

PROUST SAID THAT

Issue No. 2

December 1994



In This Issue: Marcel Purroust, Coping With Neurosis, Fortuny Gowns, Bonny Doon Vineyard, French Postcards and The Nesselrode Pudding



Letters From Our Readers



Trembling Like A...

I was so pleased to read your magazine... However, as one of the member of the original Marcel Proust Support Group, I have one bone of contention to pick. I seem to remember the story about the "missing" last pages [see premiere issue, Ed.] a little differently, or perhaps just a bit more completely. You see, I had a more pronounced interest in completing that "Everest" of words. I never intended to start, but found myself swept up in the energy, and then the story (which I read a third of the way through by stealing the copies of those around me for an hour here and fifteen minutes there) until I was unquestionably hooked.

As we approached the end, it became obvious that a slight, ever so slight bit of competition was rearing its ugly head in *some* of us. (Here I would like to suggest that perhaps the editor missed these nuances, as she had consciously slowed down her reading for the sheer pleasure of not having the experience come to a close.) After one too many wistful tilts of the head, glimmer in the eye and passing comments, I let my inner child get control of my adult body just long enough to steal up the stairs to John's empty room, find his copy of *Remembrance*, and carefully tear out the final page.

Not one day later, as friends gathered boisterously in the kitchen, the formidable instigator of the MPSG came down the stairs and into the room with a look of repressed fury on his face. He didn't need to utter a word. His energy was so strong it had prodded him, and I knew he had found my little "joke". I knew I had made a large error of judgement, and try as I might to pass it off with a clearly defensive and foolish hint of arrogance, in five minutes I was on my way downstairs to retrieve the missing page from under my pillow.

It's true that as the rest of us approached our final moments with Proust, we also found our final pages gone. In good humor, my prank was imposed upon us all.

Sincerely

"Trembling Like a..."

The editor thanks Ms. Trembling for this clarification, and the reminder that her signature, "trembling like a...", is the last phrase you can read in the Vintage edition of Remembrance when your final page is missing.

A letter I'm proud of...

PST is a lovely creation! ... When I first saw the review of *PST*, my first thought was to get it for my
(Continued on page 4)

Proust Said That is the unofficial organ of the equally unofficial Marcel Proust Support Group of San Francisco. It is published twice annually, if perhaps irregularly. This publication is devoted to the subjects, attitudes and enthusiasms Proust espoused, as well as whatever else we decide to include. Subscriptions are \$6 for one year/two issues, which includes postage. Send CASH, letters, faxes, editorial submissions and other amusing things to P, *Proust Said That*, 1907 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94115, USA, (415)923-9722, fax (415)771-9251; our online address is vision@well.sf.ca.us..

This publication is written, edited and published by P (which does not, as some might believe, stand for Proust.) Thanks once again to Dean Gustafson for the delightful portrait of Marcel Purroust on the cover, our signature madeleines, and the postcards and photos from Paris. Thanks also to Mercedes Abraham for the winsome nesselrode illustrations, Ted Olsson and Natasha Pruitt for the Proust news from Athens, Jeffrey Gray and Cynsa Bonoris for bringing *Proust Said That* into the electronic age, Stuart Mangrum, Lance Alexander and Jeffrey Gray for their invaluable technical support, and all the kind persons who encouraged me to carry on with issue number two.



Marcel Purroust

Eight years ago, in the redwood-paneled Edwardian drawing room that is the home of The Marcel Proust Support Group, a cat named Kate gave birth to a litter of five. For several days Kate tolerated the stream of human traffic coming to play with the kittens, but one day when I was out she decided to move the brood to a more isolated nest in the attic. I came home just as she was dragging the third baby out through the kitchen and up the stairs, leaving two squalling siblings huddled together in their box. In forty-five minutes she was back for a fourth, leaving the runt of the litter, a scrawny, half-moustachioed piebald, quaking and squeaking, all by himself.



I sat down next to the box and gently stroked his back while I told him not to worry because Mama was coming back for him, and in the meanwhile I was going to baby-sit. He kept on shaking and vocalizing, but he also started to purr. He was suffering deeply from his infancy abandonment trauma, and needed to talk about it; I let him express himself, throwing in the occasional understanding "uh-huh" while he bonded irrevocably with my scent. I was present at both his birth and the birth of his neurosis.

When the kittens were old enough to venture out of the attic, the little piebald began to follow me around, particularly after his seventh week, when Kate had a serious accident and the kittens were prematurely weaned, occasioning additional neurosis. Clearly he was mine, and I named him Marc, after Marc Anthony, the man for whom Cleopatra died. (There is a personal reference here: Cleopatra, a Greek, after all, came from the land across the water from my ancestral

home; I once saw a photograph of a bust of her, sculpted in her lifetime by a Greek sculptor. She did not look like Elizabeth Taylor—she looked like me.)

Marc was five human years old when we began reading Proust, no longer scrawny, but still verbose and neurotic. He never grew very big, but what he lacks in size he made up for in intelligence. He understands English perfectly, and even speaks a bit, and he is an excellent judge of character.

Late one night, after a meeting of the Proust Support Group, I sat down at my desk to sift through the day's accumulation of loose objects. On the top was a photo of Marc that someone had left in the kitchen earlier that day. Right below it, and surrounding the snapshot, was a xeroxed portrait of Proust. I gasped.

It was 3AM, no one was up, and I had just discovered that Marc looks exactly like Marcel, had he made a serious faux pas while shaving.



So I laughed out loud all by myself, and put the evidence on the mantlepiece. The next day, I showed the two pictures to everyone in the house, who also gasped, and then laughed. From that day on, Marc became known as Marcel Purroust.

It was a joke at first, those superficial similarities in appearance, stature, verbosity and neurosis shared by Proust and our cat; but as the months went on, we began to notice other things. If, for example, any item of Proustiana should be laying about, Marcel the cat would be laying on top of it, even when an inviting pile of warm, clean, black laundry should be heaped up mere feet away. There is his taste in food to be

considered: a fastidious feline, Marc will eat nothing that has touched the floor. Indifferent to most comestibles, he is rabidly fond of chicken (gay slang for young boys) and crepes. And then there is the issue of the cat's vocabulary; science has identified something like 19 distinct cat words, but Marc has hundreds at his disposal, which he employs with a certain profligacy. Most amazing, perhaps, was the period of time when Dean Gustafson's gorgeous portrait of Proust (reproduced on the cover of our premiere issue) first arrived at our house. I had not expected to get it so soon, and the place of honor over the fireplace was still covered with endless impedimentia. So we propped the painting up on a convenient object where it could be admired, and in seconds the cat was on it, preening, posing beside the face of his namesake, and for weeks he would sit nowhere else at all.

