

# PROUST SAID THAT

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Issue No. 3

May 1995



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In This Issue: Untortured Love, Rough Draft, Proust's  
Paris and Venice, The Little Phrase, Raymond Chandler  
and Sole Food

*PROUST*

# Letters.... and E-mail



Two weeks ago, whilst in a Barnes & Noble (the library for profit) on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, I was overcome to look into Proust, being an English Lit Major who constantly dreads of never really having finished his degree.

I bought Swann's Way. My acquaintances called me crazy. My friends, who knew me, said, "be careful, it's like heroin, start slowly." I have since found your newsletter, and your most delightful "Support Group" page, which I've forwarded to numerous friends and acquaintances; many have bought their own copies. Wish me luck. I haven't the camaraderie of housemates, and my circle of support is extending from NYC to Chicago to Fayetteville, but I think we're on to something.

Thanks,  
Bob

*Thanks to you, Bob! I'd just like to mention, in regard to the heroin warning of your friends, that Proust was a fan of many drugs, but not heroin. Proust reading is culturally related to more salutary (and less destructive) drug experiences.*

I have to hand it to you: your insights on the handling of neurotics are stunning. I read the article and howled, then handed it directly to my office mate, who is in a long lasting (well, two years) relationship/running battle with a guy who fits your criteria \*exactly\*. It's uncanny; it's like you knew him. But this raises a question. What's wrong with those of us who put up with and cultivate these relationships? Does Marcel have any insights to offer? That's a rhetorical question; of course he does. It's just a matter how many and where they are. A follow-up article would be welcome! Thanks again for your outstanding analysis.

Nicholas

A friend passed along to me your article, "Handling of Neurotics", since I am currently in a relationship, of sorts, with a neurotic. This information was particularly enlightening and as I read it, I had this strange sense that you knew personally the man who is at present

PROUST SAID THAT is the highly unofficial organ of the totally unofficial Marcel Proust Support Group of San Francisco. Thanks to the amazing response of you, the readers, to this obscure publication, we are now aspiring to be something like a quarterly. Our original purpose remains unchanged, to devote these pages to the subjects, enthusiasms and insights that appear in Proust's work, and because we are so very unofficial, we might inject a piece or two with only the slimmest connection to Marcel P.

To receive issues by mail, please send \$3 per issue in CASH to me, P, at 1907 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, CA, 94115 USA. If you wish to subscribe for a series of issues, please send multiples of \$3 in CASH. Orders from outside the US must, I regret, include an extra \$2 per issue for postage.

You can find us on The World Wide Web at the following address:

<http://www.well.com/www/vision/proust>  
I now have an E-mail address, psegal@well.com; if you have questions of a technical nature, please address them to my electronic wizard friend Jeffrey, vision@well.com

Special thanks in this issue to Lance Alexander, whose lovely portrait of Marcel P graces this cover, and also to Dean Gustafson, whose recent travels in Europe have provided a number of drawings for this issue, as well as the sole illustration, and Jane Martin, whose trip to Paris provided more splendid photos, And thanks as always to John Casten, who made the Marcel Proust Support Group happen to begin with, and who has also written this issue's article about the The Little Phrase. Special thanks to Susan Radcliff, too, for her wonderful assistance in printing these issues. And thanks to Patrick Corcoran for assisting with the editing.

The appearance of Proust Said That on the Internet is the amazing effort of Jeffrey Gray and Cynsa Bonorris. I thank them also for introducing me to The Well.



Letters are continued on page 18.

Thanks so much for your letters; wish I could have printed them all!

# The Possibility of Untortured Love

I fell in love for the first time; I was convinced that it was this love, and this one only, that would determine the happiness or unhappiness of my entire life. Life itself seemed to be irrevocably paired with the presence of the beloved, and for a while, that was just fine. But the day came when I was forced, whether I liked it or not, into a reconsideration.

The beloved and utterly significant other was gone; miraculously, I continued to breathe. I continued to eat. But I moped, I was terrible company for a very long time, and nothing seemed to rouse me from this frame of mind. In time, though, the grieving process began annoying even me. My sense of humor returned, food tasted good, my capacity for enjoyment resurfaced. Then one day, a new face piqued my interest, a liaison ensued, and once again a beloved became the focal point of my total and eternal well-being.

