait à la terrasse qui fermant le domaine de Styrie regarde la mer. Ils se coloraient de touts les nuances des choses, s'harmonisant avec leur silence ou leurs musiques se parfumaient de tous leurs baumes, pleuraient de leur tristesse ou de leur joie. Élevée par eux comme au-dessus d'elle-même, initiée par eux, ~~elle~~ Violante sentait tout le visible et pressentait _____l'invisible. ~~La~~ Sa joie ~~de Violante~~ était ~~perpétuelle~~ infinie, interrompue ~~seulement~~ de tristesses qui passaient encore la joie en douceur.

P.

Violante ou la mondanité

Chapitre premier
ENFANCE MÉDITATIVE DE VIOLANTE

Ayez peu de commerce avec les jeunes
gens et les personnes du monde. . .
Ne désirez point de paraître devant les grands.

Imitation de Jésus-Christ,
liv.I, chap. VIII

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

La vicomtesse de Styrie était généreuse et tendre et toute pénétrée d'une grâce qui charmait. L'esprit du vicomte son mari était extrêmement vif, et les traits de sa figure d'une régularité admirable. Mais le premier grenadier venu était plus sensible et moins vulgaire. Ils élevèrent loin du monde, dans le rustique domaine de Styrie, leur fille Violante, qui, belle et vive comme son père, charitable et mystérieusement séduisante autant que sa mère, semblait unir les qualités de ses parents dans une proportion parfaitement harmonieuse. Mais les aspirations changeantes de son cœur et de sa pensée ne rencontraient pas en elle une volonté qui, sans les limiter, les dirigeât, l'empêchât de devenir leur jouet charmant et fragile. Ce manque de volonté inspirait à la mère de Violante des inquiétudes qui eussent pu, avec le temps, être fécondes, si dans un accident de chasse, la vicomtesse n'avait péri violemment avec son mari, laissant Violante orphéline à l'âge de quinze ans. Vivant presque seule, sous la garde vigilante mais maladroite du vieil Augustin, son précepteur et l'intendant du château de Styrie, Violante, à défaut d'amis, se fit de ses rêves des compagnons charmants et à qui elle promettait alors de rester fidèle toute sa vie. Elle les promenait dans les allées du parc, par la campagne, les accoudait à la terrasse qui, fermant le domaine de Styrie, regarde la mer. Élevée par eux comme au-dessus d'elle même, initiée par eux, Violante sentait tout le visible et pressentait un peu de l'invisible. Sa joie était infinie, interrompue de tristesses qui passaient encore la joie en douceur.

D.
Violante, or Worldly Vanities

> Beware the company of young men and of persons of the great world. . . .Do not seek to be seen in the company of the great.
>
> *Imitation of Jesus Christ, Book I, Chapter VIII*

I The Meditative Childhood of Violante

The Viscountess of Styria was generous and tender and charmed everyone by her grace. Her husband, the viscount, had a very lively disposition and features of an admirable regularity. But the first grenadier who came along was more sensitive and less vulgar than he. In the rustic domain of Styria, far removed from the world, they reared their daughter Violante who, beautiful and lively like her father, as charitable and mysteriously seductive as her mother, seemed to unite in the most harmonious proportions the best of both parents. But the variable aspirations of her heart and of her mind failed to meet with a will that would have guided, without trammeling them, and have prevented her from becoming their charming and fragile toy. This lack of will power inspired in Violante's mother fears that might with time have borne fruit if the viscountess with her husband had not, while out hunting one day, met with a violent end,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

leaving Violante an orphan at fifteen. Living almost entirely alone under the vigilant but bungling supervision of old Augustin, her tutor and the intendant of the castle of Styria, for lack of friends Violante made charming companions of her dreams, vowing to remain faithful to them all her life. They went with her on all her walks, along the avenues of the park, across the countryside, or idled with her on the terrace which, separating the domain of Styria, looks toward the sea. By them reared, as it were, above herself, initiated by them, Violante was sensitive to all visible things, sensed to a certain extent the invisible. Her joy was infinite, interrupted by moments of sadness that surpassed even her joy in sweetness.

Points to note:

Ms. 1 Proust's uncertainty about the spelling of vicomte and vicomtesse.

The usual order of "régularité admirable" has been reversed in this first version. If used in a literal sense, adjectives in French generally follow the noun they modify, while if used figuratively they usually precede the noun. But "admirable" is an adjective that usually follows the noun it modifies, so that the reversal in this instance gives added emphasis to the adjective.

Here Violante is fourteen years old.

Ms. 2 A definitive title has been chosen for both the story as a whole and for the first chapter. The next three chapters of the story are also given titles in the final version.

Proust calls the story a "conte," which he will remove in the definitive version. The word "conte" is defined as "a short narrative of events, of imaginary adventures, aimed to provide amusement." Its figurative meaning is "adventure, an astonishing and charming deed or event." The word "nouvelle" to mean "short story" lacks the sense of the marvelous or unusual. It is defined as "a generally brief narrative, with a dramatic construction, presenting very few characters."

The dedication to Anatole France will be removed from the definitive version, as will all other such dedications to writers and friends that appear in the manuscripts and in the pre-original versions. Evidently, Proust wanted PJ to stand on its own two feet, without the supportive presence of his literary friends. In PJ he moved away from these personal connections and replaced them with epigraphs drawn from various authors, past and present, a device that functioned in a more objective and specifically thematic way than the personal dedications.

Vicomtesse and vicomte are still misspelled.

The comma after tendre has been removed.

"Admirable" has been put back in its customary place after the noun.

The word "rustique" and the phrase "avec le temps" were inserted in the sentences as an afterthought. The word "rustique" serves to separate the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

château and its grounds from the surrounding region, while the phrase "avec le temps" slows the pace of the sentence, giving Proust's prose a more relaxed pace.

"l'intelligence et la beauté de son père" is replaced by "belle et vive comme son père." The change reflects what Proust had already said about the father, that "the first grenadier who came along was more sensitive and less vulgar than he." To call such a man "intelligent" would have been inconsistent, while such a man might easily be "beautiful and lively."

"les ardeurs de son imagination" becomes "les aspirations changeantes de son cœur et de sa pensée." This is an important revision, because the second phrase conveys something of the instability and inconstancy of young Violante's personality, her lack of firm resolve and will power, while the former phrase makes her sound passionate and imaginative, which she is, but the story revolves essentially around her inconstancy, not her imagination.

Violante is now fifteen years old, not fourteen. This additional year makes her a more believable character, removing her from early adolescence to an already mature age, or at least closer to the threshold of maturity.

the masculine plural "touts" instead of the feminine plural "toutes" probably reflects the extreme rapidity with which Proust composed the first drafts of his stories and novels, a trait many of his friends and acquaintances noted about him.

P.

The epigraph from Thomas à Kempis's Imitation of Christ has been added. This has the effect of changing the focus of the story away from its "imaginary and marvelous" aspects to the moral and didactic intentions of Proust's writing.

The spelling of vicomte and vicomtesse has been corrected.

Commas after "vif," "monde," "Styrie" and "qui" have been added, making for a more precise and punctilious text.

In the sentence from "Mais les aspirations" to the word "fragile" in ms. 2, the use of the participle "empêchant" gives it an easier flow but the use of the imperfect subjunctive "empêchât" in P expresses the idea of "might have been able" in a more precise manner. In other words, uncertainty about Violante's will power is what is in question.

The word "qui" missing before "eussent" in Ms. 2 is replaced in P.

Commas have been placed after "qui," before "fermant," after "Styrie," before "regarde."

The sentence beginning "Ils se coloraient" and ending "ou de leur joie" in ms. 2 was eliminated in P. This seems just as well, given the ornate and mannered style of the sentence.

D.

The general quality of the translation is somewhere between very

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

good and excellent. Only a few things need to be pointed out:

The word "variable" is not particularly good for "changeantes." "Variable" sounds inauthentic; "inconstant" or "irresolute" would have been better choices here, since the emphasis throughout is on the instability of the girl's "will."

Instead of "bungling supervision" I would prefer "unskillful supervision," in order to avoid making Augustin, who has an important role later in the story, seem grossly incompetent.

"enclosing" might have been better than "separating" to describe the terrace's position in the area.

I fail to see the advantage of "By them reared" over the usual "Reared by them."

The second of the selected passages from PJ is the complete three-paragraph text of "Olivian," item XIII of "Fragments de comédie italienne":

Ms. 1

Pourquoi vous voit-on chaque soir, Olivian, vous rendre à la Comédie? Vos amis n'ont-ils pas plus d'esprit que les personnages qu'on y joue et ne serait-il pas plus aimable de souper avec eux. Mais vous pourriez mieux faire encore; si le théâtre est la ressource des causeurs dont l'ami est muet ~~maîtresse est insipide~~ et ~~dont~~ la maîtresse insipide, la conversation elle-même est le plaisir des ~~artistes~~ hommes sans imagination. Un peu du temps que vous avez ~~passé~~ perdu à plaire, si vous l'aviez passé ~~tout avec vous~~ au coin de votre feu, l'hiver, l'été dans votre parc, avec vous ou avec un livre, vous garderiez le riche souvenir d'heures plus ~~heureuses~~ profondes et plus pleines, ~~car~~ la voix de l'âme est la seule qui fasse ~~heureusement~~ retentir heureusement l'âme tout entière. Ce qu'on n'a pas besoin de montrer à l'homme d'esprit et qu'il entend à demi mots et à quart de soupirs, on perd du temps à essayer de vous le dire Olivian. ~~Vous avez une âme~~ La voix de l'imagination et de l'âme est la seule qui ~~puisse~~ fasse retentir ^heureusement^ l'imagination et l'âme tout entière et un peu du temps que vous avez tué à plaire si vous aviez _____ fait vivre avec vous ou avec un livre, au coin de votre feu l'hiver, ou l'été dans votre parc vous garderiez le riche souvenir d'heures plus profondes et plus pleines. Ayez le courage de prendre la pioche et le râteau, un jour vous aurez plaisir à ~~voir remplir jusqu' aux bord la brouette de votre pié~~ sentir un parfum doux monter de votre mémoire comme d'une brouette remplie jusqu'au bord. Pourquoi ~~écrire ce livre pourquoi partez vous au bord de la~~ _____ voyagez-vous si souvent. --Les diligences vous transportent bien lentement à votre_____ rêve vous mènerait si vite. Vous ~~voulez aller~~ allez? au bord de la mer, et vous n'avez qu'à ~~en un instant~~ fermer les yeux. Laissez ceux qui n'ont que les yeux du corps déplacer toute leur suite et s'installer avec elle à Naples ou à Pozzuoli. Mais_____vous y terminer un livre. ~~Vous~~_____ _____où le

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

terminerez-vous mieux qu'à la ville.~~--Vous changez de milieu ailleurs~~ Entre les quatre murs vous pouvez faire passer ton_____ _____ _____.. Aux champs, dans le bois, dans les Abbruzes, vous vous promenerez sans rien faire. Pourquoi surtout vous acharnez-vous à vouloir jouir du présent, à_____ _____ _____pleurer de n'y pas réussir. Homme d'imagination vous ne pouvez jouir que par le regret ou dans l'attente.C'est-à-dire du passé ou de l'avenir. Voilà pourquoi Olivian vous êtes mécontent de la comédie, de vos amis, de votre maîtresse, de vos villégiatures et de vous même. Ces singularités vous les avez peut-être remarqué mais pourquoi alors vous y complaire au lieu de chercher au lieu de les guérir. C'est que vous êtes bien misérable Olivian. Vous n'étiez pas encore un homme et vous étiez déjà un homme de lettres.