The explanation for this behavior was perfectly clear to my housemate John, the person who instigated the Marcel Proust Support Group to begin with; among his other talents, he is a powerful psychic. According to John, the spirit of Proust found this nest of admirers and wanted to bask in the adulation; seeking a body through which to manifest, Proust found that the easiest one to enter was the cat. And so our cat channels Proust, and talks and talks and talks.



...You have written me a letter full of every sort of beauty, with an additional one that is more beautiful than all the others- the fact that you are unaware of the beauties you have put into these pages that are at once so exquisite and so simple...
-Letter to Louisa de Mornand, May 1905

Letters Continued....

mother- if I got it at all, as I have bad luck with fanzine editors, who like cash but not responsibility. I thought: anyone weird enough to publish a Proust fanzine will obviously not shirk their duties as a publisher... My mother is a passionate and serious reader. She has been attempting Proust for at least a decade with a lot of success. She will therefore love *PST*.

G.S.B., Morgantown, WV

Praise from G.S.B. is most delightful for two reasons: the first is that he is himself a superb writer, and the second is that he doesn't know me, and consequently there is no mere flattery involved. To G.S.B.'s mother, the publisher's heartfelt thanks for fostering a love of language and literature in your talented son, and don't forget that the Marcel Proust Support Group is here for you. Read on...

Shortly before press time, a second letter arrived from G.S.B., and I am equally proud of it: My mother just returned *PST*, saying she was delighted. So was I. I especially liked your writing, very elegant and droll... which means that you yourself must be elegant and droll-Italianate shriekings included-- since a good magazine is a mirror of its editor.

Point Well Taken

Wonderful job, beautiful cover, \$\$ enclosed... Those madeleine recipes— they do not appeal to me... But then, memory triggers to my childhood would not include them. Mine would be... the yowl of a Siamese cat, apricot and pineapple jam, the regular "thunk" of a foot operated punch press, oatmeal bread hot from the oven. So, I am eager to read about Marcel's madeleines, but do not think I will yearn to recreate his milieu, but rather more illuminate and examine mine own.

Jeanne B., Glen Ellen, CA

To Jeanne B. the editor/publisher responds with one of those big laughs of unspoken mutual accord. Also I refer you back to the quote in the first issue from Time Regained: "In reality every reader is, while he is reading, the reader of his own self. The writer's work is merely a kind of optical instrument which he offers to the reader to enable to discern what... he would perhaps never have perceived in himself."



The Handling of Neurotics

Surely it might be possible to find a single exception to Proust's maxim; but the fact remains that most of what we know as great *has* come to us from neurotics, minds of sufficient scope to envision huge vistas of possibility. In the sights of such minds, nestled in among the revolutionary visions of greatness, are the possibilities of the less than great: the failures, dilemmas, misunderstandings, the out-and-out terrors of which neurosis is made. To embrace genius almost necessarily invites the neurotic to one's bosom.

Genius is, of course, seductive to those who can appreciate it, if not wholly compelling. My great pal Miss X and I are two of those individuals who are irresistibly drawn to the bulging brain; as a result, we have had to take long, hard looks at the dynamics of the neurotic personality, invariably lodged in the crevices of *cervellus maximus*. Mine has always been the intuitive approach; being deeply neurotic myself, I've operated on the assumption that other people have the same buttons as I do. Miss X, however, with the zeal of a scientist, identified and categorized a procedure for dealing with these complex individuals, "Miss X's Rules for Dealing With the Neurotic Personality."

As much as we laughed at Miss X's Rules over late afternoon coffees, I took to incorporating the rules into my already sympathetic treatment of neurotic friends and paramours, with an equally scientific spirit. I conclude that she was correct; and so, to all of you who desire congress with the great, or potentially great, I pass along the rules for your own edification.

Miss X's Rules

1. Neurotics are most comfortable when given choices.
2. Neurotics respond to the subjunctive case.
3. Neurotics will often say the opposite of what they mean.
4. Neurotics are more comfortable if they know your limits.
5. Neurotics are prone to compulsion; once in a relationship, they're in.

Neurotics are more comfortable when given choices. Neurotics, with their panoply of anxieties, worry about a lot. Not the least of their anxieties is being trapped in a situation that is, for one reason or another, untenable. Such a personality can imagine something wrong with virtually any option.

The neurotic type responds most favorably if empowered to make choices. If you ask an arch-neurotic "Do you want to have dinner on Tuesday?" you will probably get a waffling response, the result of the

inner monologue asking all those questions ("Will I be too tired? Maybe I could see so-and-so that night? What if I don't feel like it at the time?" etcetera.) But ask the arch-neurotic "Do you want to have dinner on Tuesday, or possibly Friday, or maybe have lunch on Sunday?" and he or she

will feel comfortable with all the options to choose from; and, anxious to please you as well, the neurotic may well ask which day is best for you. Once again, making sure to leave an option, you can say "Dinner on Tuesday is best for me, but it's up to you." You are likely to have, as you wished to propose, dinner on Tuesday.

Neurotics respond to the subjunctive case. Most native English speakers don't even realize that our language has a subjunctive case, but it exists in the deep recesses of our collective grammatical memory. We use it in speech without knowing it for what it is, when we use verbs that indicate conditions and possibilities, when we inquire if something might be possible, could or would be done.

These words suggesting contingencies give neurotics the breathing space, the potential escape routes that they require to avoid feeling trapped. If you ask a neurotic if he or she can do something, it demands an unqualified yes or no in response; to ask if they *could* do it allows that something might interfere in their willingness to oblige. And, of course, fearing rejection, most neurotics are anxious to oblige—as long as it doesn't make them feel trapped.



Neurotics often say the opposite of what they mean. Fear of rejection, fear of being laughed at, fear of making a fool of one's self... almost anyone who is thinking at all has probably suffered from some variation of this hypersensitivity at some time in their lives. The neurotic wallows in these dreads more than most. And so the most dearly held dreams, the declarations of love, avowals of what might be held in contempt are guarded close to the soul. So avid is the neurotic compulsion to protect the soft inner core that expressions of feeling are likely to emerge camouflaged in contrariness. The neurotic who tells you playfully that he hates you is far more likely to adore you.

Neurotics are more comfortable when they know your limits. The neurotic's world is a morass of pitfalls. Seeing, as they can, the world of horrible possibilities resulting from an ill-conceived action, they are prone to worry about which course of action is least dangerous. As a consequence, it is helpful, restful and even reassuring to know what people like and don't like. You don't tell a neurotic to call you sometime; suggest the days and a range of hours that are agreeable to you, and you will probably get a call.