For a long time, all went well; I was happy in this next relationship for a long time; then it went kaplooey. All of a sudden, I was once again in deep despair, moving in an aura of pathos from one sad destination to the next, being deplorable company and not caring who thought so. The seasons rolled by, and eventually one day I became too interested in something else to remember to be depressed. Enthusiasm is such a healing; with it comes amusement, laughter, challenge and pleasure.

I was well into adulthood before I got the wake-up call from my sense of humor. I was about to hit the downslope of the love cycle again, almost ready to pull out the Edith Piaf records and choose an exit between pills or razors, when the little voice said, "Hey! You thought you couldn't live without Tom, but you did. Then you thought you couldn't live without Dick, but you did. So when you see Harry coming, know from day one that you can live without him, too."

From that day on, I couldn't look at a charming man

without thinking, yeah, I can live without you, too. The thought inevitably makes me smile, and rather broadly, a facial expression which I'm told is attractive. If I meet someone, or if I love someone, the knowledge is there, imprinted in my consciousness, that my feelings for that person

*I no longer loved Gilberte. She was for me like a dead person for whom one has long mourned, and then forgetful has come, and if she were to be recited would no longer fit into a life which has ceased to be fashioned for her. I no longer had any desire to see her, not even that desire to show her that I did not wish to see her which, every day when I was in love with her, I vowed to myself that I would flaunt before her when I loved her no longer.*

*-Cities of the Plain*

have no driving need, no sense of desperation about them. My certainty that my happiness does not depend on the presence of another makes it possible for love to contain only what is fine and grand; if that pleasure must end, well so it must, but I know for a fact that I can live without him, too.

The irony of the philosophy, I can live without him, too, is that, if anything, it gives to its possessor an elusive quality that acts in one's favor. Proust said that "a man only loves what he cannot wholly possess," which is the woman who has a life without him. The loss of Albertine creates a long stretch of unhappiness, until he arrives at the understanding that "...I really ought to have discovered sooner that one day I should no longer be in love with Albertine." He could live without her, too.

It is not impossible to believe that a love can grow between two people, and perhaps live forever, should their development and interests follow similar paths. If neither person ever departs, a lifetime of happiness might be possible; but if one person leaves, the potential for other loves remains.

Fearing the end of a current love surely is a sad use of time. Happiness is possible with love, without love, or with a different love. This is a secret that came to me with age, and Proust said that in a few thousand pages.



# Proust's Last House

During Dean Gustafson's visit to Paris last winter, he visited several of Proust's residences, and sent the drawings that appeared in our second issue. The one he never found, however, was Proust's last house on the rue Hamelin.

When the gracious Jane Martin went to Paris last month, she offered to take photos for me. This apartment was too small for Marcel, and he had not expected to stay there very long; unfortunately, he was to die here only a few years later in his residence on the sixth floor.



Proust's last house is now the Union Hotel. On the second floor above the main entrance is a plaque bearing the following inscription: "Marcel Proust moved here in October 1919. He died here on 18 November 1922."



As a rule it is with our being reduced to a minimum that we live; most of our faculties lie dormant because they can rely upon Habit, which knows what there is to be done and has no need of their services.

-Within A Budding Grove

# Proust and Chandler



## THE BIG SLEEP



Above: Raymond Chandler

Left: Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall in  
*The Big Sleep*

My old friend Rich di Giulio interrupted a viewing of *The Big Sleep* one evening to leave a long-forgotten bit of dialogue on my answering machine. It had been at least a dozen years since I'd reread all the novels of Raymond Chandler, but they have remained on the shelf because I knew that one of these days I would certainly want to read them again. So *The Big Sleep* was right there where I'd left it, and in it was Phillip Marlowe's introduction to Marcel Proust in 1939.

*She wore brownish speckled tweeds, a mannish shirt and tie, handcarved walking shoes. Her stockings were just as sheer as the day before, but she wasn't showing as much of her legs. Her black hair was glossy under a brown Robin Hood hat that might have cost as much as fifty dollars and looked as if you could have made it with one hand out of a desk blotter.*

*"Well, you do get up," she said, wrinkling her*

*nose at the faded red settee, the two odd semi-easy chairs, the net curtains that needed laundering and the boy's size library table with the venerable magazines on it to give the place a professional touch. "I was beginning to think perhaps you worked in bed, like Marcel Proust."*

*"Who's he?" I put a cigarette in my mouth and stared at her. She looked a little pale and strained, but she looked like a girl who could function under a strain.*