Ms. 2

Olivian

Pourquoi vous voit-on chaque soir, Olivian, vous rendre à la Comédie? Vos amis n'ont-ils pas plus d'esprit que Pantalon, Scaramouche ou Pasquarelle? et ne serait-il pas plus aimable de souper avec eux? Mais vous pourriez faire mieux encore; si le théâtre est la ressource des causeurs dont l'ami est muet ou la maîtresse insipide, la conversation, même exquise, est le plaisir des hommes sans imagination. ~~Un peu du temps que vous avez~~ Ce qu'on n'a pas besoin de montrer aux chandelles à l'homme d'esprit parce qu'il le voit en causant, on perd son temps à essayer de vous le dire Olivian. La voix de l'imagination et de l'âme est la seule qui fasse retentir heureusement l'imagination et l'âme tout entières, et un peu du temps que vous avez tué à plaire si vous l'aviez fait vivre avec vous, nourri d'une lecture ou d'une songerie, au coin de votre feu l'hiver ou l'été dans votre parc, vous garderiez le riche souvenir d'heures plus profondes et plus pleines. Ayez le courage de prendre la pioche et le râteau, un jour vous aurez plaisir ^à sentir^ un parfum doux monter, comme d'une brouette jardinière, remplie jusqu'aux bords. Pourquoi voyagez-vous si souvent. Les carosses de voiture vous emmènent lentement où votre rêve vous conduirait si vite. Pour être au bord de la mer vous n'avez qu'à fermer les yeux. Laissez ceux qui n'ont que les yeux du corps déplacer toute leur suite et s'installer avec elle à Pozzuoli ou à Naples. Vous voulez dites-vous y terminer un livre? Où travaillerez-vous mieux qu'à la ville? Entre ses murs vous pourrez faire passer les plus vastes décors qu'il vous plaise, vous y assisterez plus facilement qu'à Pozzuoli les déjeuners de la Princesse de Bergame et vous serez moins souvent tenté de vous promener sans rien faire. Pourquoi surtout vous acharner à vouloir jouir du présent, pleurer de n'y pas réussir? Homme d'imagination vous ne pouvez jouir que par le regret ou dans l'attente c'est-à-dire du Passé ou de l'Avenir. Voilà pourquoi, Olivian, vous êtes mécontent ~~vous êtes~~ de votre maîtresse, de vos villégiatures, et de vous même. Ces ~~singularités~~ contradictions vous avez peut-être remarquées mais alors pourquoi vous y complaire au lieu de chercher à les guérir. C'est que vous êtes bien misérable Olivian. Vous n'étiez pas encore un

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

homme et vous déjà vous êtes un homme de lettres.

P.

Pourquoi vous voit-on chaque soir, Olivian, vous rendre à la Comédie? Vois amis n'ont-ils pas plus d'esprit que Pantalon, Scaramouche ou Pasquarello? et ne serait-il pas plus aimable de souper avec eux? Mais vous pourriez faire mieux. Si le théâtre est la ressource des causeurs dont l'ami est muet ou la maîtresse insipide, la conversation, même exquise, est le plaisir des hommes sans imagination. Ce qu'on n'a pas besoin de montrer aux chandelles à l'homme d'esprit, parce qu'il le voit en causant, on perd son temps à essayer de vous le dire, Olivian. La voix de l'imagination et de l'âme est la seule qui fasse retentir heureusement l'imagination et l'âme tout entière, et un peu du temps que vous avez tué à plaire, si vous l'aviez fait vivre, si vous l'aviez nourri d'une lecture ou d'une songerie, au coin de votre feu l'hiver ou l'été dans votre parc, vous garderiez le riche souvenir d'heures plus profondes et plus pleines. Ayez le courage de prendre la pioche et le râteau. Un jour, vous aurez plaisir à sentir un parfum doux s'élever de votre mémoire, comme d'une brouette jardinière remplie jusqu'aux bords.

Pourquoi voyagez-vous si souvent? Les carrosses de voiture vous emmènent bien lentement où votre rêve vous conduirait si vite. Pour être au bord de la mer, vous n'avez qu'à fermer les yeux. Laissez ceux qui n'ont que les yeux du corps déplacer toute leur suite et s'installer avec elle à Pouzzoles ou à Naples. Vous voulez, dites-vous, y terminer un livre? Où travaillerez-vous mieux qu'à la ville? Entre ses murs, vous pouvez faire passer les plus vastes décors qu'il vous plaira; vous y éviterez plus facilement qu'à Pozzuoles les déjeuners de la princesse de Bergame et vous serez moins souvent tenté de vous promener sans rien faire. Pourquoi surtout vous acharner à vouloir jouir du présent, pleurer de n'y pas réussir? Homme d'imagination, vous ne pouvez jouir que par le regret ou dans l'attente, c'est-à-dire du passé ou de l'avenir.

Voilà pourquoi, Olivian, vous êtes mécontent de votre maîtresse, de vos villégiatures et de vous-même. La raison de ces maux, vous l'avez peut-être déjà remarquée; mais alors pourquoi vous y complaire au lieu de chercher à les guérir? C'est que vous êtes bien misérable, Olivian. Vous n'étiez pas encore un homme, et déjà vous êtes un homme de lettres.

D.

Why, Olivian, are you going to be seen going to the theater every evening? Haven't your friends more wit than Pantaloon, Scaramouch, or Pasquarello, and wouldn't it be more agreeable to sup with them? But you could do better still. If the theater is the only resource for a lover of conversation whose friend is dumb and whose mistress is dull, conversation, even the most exquisite, is only the pleasure of men devoid of imagination. What an intelligent man doesn't need to be told because he learns it from talking, it is a loss of time to try to make you understand, Olivian. The voice of the imagination and of the soul is the only voice that can make the whole soul and the imagination echo

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

happily and if you had spent a little of the time you have killed in trying to please and had made it live instead, nourished by books or dreams, winters in front of your fire, summers in your park, you would be rich now in the memory of deeper and fuller hours. Have the courage to take up rake and hoe. And one of these days you will know the pleasure of sensing a delicious odor rising in your memory as from a garden wheelbarrow filled to the brim.

Why do you have to travel all the time? The stagecoach carries you slowly to places to which your imagination would speedily take you. You need only to close your eyes and you are at the seashore. Let those who have only bodily eyes transplant their whole households and settle in Pozzuoles or Naples. You say you must go there to finish a book? Where can you work better than in the city? Within your own four walls you can have all the grandest scenery in the world; it will be easier for you than at Pozzuoles to avoid the Princess of Bergamo's luncheons, and you will be less tempted to go for idle walks. Why, above all, do you try so hard to enjoy the present, weep because it is impossible? Having an imagination, you can never enjoy anything except through regret or expectation. In other words, you can enjoy only the past or the future.

That is why, Olivian, you are dissatisfied with your mistress, with all your weanderings, and with yourself. Perhaps you are already aware of the reason for these evils; then why do you put up with them instead of trying to cure them? Because, Olivian, you are truly unfortunate. Because, almost before you were a man, you were already a man of letters.

Things to note:

Ms. 1

The lack of paragraphing.

The lack of a title

The characters of the Commedia dell'arte are not named, as in Ms. 2

The use of the verb "souper" instead of the generic "manger;" "souper" refers specifically to the evening meal, and often to the meal taken late in the evening, after attending theater or a concert.

"même exquise" after "conversation" strengthens the disdainful tone of the writer concerning all idle or frivolous conversation; this effect is mostly lost with "elle-même."

The expressions "à demi mots" and "à quart de soupirs" are a little too colloquial and not as expressive as "montrer aux chandelles" in ms. 2.

The sentence beginning "La voix de l'imagination" gave Proust some trouble, as seen in the rewriting within Ms. 1.

"s'élever de votre mémoire" is probably better than "monter de votre mémoire" because the latter doesn't lend itself as well as the former to figurative usage.

Note "jusqu'au bord," which will be replaced by the plural "bords,"

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

more vivid than the singular.

The word "brouette" without adjective exemplifies the same relative lack of preciseness as the generic terminology of "personnages de la Comédie" compared with the specific names of Commedia dell'arte characters in ms. 2.

The name Pozzuoli of mss. 1 and 2 obviously lends authenticity to the Italian place name more directly than the French Pouzzoles in P.

"c'est-à-dire du passé ou de l'avenir" is a separate sentence, while it is a part of the sentence in ms. 2.

In ms. 1 Olivian has become unhappy with four things in his life, while in ms. 2 they are reduced to three.

Ms. 2

In general, ms. 2 is virtually the same as the published text.

The names of Commedia dell'arte characters: Pantalone, a pretentious Venetian merchant easily duped by clever subordinates; Scaramouch, a Neapolitan braggart; and Pasquino, a name given by the popular classes of early sixteenth century Rome to a personage of the neighborhood around the present day Piazza di Pasquino who was associated with barbed satirical jokes or little poems directed againt the great and powerful of the day, from Popes to political figures; these were affixed to a statue representing Menelaus with the body of Patroclus, and were called "pasquinate."

"un jour vous aurez plaisir" begins a new sentence in P, while it is attached to what precedes it in ms. 2.

"brouette jardinière" makes visualization of the wheel barrow easier.