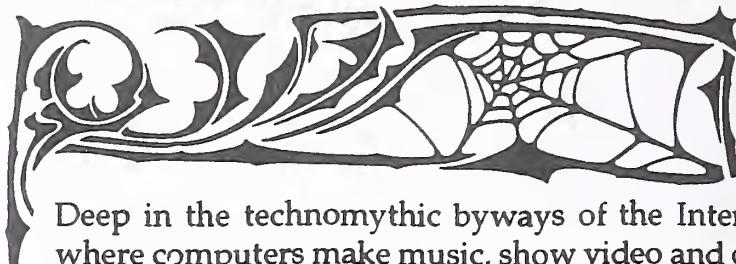
Neurotics are prone to compulsions; once in a relationship, they're in. Neurotics tend to be habitual creatures; their habits give them a structure, a sense that something—habit—is reliably there. If you can cross all the hurdles leading up to a relationship, the neurotic personality will be as compulsive in the relationship as in other habitual behaviors. The trick is not to make them feel trapped. Create the illusion that nothing is assumed, and faithfully observe rules one through four; all will be well, until such time as a neurotic reaction against stability rears its ugly head.

Even under the best of circumstances, neurotic reactions will occur. When they do, the best defense is no defense. Give a neurotic walking papers and they'll react against that, too; the harmony is at once restored, the force of habit triumphs.

If, on the other hand, you have had it with neurosis, and crave a less labyrinthine brand of interaction, neurotics are easy to turn away. Break rules one through four flagrantly. Demand specific appointments, allow for no conditions, possibilities or contingencies, and the genius who once captured your heart will surely flee in sheer panic.



PROUST ON THE WEB



Deep in the technomythic byways of the Internet, where computers make music, show video and offer visitors a cosmic onion of information, is something called The Web. *Proust Said That* now has a "page" there. If you know how to find it, you can get *Proust Said That*, in some slightly different format, on your computer terminal anywhere in the world. Our Web address is:

<http://www.well.com/www/cynsa/proust/>

I owe this extraordinary bit of exposure to Cynsa Bonoris and Jeffrey Gray, members of the Marcel Proust Support Group and experienced travelers in the big electronic world. It was their idea, and they have done the work of making it happen. I'm awed by the prospect of global electronic publishing, at its power to communicate with millions without finding a game publisher. People who know about this demi-monde tell me that being on the Web is the height of electronic chic, and one supposes that Marcel P. would have been quite enthusiastic in his appreciation. The airplane, automobile and telephone, which came into use in his lifetime, occasioned his heartfelt admiration and delight. Even Proust's powers of laudatory expression would be challenged by the experience of a Powerbook, much less one hooked up to the Net.

Readers around the planet, should you find this—and find it pleasing—please send us subscriptions, articles, letters, presents, and the Proust news from your corner of the globe.



"I have told you that without nervous disorder there can be no great artist. What is more," he added, raising a solemn forefinger, "there can be no great scientist either..."

-The Guerrmantes Way

The Fortuny Gown

by Dr. Edwina Pythagoras

Mariano Fortuny created some of the most remarkable fabrics and dresses of this century. His pleated silk gowns and velvet cloaks are regarded by collectors and museums around the world as the unique expression and embodiment of a craft at its best. However, he was not a *couturier* in the usual sense. A painter by training, he adapted the line of his dresses to the natural shape of a woman's body and sought to develop a type of garment that would not be subject to the whims of fashion. He was vigorously opposed to the restrictive and unnatural fashions of his time and remained aloof from the commercial world which produced them. However, although he is known today primarily as a dress and fabric designer, Fortuny was also a painter, etcher, sculptor, photographer, lighting engineer, set designer, theater director, inventor and architect.

Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo was born in Granada, the ancient Moorish capital of Spain, in 1871, of a family of Spanish artists. As he grew, he was surrounded by a profusion of treasures that his parents collected: rare pieces of Hispano-Moresque pottery, Persian carpets, Islamic metal-work and armory, along with a rich collection of traditional fabrics and textiles. Like everything associated with his father, who died when Mariano was three, this world held a special fascination for Fortuny: as a boy he had amused himself by dyeing pieces of material different colors. His own textiles were imbued with the same antique quality possessed by the fabrics, mellowed with age, that had

surrounded him as a child. The designs on the velvets, brocades, silks and chasubles in his parents' collection were imprinted upon his imagination many years before he started his own production.

After the elder Fortuny's death, his mother moved the family to Paris, where she organized a small salon for the friends and followers of her late husband, and

also encouraged Mariano to start painting. Along with painting, he learned etching at an early age. In 1889, his mother moved again, this time to Venice. The start of Fortuny's most creative period coincided with his move to the Palazzo Pesaro Orfei in 1899. It was a magnificent palace built in the thirteenth century and became an ideal work place, a building full of large, open spaces in which he could give full rein to his various talents. It eventually became the Palazzo Fortuny, the "house of the magician".



Physically, he was described as "about six feet tall, well-built and very distinguished-looking. His piercing blue eyes, neatly trimmed beard and beauti-

ful hands, and his manner of dress made a great impression on people meeting him for the first time. Ugo Ojetti, a journalist and critic who knew Fortuny well, gives us this description of him: "He is simple and sober as an anchorite. He always wears summer clothes, even when the bora is blowing, always of the same colour and made from the same material: an Inverness cape of black cloth, a lightweight suit of dark blue serge, a white silk cravat, a black slouch hat and low-heeled patent leather shoes or sandals of plaited red leather." His personal preference in dress was for the sixteenth century. He agreed with the

painter George Frederick Watts when he said, "The ugliness of most things connected with our ordinary habits is most remarkable." His penchant for dressing up in fancy dress and in disguises, at an early age, revealed a love and feeling for dress that was basic to Fortuny's later development: the designer of dresses and fabrics, both for the theater and for everyday use.

The elements which came to have the greatest influences on Fortuny were the art of the past and that of non-Western cultures where the concept of progress and change did not exist until the arrival of European colonists. His favorite periods were Classical Greece, the Renaissance and the great Venetian art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which still surrounded him. Of all non-Western cultures, the one he preferred was the Arabic, during the era of its greatest expansion when it extended from Morocco to India, passing through Persia and the Near East.

In the early 1900s, textiles and fashion played an important part in everyday life. The homes of the middle classes were crammed with fabrics; most were in the taste inherited from the preceding generation, but new styles and designs were beginning to emerge in tune with the new aesthetic and functional concepts promoted by reformers of the new applied arts.

One of Fortuny's main sources of inspiration was Richard Wagner. The legends that provided the basis for Wagner's musical dramas also furnished Fortuny with a vast range of images, which he developed in his paintings and engravings. Wagner and "Wagnerianism" were essential elements of the *fin-de-siecle*, and as a young man, Fortuny was introduced to Wagnerian music and mythology. His "Wagnerian experience" was a decisive milestone in his career,

introducing him to new aesthetic possibilities. He went on to do much work in the theater, specifically related to lighting and set design. This theater work lead him, during the course of research, to his first serious contact with the art of costume. He designed the costumes for several theatrical productions, but his first purely "fashion" garment was the Knossos scarf. The scarf was made of silk and was rectangular in shape, printed with geometric, asymmetrical patterns and motifs inspired by Cycladic art. The scarves could be used in a number of ways, allowing great freedom of expression and movement to the human body. It was from these simple scarves, which showed him how to fuse form and fabric, that Fortuny developed his entire production of dresses.