*"A French writer, a connoisseur in degenerates. You wouldn't know him."*

*"Tut, tut," I said. "Come into my boudoir."*

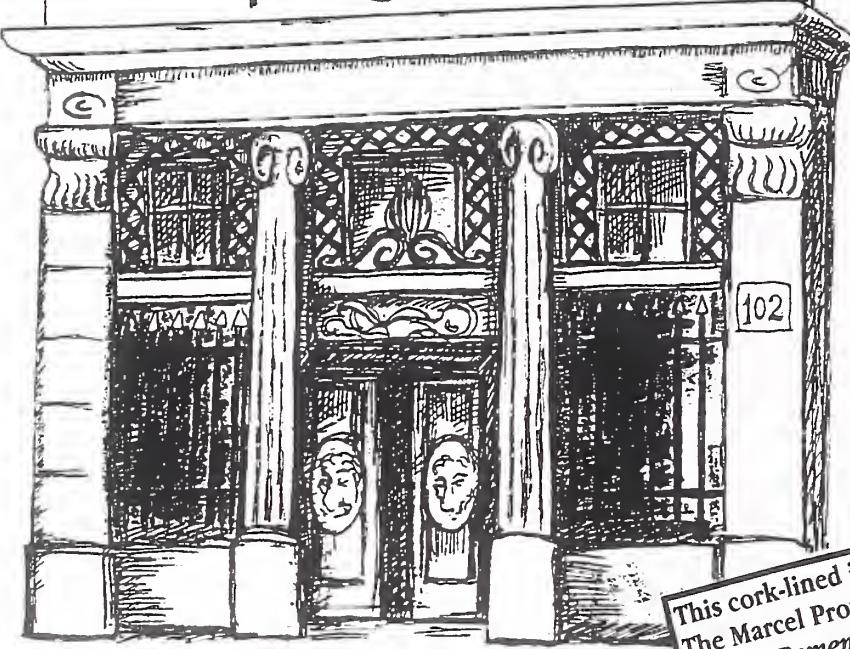


# ROUGH DRAFT

#102  
MARCH 1995

The Official Organ  
of The San Francisco  
Cacophony Society

(415) 665-0351

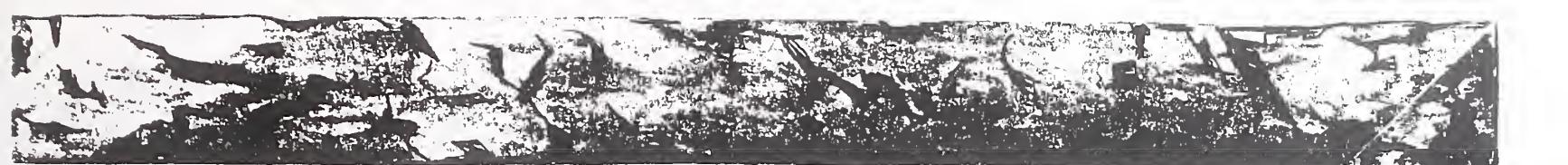


This cork-lined issue, #102, has been commandeered by The Marcel Proust Support Group because Proust began writing *Remembrance of Things Past* at 102 Boulevard Haussman, Paris.

It has been almost six years since the Cacophony Society of San Francisco found me. I would say, more modestly, that I found them, but it was here at Marcel Proust Support Group Headquarters that I first came to know the stellar members of Cacophony.

One of my old housemates had brought copies of the Society's newsletter, *Rough Draft*, into the house years before the

Cacophonists came themselves. We chortled over the weirdness of it all, affixed the newsletter to the refrigerator door, and promptly became so reinvolved in our own concerns that the newsletter was out of date before we noticed it again, under the fresh layers of important info posted in the one spot of communal attention. But one day our housemate Kevin came home from art school with tales of extraordinary new friends, Cacophonists, some of whom were artists, insisting that I must meet them.



My very first introduction to one of the Society's most charismatic movers and shakers, Sebastian Melmoth, was at the former dwelling of our housemate Lance, whose elegant watercolor portrait of MP adorns this month's cover. The occasion was Lance's annual social event, the March Hare Ball, to which guests were invited to bring "something to gag on." I had surveyed the buffet, platters of raw meat chunks, black jello, and the *pièce de la résistance*, the roadkill in aspic, among other offerings, and chose to wander to the back of the flat in search of other pleasures; it was then that I saw S. Melmoth crawling in through the third story window. I looked out to see if there were other colorful folks on the fire escape, but found, to my surprise, that there was no fire escape, or any other visible means of ascent from the ground floor.