The words "passé" and "avenir" are capitalized, a common practice of Proust in his writings of the 1890s, but he returned to the lower case in the published text.

The words "ces contradictions" are replaced in P by "ces maux," these evils or these ills, thus accentuating the moral failings of Olivian's character more than the lack of coherence suggested by the word "contradictions."

P.

The use of paragraphs greatly enchances the accessibility and impact of the P version.

D.

"need to be told" is rather weak for "montrer aux chandelles."

"waste of time" would probably be better than "loss of time."

Why the French "Pouzzoles" and not the Italian "Pozzuoli," in an English-language edition?

A more literal and more effective translation would require use of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the infinitive "Why, above all, persist . . ." to match the second infinitive "weep. . .."

"wanderings" is not good for "villégiatures," which explicitly means a vacation, a period of rest and relaxation, not just wandering about.

"Because, Olivian" doesn't quite get the sense of "C'est que," which would be rendered better by "The fact is, Olivian, you are quite unfortunate."

The next passage for comparative commentary is about the first third of "Personnages de la comédie mondaine," No. XIV of "Fragments de comédie italienne."

Ms. 1

~~Aussi bien qu'au théâ~~

De même qu'au théâtre Léandre est ~~comme toui~~ sot,

De même il est convenu dans la société que Lorenzo est spirituel mais se complaît d'un_____perfide et ~~Maio reculerait~~ n'hésiterait pas ~~devant un bon mot~~ pour faire un bon mot à sacrifier un ami, que Giovanni ~~cache~~ sous les dehors d'une rude franchise des trésors de sensibilité, que Scipion dont on peut flétrir les vices est l'ami le plus sur (sic) est le fils le plus charmant, ~~que Iago doit tenir à la police être reporter ou espion. Quant à Lorenzo~~ Iago ~~qui~~ malgré dix beaux livres n'est qu'un amateur tandis que Severino pour quelques mauvais articles de journaux_____ _____ _____ un écrivain. Quant Paolo est snob et Jules malgré_____ _____affectueuses n'est qu'un faux historien. à Fortunata elle est bonne. La rondeur de son embonpoint garantit la_____à Clarice de son caractère. Une si grosse dame ne peut être une méchante personne. ~~pourrait elle être méchante. d'ailleurs les actions_____d'ailleurs_____sont d'autant plus s'écartent d'autant plus du caractère qu'on leur impose du~~ Chacun d'ailleurs ~~très~~ différent ~~du caractère~~ déjà par nature du caractère qu'on leur prête s'en écartent d'autant plus que le large crédit de défauts contrairier ~~que cette idée~~_____ _____ qu'ils lui doivent leur promet l'impunité. Sa ~~qualité~~ personnage immuable. L'ami sur en général permet à Scipion de trahir tous ses amis en particulier. L'ami seul en souffre. "Quel scélérat ce ~~pouvait il~~ fallait-il qu'il fut pour être touché par Scipion cet ami si fidèle. Fortunata peut répandre à larges flots les médisances, ~~suffisamment abrités~~ on n'aurait jamais ___ _____sous les plis ~~vagues~~ de son corsage, dont l'ampleur vague ~~allait~~_____~~un double but a pour objet de~~ sert à tout dissimuler.

Ms. 2

Personnages de comédie mondaine

De même que dans les comédies Scaramouche est toujours

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

vantard et Arlequin balourd, que la conduite de Pasquino n'est qu'intrigue celle de Pantalon qu'avarice et que crédulité, de même la société a décrété que Guido est spirituel mais perfide et n'hésiterait pas pour faire un bon mot à sacrifier un ami, que Girolamo capitalise sous les dehors d'une rude franchise des trésors de sensibilité, que Farinata dont on doit flétrir les vices est l'ami le plus sur et le fils le plus délicat, qu'Iago, malgré dix beaux livres n'est qu'un amateur tandis que ~~Ercole~~ quelques mauvais articles de journaux ont ~~sacré~~ aussitôt sacré Ercole ^un^ écrivain, que Césare doit tenir à la police être reporter ou espion. Cardenio est snob et Lippo n'est qu'un faux bonhomme malgré ~~grand~~ ses protestations d'amitié. Quant à Fortunata, c'est chose à jamais convenue, elle est bonne. La rondeur de son embonpoint garantit assez la bienveillance de son caractère: comment si grosse dame serait-elle une méchante personne.

Chacun d'ailleurs ~~diffe~~ déjà très différent par nature du caractère que ~~une fois pour toutes~~ la société ~~lui a prêté~~ a été chercher dans le magasin général de ses costumes et caractères et lui a prêté une fois pour toutes--s'en écarte d'autant plus que la conception a priori de ~~leurs~~ ses qualités en ~~leur~~ lui ouvrant un large crédit des défauts ~~contraires~~ inverses, créé à ~~leur~~ son profit une sorte d'impunité. Son ~~personnage~~ personnage immurable d'ami sur en général permet à Farinata de trahir tous ses amis en particulier. L'ami seul en souffre. "Quel scélérat devait-il être pour être lâché par Farinata, cet ami si fidèle!" Fortunata peut répandre à longs flots les médisances. Qui ~~aurait l'idée d'en chercher la reconnaître la tour ce~~ serait assez bon pour en chercher la source jusque dans les plis de son corsage dont l'ampleur vague sert à tout dissimuler.

P. Personnages de la comédie mondaine

De même que dans les comédies Scaramouche est toujours vantard et Arlequin toujours balourd, que la conduite de Pasquino n'est qu'intrigue, celle de Pantalon qu'avarice et que crédulité; de même la société a décrété que Guido est spirituel mais perfide, et n'hésiterait pas pour faire un bon mot à sacrifier un ami; que Girolamo capitalise, sous les dehors d'une rude franchise, des trésors de sensibilité; que Castruccio, dont on peut flétrir les vices, est l'ami le plus sûr et le fils le plus délicat; qu'Iago, malgré dix beaux livres, n'est qu'un amateur, tandis que quelques mauvais articles de journaux ont aussitôt sacré Ercole un écrivain; que Cesare doit tenir à la police, être reporter ou espion. Cardenio est snob et Pippo n'est qu'un faux bonhomme, malgré ses protestations d'amitié. Quant à Fortunata, c'est chose à jamais convenue, elle est bonne. La rondeur de son embonpoint garantit assez la bienveillance de son caractère: comment une si grosse dame serait-elle une méchante personne?

Chacun d'ailleurs, déjà très différent par nature du caractère que la société a été chercher dans le magasin général de ses costumes et caractères, et lui a prêté une fois pour toutes, s'en écarte d'autant plus que la

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

conception *a priori* de ses qualités, en lui ouvrant un large crédit de défauts inverses, crée à son profit une sorte d'impunité. Son personnage immuable d'ami sûr en général permet à Castruccio de trahir chacun de ses amis en particulier. L'ami seul en souffre: "Quel scélérat devait-il être pour être lâché par Castruccio, cet ami fidèle!" Fortunata peut répandre à longs flots les médisances. Qui serait assez fou pour en chercher la source jusque sous les plis de son corsage, dont l'ampleur vague sert à tout dissimuler.

D.

Actors in the Comedy of Society

Just as in the Italian comedy Scaramouch is always the boaster, Harlequin always the dunce, just as Pasquino's conduct is nothing but intrigue, that of Pantaloon made up of avarice and credulity; so society has decreed that Guido is witty but perfidious, and would not hesitate to sacrifice his best friend for the sake of an epigram; that Girolamo under a rude armour of frankness conceals treasures of sensibility; that Castruccio, whose vices one must of course decry, is the most faithful of friends and the most attentive of sons; that Iago, in spite of the ten books to his credit, is only an amateur, while Ercole's few bad articles in the newspapers have won him the title of author; that Césare must have some connection with the police, must be an informer or a spy. Cardenio is a snob, Pippo's geniality, in spite of all his protestations of friendship, is false. As for Fortunata, it has been decided once and for all: she is kind. Her abundant curves are sufficient guarantees of the benevolence of her character: how could anyone as fat as she is be malicious?

Each one of them, moreover, so different by nature to begin with from the character that society has found for him in its general warehouse of costumes and characters and given him for all time, deviates all the more willingly from his true character since the a priori conception of his virtues, in opening a large credit for his opposite faults, creates to his advantage a sort of impunity. His immutable character of faithful friend in general allows Castruccio to betray each one of his friends in particular. The friend alone suffers: "What a scoundrel he must be to be dropped by Castruccio, such a faithful friend!" Fortunata can spread oceans of scandal with impunity. Who would be mad enough to go looking for their source in those rolls of fat, whose vastness could conceal almost anything?

Points to note:

Ms. 1

The lack of a title.
The difficulties of beginning this piece.
The Italian or Frenchified Italian names are generally common and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

conventional; with the exception of the name "Iago," they lack the strong literary associations of almost all the names in ms. 2.

The numerous crossings out indicate a certain discomfort with short "fragmentary" pieces of this type that require a succinctness and conciseness for which Proust was less well suited than he was for longer and more elaborate constructions.

Ms. 2

Scaramouche, Arlequin, Pasquino and Pantalon are all characters from the Commedia dell'arte. Farinata recalls the character Farinata degli Uberti from Canto X of Dante's Inferno. Ercole and Cesare are fairly common Italian names, but have the lustre of their classical historical and literary origins.

The comma is missing after "police."

The question mark is missing after "personne."

Like the previous mss., ms. 2 is already quite close to being the published version, indicating that Proust's preferred way of composing was to write down his thoughts pretty much as they came to him, while at the same time crossing out or otherwise modifying the ms. as the first stage of a process of revision which was then manifest in his second drafts.

P.

Adding the article "the" to the title makes us think more immediately of Balzac's La Comédie Humaine, although this may not have been Proust's intention.

Castruccio and Pippo have been added to this plethora of Italian monikers. Castruccio recalls the title of a work by Machiavelli, La Vita di Castruccio da Castracani da Lucca.

The word "corsage" means bodice but it also alludes evidently to the ampleness of Fortunata's bosom. The wording is in any event rather ambiguous, especially the word "vague."

D.

"Demeanor" might be better than "conduct."

"under a rude armour of frankness" seems excessive; I would propose "underneath (or behind) a seemingly gruff frankness (or candor)."

For "trésors de sensibilité" I would suggest the singular "a treasure of sensibility;" the plural "treasures" has an awkward sound in English.