For their full effect, Knossos scarves needed to be worn as embellishments to a particular type of dress. This dress appeared around 1907 and was called the Delphos robe. It is undoubtably Fortuny's most famous creation and eventually became the hallmark of his work. The Delphos robe, which was made of pleated silk and very simply cut, hung loosely from the shoulders and was a revolution for the tightly corseted women of 1907. His dresses can be related to the reform movements of the period. The exponents of both Modernism and the Aesthetic Movements were aiming for the creation of a modern style freed from the restraints of convention. Dress, they felt, should be artistic, hygienic

and functional, and not subject to the whims of fashion which had created a kind of clothing that imprisoned the body like a rigid shell. Followers of the Aesthetic Movement looked back nostalgically to Classical Greek and medieval dress for their models. It is principally in the paintings of artists such as Albert Moore, Frederick Leighton, Edward Burne-Jones, Sir Alma-Tadema and William Godward that one sees the best evidence of the ideal Aesthetic dress. (As an aside, Isadora Duncan had shown the need to reform dress as well as dance and was known to have worn Fortuny dresses. I found myself wondering if



she had also worn the Knossos scarf and was this the infamous scarf which strangled her as it became tangled in the spokes of her car?)

The model originally described in Fortuny's patent was a Delphos with batwing sleeves, but numerous variations were subsequently produced, some with short sleeves, some with long, wide sleeves tied at the wrist, and others were sleeveless. As a rule, the dresses had wide, bateau necks and there was a belt printed with geometric and foliar decorations which could be used or not. All the dresses reached to the floor, and Fortuny himself preferred them to cover the feet. The border of the dress, sides and cuffs were usually finished with a series of small Venetian beads in different colors, which were both ornamental and functional, in that they weighed down the dress. It is still a mystery how the pleats in the Delphos were achieved and there remains much conjecture about the process involved in their creation. Today there are Delphos dresses over forty years old whose pleats are still as tight and crisp as when they were new.



Before being made up, the silks in the dresses were dyed every color imaginable. The soft, gentle shades favored by the Aesthetes predominated, but in Fortuny's hands they gained a special richness and brilliance. The silk was

dipped several times, each application enriching the color which, due to the transparency of the dye, possessed an ambiguous and living quality that made it change according to light and movement. He never used the same design or identical color combination in any two pieces of fabric. Proust spoke of a particular velvet as being 'of an intense blue which, as my gaze

extended over it, was changed into malleable gold, by those same transmutations which, before the advancing gondolas, change into flaming metal the azure of the Grand Canal.' (119)

All the dresses were produced in his studio. They were made by hand, individually, as were all the materials that went into them: the pleated and printed silk, the velvets, the cords that were used to gather them or unite the different parts, the linings which were of satin, silk, wool, the belts, the labels. Everything was made on the premises, including accessories—as the dresses had no pockets, their wearers needed bags, which Fortuny made from his own multi-colored velvet in very simple designs.

Parisian high society was aware of Fortuny's creations and longed to possess them. These influential women of the *beau monde*, whose lives Proust was to describe in such minute detail, made him aware of Fortuny. On at least sixteen occasions throughout *Remembrance of Things Past* there are references to Fortuny or to his dresses. In the volume entitled *The Captive*, Fortuny constitutes a whole, leitmotif and is the only character in the whole of Proust's long work who retains a real-life name and identity. The descriptions, comments and associations go far beyond the needs of literature, reflecting a very real knowledge of and fascination for his dresses.

Proust had an additional reason for being familiar with Fortuny's work and with the artist himself. In 1894 Proust was introduced to Reynaldo Hahn and they became best friends. Reynaldo's sister, Maria, married Fortuny's uncle, Raymundo de Madrazo, in 1899.

Of all the outdoor and indoor gowns that Mme de Guermantes wore, those which seemed most to respond to a specific intention, to be endowed with a special significance, were the garments made by Fortuny from old Venetian models. Is it their historical character, or is it rather that each one of them is unique, that gives them so special a significance that the pose of the woman who is wearing one while waiting for you or while she talks to you assumes an exceptional importance, as though the costume had been the fruit of a long deliberation and your conversation was somehow detached from everyday life like a scene in a novel?

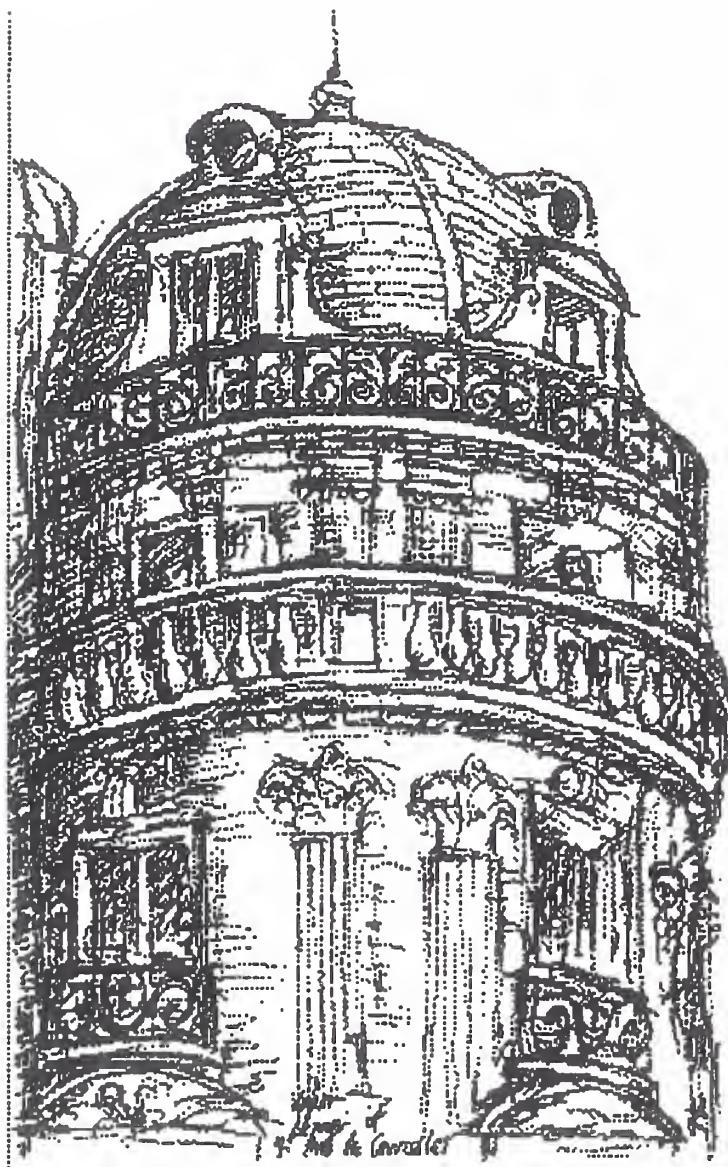
-The Captive



In 1916 Proust, forever obsessed with detail, wrote to Maria from the Boulevard Haussmann with a series of questions: "Do you know, at least, whether Fortuny has ever used as a decoration for his dressing gowns those pairs of birds, drinking in a vase, for example, which appear so frequently in St Mark's on Byzantine capitals? And do you know if

(Continued on page 13)

French Postcards



Paris, October 1994

Dean Gustafson, the extraordinary painter who created last issue's cover portrait of Proust, and this issue's portrait of Marcel Purrout (as well as our signature madeleines) is in Europe this fall. In Paris he made a pilgrimage to Proust's addresses, including his final place of rest in Pere Lachaise, and sent these cards and photographs.

Somehow it is fitting that these drawings should have been done in October, as all of Proust's changes of residence of any consequence occurred in this month. In October of 1900, he moved with his family to 45 rue de Courcelles, and in the same month six years later



to his most famous address, 102 Boulevard Haussman. Proust was evicted from Boulevard Haussman when his aunt and landlady sold the building to a bank. It is still a bank (with a commemorative plaque), under renovation while Dean was sketching.

The one address Dean didn't make it to was his last on rue Hamelin, to which Proust moved in October of 1919; although the rue Hamelin address was considered a temporary residence, until larger and finer quarters could be found, Proust never moved again. He died there in 1922. Perhaps when Dean returns to Paris in December he will complete the Proustour, and our charming collection of postcards.

And The Proust News from Athens

My friends Ted Olsson and Natasha Pruitt moved to Europe in October, where Natasha will be working as a model; once they settled in, they mailed me the following brief notice from the Athens English language newspaper:

"Tickets for the concert with the theme The Music World of Marcel Proust to be performed at Megaron, the Concert Hall of Athens (Vassilississ Sofias and 1 Kokkali) on October 22 are already on sale. Works by composers Debussy, Faure, Franck and Saint-Saens will be performed by Yiorgos Demertzis on violin and Domma Evnouchidou on piano. Seats are priced at 1,500 drachmas (for student concessions) 3,000 and 5,000 drachmas and are available at the Megaron box office and the Spiros Miliou arcade..."

The writer feeds his book, he strengthens the parts of it that are weak, but afterwards it is the book that grows, that designates its author's tomb and defends it against the world's clamor and for a while against oblivion.

-Time Regained



For in this world of ours where everything withers, everything perishes, there is a thing that decays, that crumbles into dust even more completely, leaving behind still fewer traces of itself, than Beauty: namely Grief.

-Time Regained

Proust of the Vine

It was one of those damp, blustery, chilling nights in January when all I wanted to do was go home and sit in front of the heater for a while when I first discovered Bonny Doon's delightful Grenache, *Clos de Gilroy*. It was the winter in which I was finishing *Remembrance of Things Past*, and coming to the end was far more painful than beginning, not unlike waiting for the death of a friend. Perusing the red wine selection of the neighborhood gourmet emporium in search of warmth, I spotted the label with an unmistakable cameo portrait.

Of course I bought the wine with Proust on the label, cheered to notice that my local purveyors had clipped a personal note of endorsement to the shelf. I would have bought it unendorsed, but as it was, I hurried home through the fog with great expectations.

We uncorked the bottle, but uncouthly did not wait for it to breathe before pouring. We raised our glasses and offered the standard toast, "Proust!", sampling without further preamble. The taste was at once rich and full, yet light and, well, fruity. How appropriate. How delicious.

This fall I went to Bonny Doon Vineyard, near Santa Cruz, about an hour and a half south of San Francisco. I had a dual mission: to acquire a quantity of *Clos de Gilroy* for the 72nd Annual Proust Wake in November, and to meet Randall Grahm, the vintner of Bonny Doon.

Bonny Doon may well be the most literate vineyard on earth; their newsletters feature parodies of famous literary works, rewritten around the theme of wine ("Shall I compare thee to a Chardonnay?") Breezy,

1993



Clos de Gilroy

CALIFORNIA
GRENACHE

CELLARED AND BOTTLED BY BONNY DOON VINEYARD
SANTA CRUZ, CA • 12.5% ALC. BY VOL.

good-humored erudition exudes from every line of these highly personal dispatches, as well as a lot of insight into the process of making wine and the people who do it.

While my friend Nancy and I waited in the tasting room for Randall Grahm we chatted with the charming people behind the bar about my Proust fixation. One of them confessed that they liked to cut out the Proust cameo on *Clos de Gilroy*'s label and paste it on their IDs when they go out.

When the vintner of Bonny Doon appeared, we were surprised to find a casually dressed young man with long hair accompanied by a big dog named Cesar. I suppose I'd been expecting someone resembling Orson Welles or Sebastian Cabot. We followed him to a building farther back from the road, noticing the large, graceful animal sculptures mounted on the sides of the vineyard's various facilities, and climbed the stairs to his office.

The office itself is spare, arty and lived in by man and dog. Cesar lounges with a proprietarial air. Unobtrusively tacked to the wall is Bonny Doon's James Beard Award for 1994.

FORTUNY CONTINUED

Our discussion began with my inquiring if he was a Proust nut. Our host confessed that he never managed to finish *Remembrance*, and that the label with Proust's portrait began as a take on a traditional French business card. When the preliminary artwork was completed, he explained, they felt it needed a portrait to complete it, someone quintessentially French, and Proust was a perfect choice. I, of course, concurred.

Clos de Gilroy, he told us, is not unlike a Beaujolais, a wine best drunk young and chilled, a summer wine, delightful in sorbet with blood orange. Subtle complexity, what you might be lead to expect by the label, comes from the interaction of many fruits [sic].

The words "Clos de __" on a label indicate that the grapes were grown in a walled-in vineyard, probably from historic vines. In the case of this Grenache, Graham tells us, it means that the grapes came from *close to Gilroy*.

At Bonny Doon one has the sense of being amidst people who love what they do, and have a great time doing it. Each wine has a story, a reference, and all the ones I tried were wonderful, including the desert wines, which in unsubtle hands could be cloying. It is a beautiful ride down the coast, and Bonny Doon is a delightful destination, equally charming to the palate, mind and senses.