"in opening a large credit for his oppposite faults" could be improved by strengthening the banking metaphor: "in opening a large credit line with which to cover his opposite faults"

"Fortunata can spread oceans of scandal" is acceptable but seems to be limitless; something like "Fortunata can cause (or stir up) great waves of scandal" might be better.

The fourth and last example of changes made from ms. to printed

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

text is taken from the first several pages of "La Confession d'une jeune fille." In this case, I have limited the comparison to the first ms. with the P and D editions. I have also used single passages rather than ubroken sections of the text. I have not cited the second, third and fourth ms. versions except to point out that they have many corrections and marginal insertions which are quite difficult to read, and that the two epigraphic citations from The Imitation of Christ and from a poem by Henri de Régnier appear in the third ms. written, however, in someone else's hand. The fourth ms. draft is also written in a very careful, artistic script, with rare corrections in Proust's hand. Another thing to be noted is that in ms. 1, next to the title, Proust wrote the word "Nouvelle" (the French word that comes closest to what the English term "short story" designates) as distinguished from the word "conte" which he chose to characterize "Violante ou la mondanité."

Passage 1
Ms. 1 ~~Certainement~~ Enfin la délivrance approche.
P. Enfin la délivrance approche.
D. At last deliverance is almost here.

Passage 2
Ms. 1 L'absence n'est-elle pas pour qui aime la plus certaine, la plus spirituelle, la plus efficace, la plus vraie, la plus indestructible, la plus fidèle des présences?
P. L'absence n'est-elle pas pour qui aime la plus certaine, la plus efficace, la plus vivace, la plus indestructible, la plus fidèle des présences?
D. For to one who loves, is not absence the most effective, the most tenacious, the most indestructible, the most faithful of presences?

Pasasage 3
Ms. 1 Ma mère m'amenait à la fin d'Avril ^reportait au bout de^ restait deux jours, ~~reportait~~ passait____deux jours ^encore^ au milieu de Mai et puis ^venait^ dans la dernière_____.
P. Ma mère m'amenait aux Oublis à la fin d'avril, repartait au bout de deux jours, passait deux jours encore au milieu de mai, puis revenait me chercher dans la dernière semaine de juin.
D. My mother would take me to Les Oublis toward the end of April,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

would leave again after two days, spend two more days there in the middle of May, then, in the last week of June, would come to take me away.

Passage 4

Ms. 1 Pendant ces deux jours elle me ~~prodiguait donnait sans~~ prodiguait des tendresses

P. Pendant ces deux jours elle me prodiguait des tendresses

D. During these two days she would be lavish of her tenderness

Passage 5

Ms. 1 ~~Les désirs~~ N'osant plus à la fin je ~~n'osais plus_____j'osais~~ plus_____. . .imaginant toujours les mêmes prétextes, mon oreiller ~~trop chaud~~ brûlant à retourner mes pieds gelés qu'elle seule pouvait réchauffer dans ses mains. Tant de ~~douceur~~ doux moments ^étaient^ recouvraient une douceur de plus de ce que je sentais ~~que~~ infiniement acerbes ~~ces moments~~ là ^c'étaient ceux-là^ ceux où ma mère était véritablement elle-même et que sa ^habituelle^ froideur sévère devait lui coûter beaucoup.

P. n'osant plus à la fin, n'en ressentant que davantage le besoin passionné, inventant toujours de nouveaux prétextes, mon oreiller brûlant à retourner, mes pieds gelés qu'elle seule pourrait réchauffer dans ses mains. . .Tant de doux moments recevaient une douceur de plus de ce que je sentais que c'étaient ceux-là où ma mère était véritablement elle-même et que son habituelle froideur devait lui coûter beaucoup.

D. not daring finally to call her anymore but feeling more than ever the passionate need, always inventing new excuses, my burning pillow to be turned, my icy feet which her hands alone could warm. Such sweet moments gained an added sweetness from my feeling that during them my mother was her true self and that her habitual reserve must cost her dearly.

Passage 6

Ms. 1 la supplicant de m'emmen~~er à Paris~~ avec elle je seul ai très bien le départ entre ~~la gaieté, la colère~~, la sinccère et la feinte, entre sa tristesse qui perçait. . .

P. la suppliant de m'emmener à Paris avec elle, je démêlais très bien le sincère au milieu du feint, sa tristesse perçait. . .

D. imploring her to take me with her to Paris, I readily discerned the truth through her dissimulation, sensed her sadness through her gay and irritated . . . .

Points to note:

Passage 1

Proust was sensitive to the dramatic aspect of this "confession," as seen in his decision to begin this story with the word "Enfin," much more

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

arresting than "Certainement."

Passage 2

First, ms. 1 employs six adjectives, while P employs five, and D four. Second, "spirituelle" and "vraie" are dropped in P, while in D "certaine" and "vivace" are dropped. Third, the order changes, but all three versions end with "fidèle," showing that it is the word which, for Proust, clinched the case for absence. Ms. 1 shows Proust's tendency to enlarge and embroider his sentences. In P., he is still embroidering, because "vivace" is a wasted adjective, and "indestructible" is already taken care of by "certaine" and "fidèle." D is concise, and "tenacious" is a good choice for "vivace." But it might have been better to leave out "effective" altogether, and replace it with "certain."

Passage 3

The inherent awkwardness of this sentence accounts for the numerous crossings out and corrections, which still do not succeed entirely in solving the problem. D is about as good as it can be, short of breaking it up into two sentences.

Passage 4

The choice of "prodiguait" is a good one in light of the exceptional nature of this meeting of mother and daughter. D's "lavish" conveys the original quite well.

Passage 5

Ms. 1 is rather more loose and baggy than most of Proust's first drafts. P makes clear what remains nebulous in ms. 1, because of a lack of punctuation with which to offset the sentence's long-windededness.

The repetiiton of "sweet" and "sweetness" within the same sentence is not at all untypical of Proust, for whom the idea of sweetness was intimately associated with his mother and with mother figures in his short stories and in his novels. (See for example my concluding remarks)

Removing "sévère" was a good decision, because the fact that her coldness was "habitual" is what matters, not its severity.

Passage 6

In ms. 1 Proust used the masculine "seul" although it is a young woman who is making the confession and describing her relationship with her mother. This may reflect the intensity of Proust's feelings for his mother, which suddenly obtruded themselves in the course of writing this sentence.

Proust wrote "supplicant" which he then corrected to "suppliant."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

B. Textual variants in "La Mort de Baldassare Silvande, vicomte de Sylvanie," from the Pre-original Version in La Revue Hebdomadaire to its Appearance in Les Plaisirs et les jours.

Abbreviations: RH=La Revue Hebdomadaire of October 26, 1895
P=Pléiade edition

In the following comparative listing of variants, I have not for the most part included changes in punctuation, paragraphing, and spacing, simply because it is not possible to ascertain with any degree of certainty which of these changes were made by Proust, and which by the various editors of his writings. The changes in wording and occasionally in syntax and verb tense, on the other hand, were Proust's, as were other differences such as names.

	RH	P
1	The epigraph placed at the very beginning of the text is from Shakespeare's Macbeth, "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow . . .." Act V, scene v	The epigraph placed at the beginning is from a French translation of Emerson's Essays: "The poets say that Apollo tended the flocks of Admetus; so too, each man is a God in disguise who plays the fool." The lines from Macbeth in P are placed at the beginning of chapter IV.
2	Il se rappelait même la violence de sa colère le jour où son cousin Cardenio s'était moqué de lui, l'éclat de ses yeux et les jouissances de sa vanité quand le duc de Parme avait cherché à lui faire épouser sa sœur (il avait alors en essayant de dissimuler son plaisir serré les dents et fait une grimace qui lui était habituelle et qui déplaisait à Alexis) et le ton méprisant à Assumpta qui faisait profession de ne pas aimer sa musique.	Il se rappelait même la violence de sa colère le jour où son cousin Jean Galeas s'était moqué de lui, combien l'éclat de ses yeux avait trahi les jouissances de sa vanité quand le duc de Parme lui avait fait offrir la main de sa sœur (il avait alors, en essayant de dissimuler son plaisir, serré les dents et fait une grimace qui lui était habituelle et qui déplaisait à Alexis) et le ton méprisant dont il parlait à Lucretia qui faisait profession de ne pas aimer sa musique.
3	précepteur; au moment de parler, il devint cramoisi:	au moment de parler, il devint très rouge.
4	il lui demanda tout bas, sa petite bouche collée à son oreille	il lui demanda tout bas, sa bouche collée à son oreille

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

5 il se mit à causer avec sa belle-mère, la mère d'Alexis, qui, depuis la mort de sa mère, était l'être qu'il aimait le plus au monde.	il se mit à causer gaiement avec la mère d'Alexis, sa belle-sœur, qui, depuis la mort de sa mère, était l'être qu' il aimait le plus au monde.
6 il crut que la tristesse de son oncle, courageusement bannie de sa conversation, s'était réfugiée dans ses yeux qui seuls dans toute sa personne étaient sincères.	il crut que la tristesse de son oncle, courageusement bannie de sa conversation, s'était réfugiée dans ses yeux qui, seuls, dans toute sa personne, étaient alors sincères.
7 Mais aussi pourquoi craignait-il tant de nous faire de la peine?	Mais aussi pourquoi craint-il tant de nous faire de la peine?
8 Mais les douleurs de l'ataxie qui serraient parfois Silvande	Mais les douleurs de la paralysie générale qui serraient parfois Baldassare
9 Il se leva vivement mais réveilla sa douleur atroce; à peine fut-elle calmée, il appela	Il se leva vivement, mais réveilla en même temps sa douleur atroce, il dut s'arrêter un moment; à peine elle fut calmée, il appela:
10 En rentrant chez lui, Alexis fut vivement frappé par cette pensée que lui aussi mourrait un jour, et que s'il avait encore devant lui beaucoup plus de temps que son oncle, son vieux jardinier, la duchesse d'Alériouvres ne lui survivraient pas longtemps. Pourtant, assez riche pour se retirer Beppo travaillait toujours pour gagner. . .	En rentrant chez lui, Alexis fut vivement frappé par cette pensée que lui aussi mourrait un jour, et que s'il avait encore devant lui beaucoup plus de temps que son oncle, le vieux jardinier de Baldassare et sa cousine, la duchesse d'Alériouvres, ne lui survivraient pas longtemps. Pourtant, assez riche pour se retirer, Rocco continuait à travailler sans cesse pour gagner. . .
11 Heureusement plus que leur moqueries la vie. . .	Heureusement, plus puissante que leur moqueries, la vie. . .
12 la présence de nombreux invités pouvait distraire la tristesse qui suivait souvent ses douleurs ataxiques.	la présence de nombreux invités pouvait distraire la tristesse qui suivait ses crises.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