Bonny Doon Vineyard, P.O. Box 8376, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, (408)425.3625, and fax (408)425.3856.

in Venice there are any paintings (I would like some titles) in which any mantles or dresses appear that Fortuny may have (or could have) gained inspiration from?" Maria having replied affirmatively, Proust could write with confidence that Albertine's dress, a gift from the narrator, "swarmed with Arabic ornaments, like the Venetian palaces hidden like sultanas behind a screen of pierced stone, like the bindings in the Ambrosian library, like the columns from which the Oriental birds that symbolized alternatively life and death were repeated in the mirror of the fabric".

As Guillermo De Osma writes in *Fortuny, The Life and Work of Mariano Fortuny* (this article could not have been written without the existence of this book), "Fortuny invented fashion outside fashion, fashion that does not change, fashion as art. It is hard to image a woman today wearing a Poiret, a Paquin or a Patou. Dresses by these well-known designers and fashion innovators are marked by the stigma of fashion: they were created with the notion that they would not be used the following season or the following year, when they would in any case have lost their magic. Fortuny's, by contrast, are timeless clothes. Their beauty lies in the elegant simplicity, the perfect cut, the quality of the material and the sensuality of the colors. All these elements, perfectly integrated, make a Fortuny garment a work of art."

...the alcohol that I had drunk, in stretching my nerves exceptionally, had given to the moment a quality, a charm, which did not have the effect of making me more competent or indeed more resolute to defend it; for in making me prefer it a thousand times to the rest of my life, my exultation isolated it therefrom; I was enclosed in the present... momentarily eclipsed, my past no longer projected before me the shadow of itself we call our future... by a contradiction which was only apparent, it was at the very moment in which I was experiencing an exceptional pleasure, in which I felt that my life might yet be happy... it was at this very moment that, delivered from the anxieties which it had hitherto inspired in me, I unhesitatingly abandoned it to the risk of an accident.

-Within a Budding Grove



The Superlative Nesselrode

The Nesselrode pudding, a frozen confection featuring the flavor of chestnut, was invented by a Monsieur Mouy, chef to Count Nesselrode, a Russian statesman who played a major role in the creation of the Holy Alliance. This mid-19th century dish achieved great popularity by the era of the Belle Epoque, and is one of the few dishes served at Proust's interminable dinner parties in *Remembrance* to merit an exclamation of approval from a guest.

The Nesselrode forms what seems to most contemporary diners as an unholy alliance of custard, chestnuts, glace cherries, candied orange peel, sultanas, currants, liquor and cream. Since five of the major ingredients figure prominently in the preparation of the world's most universally detested sweet, fruitcake, we had our reservations about the Nesselrode. Foods, like most things, have fads, and palates change over time. Things candied and glazed no longer evoke the same appreciative response they once did.

Putting reservations aside, I scoured my library of cookbooks for the recipe in question. I found not one,

but five recipes, each, of course, slightly different. Some called for fresh chestnuts, others for paste, and one for pureed marrons glace. All of them called for candied orange rind, one of those items you just can't buy. So even before I decided on a recipe, I devoted an evening to making a cupful of candied peel.

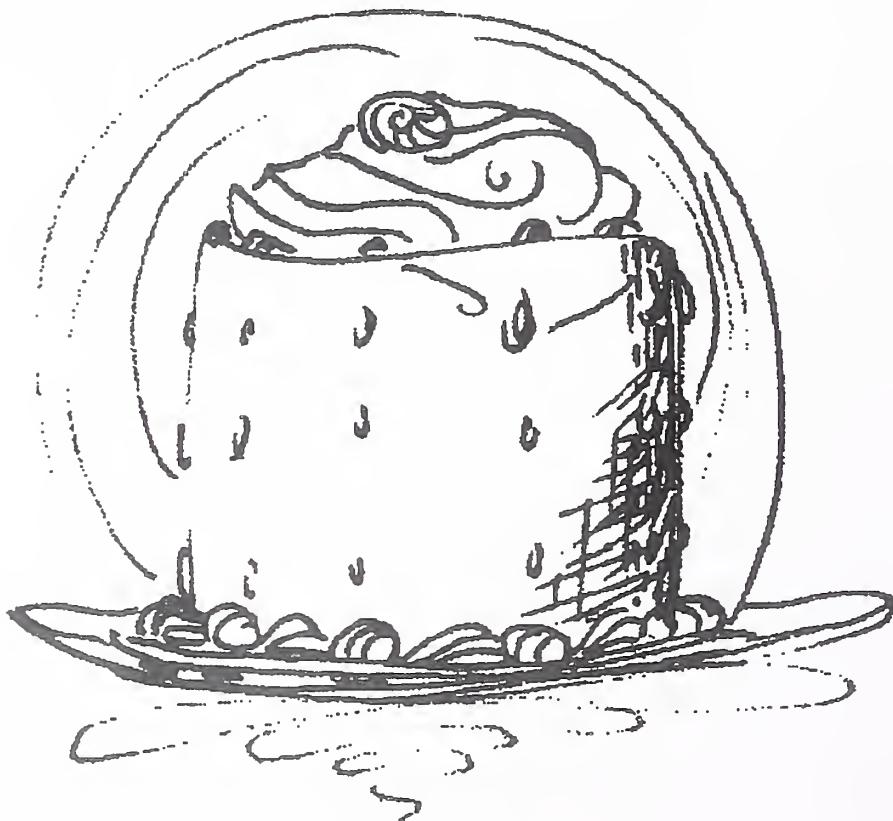
Candied Orange Peel

Remove the rind from two medium oranges in large sections. Grate the exterior surface of the rind slightly to activate the oils, then slice it into long thin strips (you should have about a cup.) Put it in a small heavy saucepan and cover with 3/4 cup cold water. Bring it slowly to a boil, then simmer for ten minutes. Drain the peel well, then repeat this process three to five times.

Make a syrup of 1/4 cup water and 1/2 cup sugar. Add the peel and boil over a low flame until the syrup is absorbed and the peel is transparent. Roll the blazing hot strips in powdered sugar and dry on racks. Don't leave the peel to cool in the pan; you'll never get it out.

With the peel question settled, I continued to compare the recipes at hand. All of them called for at least one, and often two, kinds of wine or liquor, either Maraschino, Malaga, Marsala or Madeira (anything sweetish beginning with M?) I decided to play slightly with the recipe in that gorgeous tome, *Dining With Proust* by Annel Borrel, Alain Senderens and Jean-Bernard Naudin, largely because the photograph was so impressive, but I substituted Marsala for Malaga because I had it, and made that once-in-a-decade investment in a bottle of Maraschino.