13 Repris par le plaisir qui flottait autour d'eux	Repris tous deux par le plaisir autour d'eux
14 Epigraph to chapter III: "Sa jeunesse lui fait du bruit, il n'entend pas." (Lettre de madame de Sévigné à madame de Grignan, lettre 1127)	Epigraph to chapter III: "Sa jeunesse lui fait du bruit, il n'entend pas." Mme de Sévigné.
15 "Je vous aimai d'une affection dont aucune espérance de plaisir charnel ne venait déconcerter la sagacité sensible."	"Je vous aimais d'une affection dont aucune espérance de plaisir charnel ne venait déconcerter la sagacité sensible."
16 Pia. . .s'était éprise pour Girolamo d'un amour invincible et furieux	Pia. . .s'était éprise pour Castruccio d'un amour invincible et furieux
17 Maintenant, au contraire, il était de plus en plus vaniteux, irascible, avec le regret des plaisirs qu'il ne pouvait plus goûter.	Maintenant, au contraire, il était de plus en plus vaniteux, irascible, brûlé du regret des plaisirs qu'il ne pouvait plus goûter.
18 La deuxième nuit, on tenta une opération hasardeuse.	La seconde nuit, on tenta une opération hasardeuse.
19 La mort, qui était venue à lui à peu à peu et sans qu'il voulût la voir, il s'était trouvé subitement en sa présence.	Quand la mort était venue à lui peu à peu il n'avait pas voulu la voir; maintenant il s'était trouvé subitement en sa présence.

Comments:

1. The quote from Shakespeare is more appropriate for the story's theme of a life frequently misspent and ruefully remembered.

2. The change of names suggests a desire for a more historically weighty Italian name than Cardenio: Jean Galeas is a Frenchified form of Gian Galeazzo, which recalls Gian Galeazzo Visconti, of the ruling Milanese family in the fifteenth century. But the Italian names Assumpta and Lucretia are incorrect, if the intent was authenticity; the correct Italian names are Assunta and Lucrezia. As in other cases, Proust seems to have been unsure of himself in this area.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In general, the P version is much more polished and elegantly written, although it betrays the usual penchant for embroidery.

3. "cramoisi," meaning crimson, is commonly used for "flushed" or "blushing," but there is something a bit cliché-like about it which the neutral "très rouge" eliminates.

4. "petite" is an unncessary adjective, since we know that the subject of the sentence is a child, Baldassare's nephew Alexis, through whose eyes we see the main events and characters in the first three chapters.

5 The subject here is Baldassare. This is the type of sentence where the family relations and possessive forms can create confusion. The P version is an improvement over RH.The adverb "gaiement" is a desirable addition, since the nature of the relationship between Baldassare and Alexis's mother is so close. "Gaiety" was a state of being that was dear to Proust: It connotes levity, humor, spontaneity.

6. In this case punctuation is a key element in focusing attention on Baldassare's eyes.

7. The use of the present tense "craint-il" in P gives the question more immediacy and urgency.

8. No doubt the word "ataxie" had a clinical and technical sound to it that Proust wanted to eliminate with the words "paralyse générale."

9. "en même temps" emphasizes the simultaneity of the two events, while "il dut s'arrêter un moment" further consolidates the "atrociousness" of the pain.

10. "le vieux jardinier" gives more autonomy to the gardener than "son vieux jardinier," of some importance in that the man was well off enough to retire yet wanted to continue working. "Beppe," not Beppo, is the correct shortened form of Giuseppe. Rocco in P continues the Italian motif, without being a diminutive or shortened form. Psychologically this fits better with the independence of the gardener, who, we learn, continues to work ceaselessly not only to earn more money but also to win a prize for his roses.

11. the adjective "puissante" adds force to an otherwise conventional thought.

12. Again, the word "ataxique" was too technical, yet "crises" is so generic as to lose the impact conveyed in exampe 8 by "paralysie générale."

13. This reference to a brief passionate love affair between Baldassare and a young woman he meets at a nearby château is enhanced by "tous deux," since we see immediately that this is a mutual passion in which both partners, simultaneously gripped by desire, "se jetèrent l'un sur l'autre. . ."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

14. Why Proust chose to remove the greater preciseness of the RH epigraph is difficult to say, unless perhaps he felt that it was pedantic to give the particulars.

15. "aimais" is an improvement over "aimai" because of the far greater indefiniteness and long duration conveyed by the imperfect tense.

16. Why the change to "Castruccio" in P is anyone's guess. The most famous "Girolamo" in Italian history is Girolamo Savonarola, the great Dominican monk who paid with his life in 1498 for his opposition to the Florentine regime of the time, and for his repeated denunciations of the Papacy. Perhaps this association made Castruccio a more attractive name for the object of "an invincible and furious love."

17. "brûlé de regret" is obviously much stronger than "avec le regret," and conveys a side of Baldassare's character that appears repeatedly in the story.

18. "seconde" seems a better choice to describe the stages of an illness or, as in this case, of a struggle to survive a serious accident. Grammarians explain that "second" or "seconde" generally replace "deuxième" when the series is limited to two units.

19. The P version flows more naturally and conveys a somewhat stronger sense of inevitability.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Works Cited

A. Manuscripts and Rare Books

Proust, Marcel. Les Plaisirs et les jours. B.N. Reserved and rare book division: Rés $^{m}y^{2}$ 179. Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1896.

_____. Manuscript of Les Plaisirs et les jours. B.N. manuscript division: 16612.

_____. Proof pages of Les Plaisirs et les jours. B.N. manuscript division:16614

_____. Les Plaisirs et les jours. Rare book division of Columbia University Library: NC 248 .L54 1896 P94.

_____. Marcel Proust-Usuels de la Réserve. B.N. Reserved and rare book division, 1965.

_____. Manuscript of Jean Santeuil. Kolb-Proust Archive for Research, Room 429 Main Library of the University of Illinois in Urbana.

_____. Manuscripts and other materials in the Rare Book and Manuscript room of the University of Illinois Library in Urbana.

Delafosse, Léon. Six Mélodies. B.N. folio Département de la Musique: Vm7 12117

B. Editions and Translations of Les Plaisirs et les jours

1. French editions

Proust, Marcel. Les Plaisirs et les jours. Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1896.

_____. Les Plaisirs et les jours, préface par Anatole France. Paris: Nouvelle Revue Française: 1924.

_____. Œuvres complètes de Marcel Proust, tome 9, Les Plaisirs et les jours. Paris: Gallimard, 1935. The copy I consulted is marked BN 8 Y^{2} 75585 (9)

_____. Les Plaisirs et les jours. Paris: Gallimard, 1950.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. Jean Santeuil précédé de Les Plaisirs et les jours. Ed. Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.

_____. Les Plaisirs et les jours suivi de l'Indifférent et autres textes. Ed. Thierry Laget. Paris: Gallimard, 1993.

2. Translations

a. English

_____. Pleasures and Regrets. Preface by D.J. Enright, trans. Louise Varese. London: Peter Owen, 1948 (subsequently republished 1976 and 1986).

_____. Pleasures and Days and Other Writings by Marcel Proust. Ed. F. W. Dupee, trans. Louise Varese et al. Garden City: Doubleday Books, 1957.

b. German

_____. Tage der Freuden. Trans. Ernst Weiß. Berlin: Proplyäen Verlag, 1926.

_____. Freuden und Tage, und andere Erzählungen und Skizzen aus den Jahren 1892-1896. Trans. and ed. Luzius Keller. Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988.

_____. Freuden und Tage. Ed. and Trans. Luzius Keller. Frankfurt-am-Main: Insel Verlag, 1997.

c. Swedish

_____. Noveller. Trans. Karin Bong. Stockholm: Tiden, 1956 (reprinted in 1965).

d. Japanese

_____. Tanoshimi To Hibi. Trans. Han'ya Kubota. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1960. Reprinted in 1965, 1972, 1975, 1986, the last published by Fukutake Shoten.

e. Italian

_____. I piaceri e i giorni. Trans. Marise Ferro. Milan: Ultra, 1946.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. I piaceri e i giorni. Trans. Marise Ferro. Milan: Sugar, 1968 (reprinted in 1976 by Garzanti).

f. Slovak

_____. Rozkose a dni. Trans. Anton Vantuck. Bratislava: Slov. spic, 1969.

g. Spanish

_____. Obras completas. Trans. Consuelo Bergés et al. Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1971.

_____. Los placeres y los días. Parodias y miscelánea. Trans. Consuelo Bergés. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1975.

h. Portuguese

_____. Os praceres e os días. Trans. Fernando Py. Rio De Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1983.

i. Hebrew

_____. Ta 'anugot we-yamin-kitavim. Trans. Yoram Bronovsky. Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan-Modan, 1979.

j. Greek

_____. Diavazontas. Trans. Petros Papadopulos and Koster Tsitaraku. Athens: Estia, 1985.

C. Works by Proust consulted other than Les Plaisirs et les jours

Proust, Marcel. Chroniques, Ed. Robert Proust. Paris: Gallimard, 1927.

_____ and André Gide. Autour de la Recherche-lettres. Préface de Pierre Assouline. Paris: Editions Complexes, 1949.

_____. Jean Santeuil. 3 vols. Ed. Bernard de Fallois. Paris: Gallimard, 1952.

_____. Correspondance avec sa mère, 1887-1905. Ed. Philip Kolb. Paris: Plon, 1953.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. Contre Sainte-Beuve-nouveaux mélanges. Ed. Bernard de Fallois. Paris: Gallimard, 1954.

_____. Jean Santeuil. Trans. Gerard Hopkins. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956.

_____. Lettres à Reynaldo Hahn. Ed. Philip Kolb. Paris: Gallimard, 1956.

_____ Textes retrouvés. Ed. Philip Kolb and Larkin B. Price. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968.

_____. Jean Santeuil, Ed. Yves Sandre. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.

_____. Contre Sainte-Beuve, précédé de Pastiches et mélanges et suivi d'Essais et articles. Ed. Pierre Clarac et Yves Sandre. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.

_____. Correspondance. 21 vols. Ed. Philip Kolb. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1976-1993. . .

_____. L'Indifférent. Ed. Philip Kolb. Paris: Gallimard, 1978.

_____. Letters 1880-1903. Ed. Philip Kolb, Trans. Ralph Manheim. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983.

_____.Letters 1880-1903. Ed. Philip Kolb, Trans. Ralph Manheim. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983.

_____. On Reading Ruskin. Trans. and Ed. Jean Autret et al. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

_____. Mon cher petit-lettres à Léon Daudet. Paris: Gallimard, 1991.

_____. A la recherche du temps perdu. 4 vols. Ed. Jean-Ives Tadié et al. Paris: Gallimard, 1987-1989.

_____. Ecrits de jeunesse 1887-1895. Ed. Anne Borrel et al. Illiers-Combray: Institut Marcel Proust International, Société des Amis de Marcel Proust, 1991.

_____. In Search of Lost Time. 6 vols. Trans. C.K. Scott, Terence Kilmartin, D.J. Enright. New York: Random House, 1992.

D. Criticism and Scholarship on Les Plaisirs et les jours

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bailey, Ninette. "Couleur picturale et couleur poétique dans Les Plaisirs et les Jours." BSAP, 16 (1966): 411-422.

Brée, Germaine. "Une Étude du style de Proust dans Les Plaisirs et les jours." The French Review vol. XV, 5 (1942): 401-409.

Costil, Pierre. "La Construction musicale de la Recherche." BSAP, 8 (1958): 469-489, and 9 (1959): 83-110.

_____. "Proust et la poésie de la fleur." BSAP, 13 (1963): 20-41.

Daum, Pierre. Les Plaisirs et les jours, de Marcel Proust--étude d'un recueil. Paris: Nizet, 1993.

Fraisse, Luc. "Discours sur le style: Marcel Proust lecteur de Buffon." BSAP, 38 (1988): 29-36.

Gicquel, Bernard. "La Composition des Plaisirs et les jours." BSAP, 10 (1960): 249-261.

Henry, Anne. "Les Plaisirs et les Jours: chronologie et métempsychoses." Cahiers Marcel Proust 6 (1973): 69-93.

Johnson, Jr., J. Theodore. "Proust's Early Portraits de Peintres." Comparative Literature Studies vol. IV, 4 (1967): 397-408.

Keller, Luzius ed. Bezüge und Strukturen--Studien zu Les Plaisirs et les Jours. Frankfurt-am-Main: Insel Verlag, 1987.

Kingcaid, Renée A. "A Hothouse of Orchids: Proust's Les Plaisirs et les jours." diss., Ohio State University, 1982.

_____. Neurosis and Narrative-The Decadent Short Fiction of Proust, Lorrain, and Rachilde. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992.

Paganini, Maria. "Intertextuality and the Strategy of Desire: Proust's 'Mélancolique Villégiature de Mme de Breyves'." Yale French Studies, 57 (1979): 136-163.

Placella, Paola. Motivi proustiani. Da Les Plaisirs et les Jours alla Recherche. Naples: Giannini editore, 1976.

Price, Larkin B. Materials for a Critical Edition of Marcel Proust's Les Plaisirs et les jours. Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1965.

Rolli, Alexandre. "A propos des illustrations de Proust." BMAP, 21 (1971): 1178-

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1179.

Sarkany, Stéphane. "Pragmatique et réception de Les Plaisirs et les jours," in Proust et le texte producteur, Ed. John D. Erickson and Irène Pagès. Guelph, Ontario: University of Guelph, 1980.

Weiss, Véronique. Les Plaisirs et les jours ou l'écriture double. Diss., New York University, 1995.

E. Criticism and Scholarship on Jean Santeuil

Adam, Antoine. "Notes sur deux livres récents: Marcel Proust, Jean Santeuil. Revue des sciences humaines. October -December 1952, 359-365.

Anguissola, Alberto Beretta. "Storia, scienza e società in Proust." Paragone, 22, 260, October 1971, 61-89.

Baudino, Catherine Anne. "A Narrative Analysis of Jean Santeuil." Diss. London University, 1976.

Bell, William Stewart. "The Prototype for Proust's Jean Santeuil." Modern Language Notes, Vol. 53, 1, January 1958, 46-50.

Brée, Germaine. "From Jean Santeuil to 'Time Regained'." Bucknell Review. 6, 3, December 1956, 16-21.

_____. "Jean Santeuil: An Appraisal." L'Esprit Créateur, 5, 1, Spring 1965, 14-25.

Carassus, Emilien. "L'Affaire Dreyfus et l'espace romanesque: de Jean Santeuil à la Recherche du temps perdu." Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France. Nos. 5-6, 1971, 836-853.

Guaraldo, Enrico. "Per una storia del Jean Santeuil." Paragone, 22, 260, October 1971, 89-126.

_____. "Il volto nuovo del Jean Santeuil di Proust." Paragone, 23, 272, October 1972, 51-67.

Hokari, Mizuho. "Proust et Gustave Moreau-À propos de l'échec de Jean Santeuil." Etudes de Langue et de Littérature Françaises. 4, 1969, 34-48.

Kolb, Philip. "Proust's Portrait of Jaurès in Jean Santeuil." French Studies, XV. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 338-349.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. "Historique du premier roman de Proust." Saggi e ricerche di letteratura francese, vol. IV. Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1963, 215-277.

Marc-Lipianski, Mireille. La Naissance du monde proustien dans Jean Santeuil. Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1974.

Mauriac, Claude. "Naissance de Proust." Hommes et idées d'aujourd'hui. Paris: Editions Albin-Michel, 1953, 219-243.

O'Brien, Justin. "Jean Santeuil." The French Literary Horizon. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1967, 29-32.

Placella, Paola. "Motivi della Recherche dans Jans Santeuil and Contre Sainte-Beuve." Trimestre, VII, 1-4, January-December 1973, 1-36.

Price, Larkin B. "Marcel Proust's 'Dieu déguisé': The Artist Myth in Jean Santeuil." L'Esprit Créateur, 9, 1, Spring 1971, 61-73.

Saraydar, Alma. "Proust disciple de Stendhal-les avant-textes d'un Amour de Swann dans Jean Santeuil." Archives de Lettres Modernes. Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1980, 1-88.

Tupinier, Georgette. "La Digitale de Jean Santeuil." Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France, Nos. 5-6, 1971, 950-964.

F. Biography

Albaret, Céleste. Monsieur Proust-souvenirs recueillis par Georges Belmont. Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1973.

Barker, Richard H. Marcel Proust-A Biography. New York: Criterion Books, 1958.

Blanc, Olivier. "Un ami de cœur de Marcel Proust: Clément de Maugny." BSAP, 45 (1995): 48-61.

Billy, Robert de. Marcel Proust-lettres et conversations. Paris: Editions des Portiques, 1930.

Blanche, Jacques-Emile. Mes Modèles--Barrès, Hardy, Proust, James, Gide, Moore. Paris: Librairie Stock, 1928.

Bonnet, Henri. Alphonse Darlu (1849-1921 le maître de philosophie de Marcel Proust. Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1961.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. Les Amours et la sexualité de Proust. Paris: Nizet, 1985.

Borrel, Anne, Alain Senderens, Jean-Bernard Naudin. Dining with Proust. New York: Random House, 1992.

Buisine, Alain. Proust et ses lettres. Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1983.

Cattaui, Georges. "Marcel Proust and the Jews". The Jewish Review, 1932, No. 3.

Clermont-Tonnerre, Elizabeth de. Robert de Montesquiou et Marcel Proust. Paris: E. Flammarion, 1925.

Cocking, J.M. Proust. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956.

Collet, Georges-Paul. "Marcel Proust et Jacques-Emile Blanche." BSAP, 24 (1974): 1839-1864.

Curtis, Jean-Louis. "Proust et Ruskin." BSAP, No. 45, 1995.

Delage, Roger. "Reynaldo Hahn et Marcel Proust." BSAP, 26 (1976): 229-246.

Dreyfus, Robert. Souvenirs sur Marcel Proust, avec des lettres inédites de Proust. Paris: Simon Kra, 1926. (also published by Grasset, 1926)

Ferré, André. Les Années de collège de Marcel Proust. Paris: Gallimard, 1959.

Francis, Claude and Fernande Gontier. Marcel Proust et les siens. Paris: Plon, 1981.

Gavoty, Bernard. Reynaldo Hahn le musicien de la Belle Époque. Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1976.

Gregh, Fernand. L'Age d'or-souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse. Paris: Grasset, 1947.

_____. Mon Amitié avec Marcel Proust. Paris: Grasset, 1958.

Hahn, Reynaldo. Notes. Journal d'un musicien. Paris: Plon, 1933.

_____. Du Chant-pour la musique. Paris: Gallimard, 1957.

_____. "Douze lettres à Edouard Risler." BSAP, 43 (1993).

Halévy, Daniel. Pays parisiens. Paris: Grasset, 1932.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Jaquillard, Pierre. "Le Paris de Marcel Proust." BSAP, 7 (1957): 283-306.

Jullian, Philippe. Robert de Montesquiou, a fin-de-siècle prince. Trans. John Haylock and Francis King. London: S eeker and Warburg, 1967.

Kolb, Philip ed. Cahiers Marcel Proust--Le Carnet de 1908. Paris: Gallimard, 1976.

Leon, Derrick. Introduction to Proust--His Life, His Circle and His Work. London: Kegan Paul, 1940.

Maurois, André. Le Monde de Marcel Proust. Paris: Hachette, 1960.

Painter, George D. Proust--The Early Years. Boston-Toronto: Little Brown, 1959.

_____. Proust--The Later Years. Boston: Little Brown, 1965.

Proust, Marcel. Mon cher petit-lettres à Lucien Daudet (1895-1897, 1904, 1907, 1908). ed. Michel Bonduelle. Paris: Gallimard, 1991.

Quint, Léon-Pierre. Marcel Proust--sa vie, son œuvre. Paris: Simon Kra, 1925.

Robert, Louis de. Comment débuta Marcel Proust-lettres inédites. Paris: Gallimard, 1925.

Soupault, Robert. "Robert Proust, frère de Marcel." BSAP, 17 (1967): 553-568.

Tadié, Jean-Yves. Marcel Proust. Paris: Gallimard, 1996.

G. General Criticism on Proust

Alden, Douglas W. "Proust's Duel." Modern Language Notes, 58, 2, February 1938, 104-106.