The Nesselrode was a two day event, not counting the evening of the orange peel. On the first day, the recipe is assembled and packed into a mold, then frozen for at least 24 hours. On the second day it is unmolded, garnished, and in the case of this Nesselrode, sketched. This was the process:



Nesselrode Pudding (Chestnut Pudding)

1/2 cup chestnut puree
1/4 cup crystallized cherries
1/2 cup candied orange peel
1/2 cup Marsala
1/2 cup each currants and sultanas
1 dessertspoon (big splash) Maraschino
2 cups whipping cream
Custard:
2 cups milk
5 eggs
3/4 cup sugar



Dice glaceed and candied things into bits and macerate them in the Marsala. Wash the currants and sultanas and soak them in warm water; when it's time to use them drain them well and dry them thoroughly in a clean dish towel, if you have any, or paper towels. In a heavy bottomed saucepan, heat the milk slowly until it boils. Separate the eggs. Reserve the whites for a chemistry experiment in the back of the refrigerator; place the yolks in a bowl and add the sugar, beating vigorously until the mixture is light and frothy, which takes some doing. By then the milk should be boiling. Pour it over the mixture in the bowl, then return the contents of the bowl to the saucepan. Stir religiously, scraping all the corners and cook over low heat until the custard thickens. Strain the custard through a sieve.

Mix the chestnut puree, the Maraschino and the custard together well, then add the candied things and the raisinoids. Whip the cream until it is very stiff, and fold it carefully into the mixture. Pour it into a charlotte mold (I used a 2-quart plastic tub) lined with waxed paper. Cover tightly with foil and freeze for 24 hours.

In this process I dirtied 18 pots, bowls, sieves, measuring devices and other implements, and took up an entire afternoon. The ingredients (including the decade's supply of Maraschino) cost about \$40.00; of course I have enough left to make several more Nesselrodes, oh joy.

The following evening a small crowd gathered around the kitchen table for the Nesselrode experience, foreshadowed by Candied Peel Night and the kitchen-wasting assembly procedure of the day before. I whipped up some creme chantilly for the garnish, scrubbed the rust out of the pastry tube's nozzle, and unmolded the beast. I crowned it with a big pouf of

cream and an obligatory glace cherry on top. At the base I alternated cream starbursts and cherry halves, and applied rows of sultanas down the sides, but I didn't obsess about the garnish too much because I feared it would melt before my resident food artist, Miss Mercedes, could capture it on paper.

Once drawn, the Nesselrode was quartered (well, sliced.) Much to my surprise, it wasn't too bad; the one person who actually liked the Maraschino even said it was delicious, and had two helpings, which he later regretted. The bland smoothness of the cream and chestnuts did something to diffuse the sweet sweet of the cherries and the tang of the peel; there was something of that fruitcake sensibility, but with plenty of creaminess to make it go down.

Perhaps there was something in the utter fussiness of the endeavor, in the painstaking application of garnish, in the unmolding itself, that generated so much enthusiasm among the audience. In the unmolding overture to the garnishing, I used the method recommended by one source, covering the inverted mold with hot towels. Six perfectly intelligent people watched with something like rapt attention from the hot towel application to the dissection, and spoke of the event as some kind of rite of passage. They spoke of time having a new demarcation, before and after Nesselrode. As initiates they were now Nesselrodees or Nesselrodsters, depending on who you asked.

On the whole, my conclusion is that the Nesselrode, for all the comment it aroused, was not worth the extreme number of hours required to prepare it. The indisputable proof of this assumption is that the last of the frozen pudding is still in our freezer; if it were really rhapsodically delicious it would have been eaten by now.



"What do I see? A Nesselrode pudding! As well! I declare I shall need a course at Carlsbad after such a Lucullan-feast as this."

-Within a Budding Grove

Proust Attends 72nd Annual Wake

On the chilly evening of November 19, guests arrived at the John Wickett Museum of Exotica to pay their respects at the 72nd Annual Marcel Proust Memorial Wake. They had not been warned about what to expect, except that early in the evening we would hold a seance in the hope of communicating with the long-dead, but not forgotten, M. Proust.

Passing the outer doors of the John Wickett Museum, they entered, awestruck by the spectacle before their eyes. In the large main room, subdivided by screens and ladders into nooks and aeries, not a square foot of unadorned space appeared, and the adornments, singularly and together, conveyed the exotic sensibility of times and places past, a riot of colors, creatures, doodads, geegaws, priceless collectibles, paintings, instruments, objects too obscure to identify, too numerous to take in. Eyes wide with wonder, dazed and delighted, the new arrivals gravitated, murmuring in hushed tones, with instinctive certainty towards the bar in the back.

Much of San Francisco's arty bohemian elite turned out in sartorial, if somber, splendor for the event. The Burning Man, Larry Harvey, sported that fitting accoutrement, rarely seen in these modern times, the black armband. Dr. Edwina Pythagoras, whose splendid piece on the designer Fortuny appears in this issue, arrived on the arm of Mr. Zymbot Danger Ranger Bubble of The Cacophony Society. MP Support Group member Varla Satana made a striking entrance with Sebastian Melmoth; my roommate John, who had flown in from Nepal that afternoon, limped in on the foot he had sprained while trekking, and our friend Dawn Stott, one of the original support group members, flew in from Austin for the occasion. When Miss Harley B and her husband, Werner Werve, made their elegant entrance, all four members of the original support group were present. In all, about seventy of the most charming people in the bay area were there, uncharacteristically subdued by the magical place they had entered. By the grace of the remarkable Gardenia Garlick, I was free to mingle among them, knowing that the details for the evening were in her capable hands.

Numerous and respectful (for the most part) toasts were offered to the honorable departed M.P., and after I had and was toasted sufficiently I circulated among the guests to solicit conspirators at the seance table, including among them Miss Lisa Archer and Pierre le Marquis de Gateau, cohorts in recent shocking adventures chronicled in the next issue of Stuart Mangrum's *Twisted Times*. We gathered around the table, joined hands and closed our eyes. A deep hush fell over the museum as I announced to the cosmos that we were trying to contact Marcel Proust, and if he could hear us, to give us a sign. For several minutes, nothing happened at all. Someone suggested that the lights should be dimmed; I called again for M. Proust to give us a sign.

Just when I despaired of a response, a hollow cough sounded high above our heads, and at last, he spoke. This is a verbatim transcript of our conversation:

MP: *Oui, madame. Je suis ici, complètement à votre service.*

Me: *Thank you, M. Proust. I know you speak English... do you mind?*

MP: *Not at all, Madame. My English is rusty, you'll forgive me, I hope... they speak French up here, of course.*

Me: *We have some questions we would like to ask you, M. Proust. The first is, what happens when we die?*

MP: *After death, Time withdraws from the body, and the memories, so indifferent, grown so pale, are effaced...*

Me: *But your mind remains fully functional nonetheless?*

MP: *It is the possession of a body that is the greatest danger to the mind.*

Me: *What is the great lesson of death?*

MP: *There is no humiliation so great that one should not accept it with unconcern, knowing that at the end of a few years our misdeeds will be no more than an invisible dust buried beneath the smiling and blooming peace of nature.*

Me: *Is there a paradise?*



MP: We dream much of paradise, or rather of a number of successive parades, but each of them is, long before we die, a paradise lost, in which we should feel ourselves lost, too.