_____. "Proust." Gay and Lesbian Literature, ed. Sharon Malinovski. Detroit-London: St. James Press, 1994.

Auchincloss, Louis. "Proust's Picture of Society." Partisan Review, 4, 1960, 690-701.

Autret, Jean. L'Influence de Ruskin sur la vie, les idées et l'œuvre de Marcel Proust. Geneva-Lille: Drozet Fiard, 1955.

Bal, Mieke. The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually. Trans. Anna-Louise Milne. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bardèche, Maurice. Marcel Proust Romancier, vol. 1. Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1971.

Barthes, Roland et al. Recherche de Proust. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1980.

Beauchamp, Louis de. Le Petit groupe et le grand monde de Marcel Proust. Paris: Editions Nizet, 1990.

Beckett, Samuel. Proust. (New York: Grove Press, 1970 (originally published 1931). Reedited by John Calder .

Beerbohm, Sylvia Sarah. "The Cosmic Vision of Marcel Proust in À la recherche du temps perdu." Diss. Columbia University, 1968.

Boitchidzé, Gaston. "Jugements russes sur Proust." Europe, 49, February-March 1971, 156-166.

Bonnet, Henri. Marcel Proust de 1907 à 1914. Paris: Nizet, 1971. Vol. 2, 1976.

_____. "La Théorie d'Hans-Robert Jauss confrontée à l'esthétique proustienne." BSAP, 36 (1986): 451-468.

Bowie, Malcolm. Freud, Proust and Lacan--Theory as Fiction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Brée, Germaine. The World of Marcel Proust. New York: Houghton Miflin, 1966.

Brunet, Etienne. Le Vocabulaire de Proust. Geneva-Paris: Slatkine-Champion, 1983.

Bucknall, Barbara J. The Religion of Art in Proust. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969.

Canavaggia, Jeanne. Proust et la politique. Paris: Librairie Nizet. 1986.

Carter, William C. The Proustian Quest. New York: New York University Press, 1992.

Cattaui, Georges ed. Entretiens sur Marcel Proust. Paris and La Haye: Mouton &Co., 1966.

Caws, Mary Ann and Eugène Nicole eds. Reading Proust Now. New York: Peter Lang, 1990.

Chantal, René de. Marcel Proust critique littéraire, vol. 1. Montréal: Les Presses

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Universitaires de Montréal, 1967.

Compagnon, Antoine. La Troisième République des lettres. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1983.

_____. Proust entre deux siècles. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989.

Courtial, Marie-Thèrese. "La Vision impressioniste de la mer dans la Recherche du temps perdu." BSAP, 25 (1975): 267-276.

Curtis, Jean-Louis. "Proust et Ruskin." BSAP, 45 (1995): 9-18.

Daniel, George P. "Marcel Proust, le Moyen Âge et Pierre Chastellain." BSAP, 18 (1968): 703-706.

De Botton, Alain. How Proust Can Change your Life. New York: Pantheon, 1997.

Deleuze, Gilles. Proust et les signes. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964.

Doubrovsky, Serge. La Place de la madeleine--écriture et fantasme chez Proust. Paris: Mercure de France, 1974.

Ellison, David R. The Reading of Proust. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984.

Erickson, John D. and Pagès, Irène. Proust et le texte producteur. Ontario: University of Guelph Press, 1980.

Europe: Centenaire de Marcel Proust, August-September 1970.

Genette, Gérard. Figures III. Paris: Seuil, 1972.

Gide, André. Journal 1889-1939. Paris: Gallimard, 1951.

_____. Journal 1939-1949. Paris: Gallimard, 1954.

_____. The André Gide Reader. Ed. David Littlejohn. New York: Knopf, 1971.

Girard, René ed. Proust--A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1962.

Goodkin, Richard. Around Proust. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Hassine, Juliette. Ésotérisme et écriture dans l'œuvre de Proust. Paris: Librairie Minard, 1990.

Hayes, Jarrod. "Proust in the Tearoom." PMLA, October (1995): 992-1005.

Henry, Anne. Marcel Proust-Théories pour une esthétique. Paris: Klincksieck, 1983.

Houston, John Porter. The Shape and Style of Proust's Novel. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982.

Huas, Jeanine, L'Homosexualité au temps de Proust. Donclau: Dinard, 1992.

Hughes, Edward. "The Mapping of Homosexuality in Proust's Recherche", in Paragraph, July 1995.

Jackson, Elizabeth R. L'Evolution de la mémoire involontaire dans l'œuvre de Marcel Proust. Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1966.

Jacobs, Carol. "Walter Benjamin: Image of Proust." Modern Language Notes, 86, 6, December 1971, 910-932.

Kadi, Simone. La Peinture chez Proust et Baudelaire. Paris: La Pensée Universelle, 1973.

Kopp, Richard L. Marcel Proust as a Social Critic. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971.

Ladenson, Elisabeth. Proust's Lesbianism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

Lesage, Laurent. Marcel Proust and his Literary Friends. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958.

Linn, John Gaywood. The Theater in the Fiction of Marcel Proust. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1966.

Louria, Yvette. "Proust and Lunacharskii." Romanic Review, 62, 21, April 1971, 127-132.

Martin-Deslias, Noël. Idéalisme de Proust. Paris: Les Editions Nagel, 1952.

Mayer, Denise. Marcel Proust et la musique d'après sa correspondance. Paris: La Revue Musicale, 1978.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Megay, Joyce. Bergson et Proust. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1976.

Milly, Jean. Proust et le style. Geneva: Slatkine reprints, 1991 (1st ed. 1970)

_____. Les Pastiches de Proust. Paris: Armand Colin, 1970.

_____. Proust dans le texte et l'avant-texte. Paris: Flammarion, 1985.

Moore, Gene M. Proust and Musil--The Novel as Research Instrument. New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1985.

O'Brien, Justin. "Albertine the Ambiguous: Notes on Proust's Transposition of Sexes." PMLA vol. LXIV, 5 (1949): 933-952.

Peyre, Henri. Marcel Proust. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.

Piroué, Georges. Proust et la musique du devenir. Paris: Editions Denoël, 1960.

Pommier, Jean. La Mystique de Proust. Geneva: Librairfie Droz, 1968.

Poulet, Georges. "Proust and Human Time." Proust--A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962.

Price, Larkin B.. ed.. Marcel Proust-A Critical Panorama. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973.

Raczymov, Henri. Le Paris littéraire et intime de Marcel Proust, photographies de Martine Mouchy. Paris: Editions Parigramme, 1997.

Raimond, Michel. "Proust et Balzac." BSAP 17 (1967): 742-769.

Renauld, Pierre. "Psychologie proustienne et conscience mythique." BSAP, 21 (1971): 1157-1164.

Rivers, Julius Edwin. Proust and the Art of Love-the Aesthetics of Sexuality in the Life, Times, and Art of Marcel Proust. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

Spitzer, Leo. "Le style de Marcel Proust." Etudes de Style. Paris: Gallimard, 1970.

Splitter, Randolph. Proust's Recherche-A Psychoanalytic Interpretation. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

Sprinker, Michael. History and Ideology in Proust--À la recherche du temps perdu and the Third French Republic. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Strauss, Walter A. Proust and Literature--The Novelist as Critic. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Tadié, Jean-Yves. Proust et le roman. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.

Thornton, Ronald. Marcel Proust and Marxist Literary Criticism from the Nineteen Twenties to the Nineteen Seventies. Diss. Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1979.

Various. Entretiens sur Marcel Proust. Paris and La Haye: Mouton & Co., 1966.

Viers, Rina. "La Signification des fleurs dans l'œuvre de Marcel Proust." BSAP, 25 (1975): 153-176.

Vigneron, Robert. Etudes sur Stendhal et sur Proust. Paris: A.G.Nizet, 1978.

Vogely, Maxine A. Italy in the Life and Works of Marcel Proust. Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1969.

Wolitz, Seth L. The Proustian Community. New York: New York University Press, 1971.

Zima, P.-V. Le Désir du mythe-une lecture sociologique de Marcel Proust. Paris: Editions A.-G. Nizet, 1973.

H. Literary Theory, History, Philosophy

Althusser, Louis. Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays. Trans. Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1971.

Apter, Emily and William Pietz, eds. Fetishism as Cultural Discourse. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Arvon, Henri. Marxist Esthetics. Trans. Helen R. Lane. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973.

Bakhtin, M.M., and Medvedev, P.N. The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

_____. The Dialogic Imagination. Ed. Michael Holquist, Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Barnes, Susan J. and Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. Eds. Van Dyck 350. Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1994.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Benjamin, Walter. Illuminations. Ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Shocken Books, 1969.

_____. Understanding Brecht. Trans. Anna Bostock. London: New Left Books, 1973.

Bodei, Remo. La Filosofia nel Novecento. Rome: Donzelli Editore, 1997.

Brown, Christopher. Van Dyck. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.

Buttigieg, Joseph A. A Portrait of the Artist in Different Perspective. Athens, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1987.

Carassus, Emilien. Le Snobisme et les lettres françaises de Paul Bourget à Marcel Proust. Paris: A. Colin, 1966.

Caudwell, Christopher. Illusion and Reality-A Study of the Sources of Poetry. New York: International Publishers, 1937.

_____. Romance and Realism-A Study in English Bourgeois Literature. Ed. Samuel Hynes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.

Craig, David ed. Marxists on Literature-An Anthology. New York: Penguin, 1975.

Culler, Jonathan. Structuralist Poetics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.

Deffoux, Léon. Le Pastiche littéraire des origines à nos jours. Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1932.

De Man, Paul. Allegories of Reading. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

Dombroski, Robert. L'Esistenza ubbidiente--letterati italiani sotto il fascismo. Naples: Guida editori, 1984.

_____. Properties of Writing-Ideological Discourse in Modern Italian Fiction. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Duby, Georges ed. Histoire de la France de 1852 à nos jours. Paris: Larousse, 1989.

Dynes, Wayne R. and Donaldson, Stephen editors. Homosexual Themes in Literary Studies. New York and London: Garland Publishing Co., 1992

Eagleton, Terry. Marxism and Literary Criticism. Los Angeles: University of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

California Press, 1976.

_____. Criticism & Ideology--A Study in Marxist Literary Theory. London: Verso, 1978.

_____. Ideology-An Introduction. London-New York: Verso, 1991.

Eco, Umberto. Opera aperta. Milan: Bompiani, 1976.

Eliot, T.S. Selected Essays. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1950.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. Self-Reliance and Other Essays. New York: Dover Publications, 1993.