Me: Is it difficult for you, being dead?

MP: A dead writer can at least be illustrious without any strain on himself.

Me: What is the value of dead authors for future generations?

MP: The cruel law of art is that people die and we ourselves die after exhausting every form of suffering, so that over our heads may grow the grass not of oblivion, but of eternal life, the vigorous and luxuriant growth of a true work of art, and so that gaily and without a thought for those who are sleeping below them, future generations may come to enjoy their *dejeuner sur l'herbe*.

Me: But surely you live on in the imaginations of your readers.

MP: No doubt my books, like my fleshly being, will in the end one day die. But death is a thing we must resign ourselves to. We accept the thought that in ten years we ourselves, and in a hundred years our books will have ceased to exist. Eternal duration is promised no more to men's works than to men.

Me: Do you have any advice for the living?

MP: When we are alive, we passionately long for there to be another life in which we shall be similar to what we are here below. But we do not pause to reflect that even without waiting for the afterlife, in mortal life, after a few years, we are unfaithful to what we once were, to what we wished to remain immortally. Even without supposing that death is to alter us more completely than the changes that occur in the course of our lives, if in that mortal life we should encounter the self that we have been, we should turn away from ourselves... Nothing is more natural than change... Mon dieu, what is happening?

Me: M. Proust, is something wrong?

MP: I don't know, I do not have the words... It's this conversation, your energy... Something strange is happening ...

Me: What is happening?

MP: All this energy is revitalizing me; I feel almost alive... In fact, I AM.

The houselights went out, and then on, as Marcel Proust himself appeared in the room, amidst tumultuous applause, bravos and a profusion of

You are invited to attend

The 72nd Annual Marcel Proust Memorial Wake

Saturday, November 19 at 8:30PM

at the

John Wickett Museum of Exotica
2671 Sutter Street (near Lyon)
San Francisco

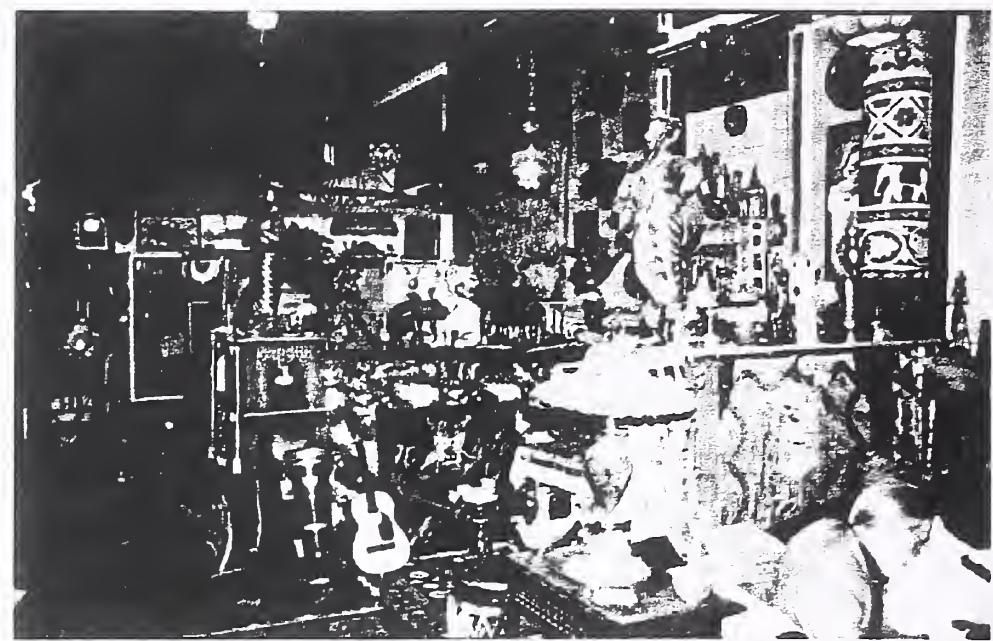
The evening will begin with a seance in which we will try to summon the spirit of the dear departed Marcel.

Black tie optional

RSVP (415)923-9722.

excited toasts. Mr. Proust's ordinary pallor was accentuated by 72 years of deadness, but he was otherwise perfectly elegant. He graciously accepted the accolades of the crowd as my co-mediums and I congratulated each other on our success, but quickly retired to the bar for the first drink he'd had for a long time.

Later in the evening I was able to offer M. Proust a glass of Armistead Farquahrson's latest absinthe, Jealous Muse No. 3, a small quantity of which was brewed particularly for this event, and a marron glace, which, at \$28.00 for a tin scarcely larger than a snuff can, is a highly overrated sweet.



Many months ago, Larry Harvey noticed that our friend Stuart Mangrum, the publisher of *Twisted Times* and my invaluable advisor for this publication, bears a tremendous resemblance to my beloved Marcel. He does not, fortunately for Stuart, look like the aging Proust confined to his cork-lined chamber, but rather like the young Proust, the rising society star painted by Jacques-Emile Blanche. With every bit as much grace as his look-alike, Stuart offered to impersonate my literary hero at the wake.

Just a few days before the 19th, I fabricated the seance, extracting quotes from *Remembrance* and phrasing the questions around them. Less than 72 hours before the event, I faxed the script to the would-be Marcel, who played his role with admirable sensitivity and panache, even more so in light of my utter procrastination, and the fact that he spent the first hour of the party trapped in a loft without libations.

In the days of recovery following the wake, dozens of calls came in from astonished guests, still reeling from the charm of the event, or from those who hadn't made it, but had heard about it until they were forced to berate themselves for missing it. My friends, with their interest in the unusual and their devoted pursuit of outrageous entertainment, are a hard lot to impress. Thanks to Stuart, for his fabulous characterization, to John Wickett, for graciously providing his stunning venue for the event, and to Gardenia, Nik, Lisa and Paul, the 72nd Annual Marcel Proust Memorial Wake was the social event of the season.



Photos: (left) the Proust altar at the wake, portrait by Dean Gustafson; (above) part of John Wickett's museum. Photos by Peter Field.



Proust died on November 18, 1922. This photo of the recently deceased M. Proust was taken by Man Ray.

Yet presently, when I left this party to go home, it only needed a chance collision between the taxi which I should take and another car for my body to be destroyed, thus forcing my mind, from which life would instantly ebb away, forever to abandon the new ideas which at this moment, not yet having had time to place them within the safety of a book, it anxiously embraced with the fragile protection of its own pulpy and quivering substance.

-Time Regained



Absurd.
Bizarre.
Obscure.
Provocative.
Twisted.



SAMPLE \$3 • SUBSCRIPTION \$10/4 ISSUES • POSTPAID • NO CHECKS
TWISTED TIMES • BOX 271222 • CONCORD • CA • 94527