Everdell, William R. The First Moderns. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Fiser, Emeric. Le Symbole littéraire-essais sur la signification du symbole chez Wagner, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Bergson and Proust. Paris: Librairie José Corti (no year given).

Foucault, Michel. The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Fromentin, Eugène. Les Maîtres d'autrefois-Belgique-Hollande. Ed. Jacques Foucart. Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1965.

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism--Four Essays. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

_____. The Critical Path-An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971.

Gay, Peter. Pleasure Wars. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.

Goldmann, Lucien. The Hidden God--A Study of the Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine. Trans. Philip Thody. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. New York: The Humanities Press, 1970.

Gramsci, Antonio. Selections from The Prison Notebooks. Ed. and Trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971.

_____. Prison Notebooks, Vols. I and II. Ed. and Trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg. New York, Columbia University Press, 1992 and 1996.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. Selections from Cultural Writings. Ed. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Trans. William Boelhower. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Grasselli, Margaret Morgan, and Pierre Rosenberg Eds. Trans. Thomas D. Bowie. Watteau 1684-1721. Paris: Editions des Musées Nationaux, 1984.

Hanne, Michael. The Power of the Story--Fiction and Political Change. Providence and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1994.

Harrison, Charles, and Paul Wood, Art in Theory 1900-1990-An Anthology of Changing Ideas. New York: Blackwell, 1992.

Hauser, Arnold. The Social History of Art, vol. III. Trans. Stanley Goodman. New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1957.

Henrich, Dieter. Aesthetic Judgment and the Moral Image of the World--Studies in Kant. Stanford: Stanford Universityy Press, 1992.

Hesiod-Homeric Hymns-Epic Cycle-Homerica. Trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936.

Hirsch, E.D. Jr. Validity in Interpretation. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967.

Iacono, Alfonso M. Le Fétichisme--histoire d'un concept. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992.

Isaac, Jules et al. L'Histoire--La Naissance du monde moderne/1848-1914. Paris: Hachette, 1961.

Jackson, Anne B. La Revue Blanche (1889-1903)--origine, influence, bibliographie. Paris: M.J. Minard-Lettres Modernes, 1960.

_____. "Les Critiques de la Revue Blanche", in La Revue des Lettres Modernes: Histoire des idées et des littératures. Vol. 4, No. 25-26 (trimestre 1, 1957).

James, William. The Varieties of Religious Experience. New York: The Modern Library (no date of publication)

Jameson, Fredric. The Political Unconscious--Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Pure Reason. London: Dent, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. Analytic of the Beautiful--from the Critique of Judgment. Ed. and Trans. Walter Cerf. Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs Merrill Co., 1963.

_____. Critique of Judgment. Ed. and trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987.

Kempis, Thomas à. The Imitation of Christ. Ed. Harold C. Gardiner, S.J. New York: Doubleday, 1989.

Koivisto, Juha, and Veikko Pietilä. "Ideological Powers and Resistance: The Contribution of W.F. Haug and Projekt Ideologie-Theorie." Rethinking Marxism, vol. 9, 4 (1996-1997): 40-59.

LaCapra, Dominick. History and Criticism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

_____. History, Politics, and the Novel. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Landy, Marcia. Film, Politics, and Gramsci. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

Larrain, Jorge. "Ideology." A Dictionary of Marxist Thought. Ed. Tom Bottomore et al. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Lentricchia, Frank. After the New Criticism. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980.

_____ and McLaughlin, Thomas, Eds. Critical Terms for Literary Study. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Loevgren, Sven. The Genesis of Modernism--Seurat, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and French Symbolism in the 1880s. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971.

Lukács, Georg. Realism in Our Time--Literature and the Class Struggle. New York: Harper, 1964.

_____. History and Class Consciousness--Studies in Marxist Dialectics. Trans. Rodney Livingstone. Boston: MIT Press, 1971.

Martines, Lauro. Society and History in English Renaissance Verse. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985.

Marx, Karl and Engels, Frederick. The German Ideology. Collected Works, vol 5, New York: International Publishers, 1976.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. On Literature and Art. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976.

Mayer, Arno J. The Perisistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War.

McNeece, Lucy Stone. Art and Politics in Duras' "India Cycle". Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996.

Michaud, Guy. La Doctrine symboliste (documents). Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1947.

Monod, Silvain. Pastiches. Paris: Henri Lefebvre Editeur, 1963.

Montesquiou-Fezensac, Robert de. Les Chauves souris, Paris: G. Richard, 1893.

_____. Le Parcours du rêve au souvenir. Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1895.

_____. Les Hortensias bleus. Paris: Eugène.Fasquile, 1896.

_____. Roseaux pensants. Paris: Fasquelle, 1897.

_____. Les Pas effacés, 3 vols. Paris: Emile Paul, 1923.

Nattier-Natanson, Evelyn. Les Amitiés de la Revue Blanche et quelques autres. Vincennes: Les Editions du Donjon, 1959.

Nattiez, Jean-Jacques. Wagner Androgyne--A Study in Interpretation. Trans. Stewart Spencer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings. Ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, Trans. Ronald Speirs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Norris, Christopher. Deconstruction: Theory and Practice. New York and London: Methuen, 1982.

Pagès, Alain. 13 janvier 1898--J.Accuse. . .! Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1998.

Peyre, Henri. The Contemporary French Novel. New York: Oxford University Press, 1955.

_____. Ed. Baudelaire, A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Phelan, James Ed. Reading Narrative--Form, Ethics, Ideology. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989.

Plato. Symposium. Trans. Robin Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Rièse, Laure. Les Salons littéraires parisiens du Second Empire à nos jours. Toulouse: Privat Editeur, 1962.

Rosenberg, Pierre. Chardin, 1699-1779. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979.

Ruskin, John. The Art Criticism of John Ruskin. Ed. Robert L. Herbert. Garden City: Doubleday, 1964.

_____. Praeterita. Ed. Kenneth Clark. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

_____. The World, the Text and the Critic. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Said, Edward. Culture and Imperialism. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.

Sarraute, Nathalie. L'Ère de soupçon. Paris: Gallimard, 1956.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. Qu'est-ce que la littérature?. Paris: Gallimard, 1948.

_____. Literature and Existentialism (original title What is Literature?).Trans. Bernard Frechtman. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1994.

Sayre, Robert. Solitude in Society--A Sociological Study in French Literature. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Schapiro, Meyer. Impressionism--Reflections and Perceptions. New York: George Braziller, 1997.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. Philosophical Writings. Ed. Wolfgang Schirmacher. New York: Continuum, 1996.

Schom, Alan. Emile Zola--A Bourgeois Rebel. London: Macdonald Queens Anne Press, 1987.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. Tendencies. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

_____ Ed.. Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

Shattuck, Roger. The Banquet Years--The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France 1885 to World War I. Garden City: Anchor Books Doubleday: 1961.

Sizeranne, Robert de la. Ruskin et la religion de la beauté, 10th ed. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1920.

Stambolian, George, and Elaine Marks, eds. Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts, Critical Texts. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979.

Thomas, Francis-Noël. The Writer Writing-Philosophic Acts in Literature. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Tuchman, Barbara W. The Proud Tower-A Portrait of the World before the War 1890-1914. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966.

Vásquez, Adolfo Sánchez. Art and Society--Essays in Marxist Aesthetics. Trans. Maro Riofrancos. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973.

Williams, Raymond. Marxism and Literature. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

_____. Writing in Society. London: Verso, 1980s (date not given)

Wilson, Edmund. Axel's Castle-A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870 to 1930. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931.

I. Bibliographies, Anthologies, Reference Works

Abrams, M.H. A Glossary of Literary Terms, 6th ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1981.

Baudelaire, Charles. Petits poèmes en prose-Le Spleen de Paris. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1980.

_____. L'Art romantique. Ed. Lloyd James Austin. Paris: Garner-Flammarion, 1968.

_____. Les Fleurs du mal. Paris: Larousse, 1993.

Bottomore, Tom et al. Ed. A Dictionary of Marxist Thought. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Brunel, P. et al. Histoire de la littérature française XIX^e et XX^e siècle. Paris: Bordas, 1972.

Brunet, Etienne. Le Vocabulaire de Proust, vol. III.

Cahiers Marcel Proust nouvelle série, 3, Textes Retrouvés. Ed. Philip Kolb with a bibliography of Proust's published writings from 1892 to 1971. Paris: Gallimard, 1971, 379-408.

Clarac, Pierre and André Ferré eds. Album Proust-iconographie réunie et commentée. Paris: Gallimard, 1965.

Giorgi, G.. "Proust en Italie," BSAP, No. 17. 1967. 591-602.

Graham,Victor E. Bibliographie des études sur Marcel Proust et son œuvre. Genève: Librairie Droz, 1976.

Lagarde, André and Laurent Michard Eds. XIX Siècle-les grands auteurs français du programme-anthologie et histoire littéraire. Paris: Bordas, 1985.

Lemaître, Henri. Dictionnaire Bordas de Littérature Française. Paris: Bordas, 1994.

Mallarmé, Stéphane. Œuvres. ed. Y.-A. Favre. Paris: Bordas classiques Garnier, 1992.

Price, Larkin B. A Check List of the Proust Holdings at the University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign. Urbana: A Joint Publication of the University of Illinois Library and the Graduate School of Library Science,1975./

Taylor, Elizabeth Russel. Marcel Proust and His Contexts: A Critical Bibliography of English language Scholarship. New York: Garland, 1981.

Van Tieghem, Pierre ed. Dictionnaire des littératures. 3 vols. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris, 1968.

Various. Preface by Jean-Yves Tadié. Index général de la correspondance de Marcel Proust, d'après l'édition de Philip Kolb. Kyoto: Presses de l'Université de Kyoto, 1998.

Young, Ian Ed. The Male Homosexual in Literature: A Bibliography, 2nd ed. Metuchen and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1982.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

J. Periodicals

American Proust Association Newsletter
Le Banquet (1892-1893). Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1971.
Bulletin de la Société des Amis de Marcel Proust (BSAP)
Cahiers Marcel Proust
Comparative Literature Studies
L'Esprit Créateur
Europe
The French Review
Le Gaulois
La Gazette des Beaux Arts
Le Mensuel
Le Mercure de France
Modern Language Notes
Paragone
La Plume
PMLA
La Revue Blanche
La Revue des deux mondes
Revue des Sciences Humaines
Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France
La Revue Hebdomadaire
Tout Paris
Yale French Studies

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.