Soon thereafter, Cacophonists gravitated to our house, and I was talked into attending my first event, a late night walking tour of the Oakland storm drains, for which the dress code was formal wear and hip waders. My night vision is not what it might be, and soon I was trailing at the tail end of the party, clinging to my friend Cyndy (whose obituary appeared in my premiere issue) while she somehow managed to videotape the tour in spite of me. At one juncture, our former housemate Miss Dawn was at the head of the party with Kevin and Sebastian, the hosts for the event, when they found a stretch of deep water; "if it's up to here on me," the tall Miss Dawn told Sebastian, "it will be over P's head." The dashing Mr. Melmoth raced back through the line to find me and carry me over the rough spots. It was the first of many occasions on which he rescued me at a Cacophony event.

As the years passed, I began avoiding events that I knew in advance would require a Sebastian Melmoth rescue. Fortunately, the adventures of Cacophony aren't necessarily dangerous; few involve physical peril. There was plenty for me to do, especially after the inception in 1991 of The Marcel Proust Support Group, which I believe holds the Cacophony record as the longest-running event.

In the years following the beginning of the Marcel Proust Support Group, I was able to meet dozens of the Society's members, and many of them became well-loved friends. Most of the people who frequented Cacophony were colored with ingenious prospects of amusement, with spectacular notions of entertainment, and the times I spent with them were seldom if ever without laughter. A fair number of them read Proust with me, or became interested in matters relating to the era; Joe Fenton and Edwina Pythagoras, one of Cacophony's original members and constant activists, have produced articles for our first two issues.

There was a time, of course, when numerous members of Cacophony were concerned about the massive Proustian sensibility that was taking over the society. To counteract this effusive sensation among some of us, and of course in sheer amusement, others launched an opposite crew: The Charles Bukowski Support Group.

I must admit to being a Bukowski fan myself, ever since an occasion in Los Angeles after my college years; my old friend, the LA poet Michael C. Ford, wanted to arrange a fund-raising reading for Kenneth Patchen, who was very ill at the time, and since my one skill in life has always been finding a great place to live, Michael asked if we might hold the reading at my huge Santa Monica dwelling. Of course I said yes.

Twenty wonderful poets came to read at this event, and Charles Bukowski was one of them. He drank 2 six-packs





of cheap beer, then rose to the podium to read without a trip to the bathroom. "This podium is a prop," he began, "in case I need to fall down."

After Bukowski's visit to my house, and a memorable reading, I began to read his books. Like Proust, he writes about what people are *really* like, and he certainly makes us laugh.

I helped Sebastian Melmoth begin the Bukowski Support Group by making a search of the bars in the Tenderloin district for a perfect place to meet. In one perfectly seedy establishment, the Ha-Ra, as we downed a few martinis we found ourselves talking to an older gentleman who told us that he'd owned a bookstore in New York, after we told him about our plans to launch the support group. He pointed at the bartender who had made our drinks: "See that guy there?" he asked us. "He's extremely literate; he reads 20 books a week." We knew we'd found the perfect spot.

Soon thereafter, the Bukowski Support Group made the edition of *Rough Draft*, and the first meeting created a stir at the Ha-Ra, where we read aloud, drank a whole lot, and toasted Hank. In a later *Rough Draft*, the Bukowski Day at the Races was announced.

Soon after the birth of the Bukowski Support Group, I began thinking about editing *Rough Draft*. When I finally began, I made a point of adding to each issue at least one quote from Proust.

Editing *Rough Draft* made it clear to me that it was possible to edit a publication, and the presence of Proust in a regular publication brought about the plan to do *Proust Said That*. After I had done about five issues of *Rough Draft*, Cacophony started thinking about having a different editor for each issue (no doubt to avoid the presence of other editors' manias.) Maxwell Maud set about lining up monthly candidates; I longed to do *Proust Said That*. After I completed the seventh issue, another editor was found, and I was free to start this publication of my own.

Last fall, however, we began to think about the fact that *Rough Draft* #100 was soon coming up, and several of us wanted the honor of editing it. For me, however, it was impossible, because I would be out of town during the week that it would be created. It did occur to me, however, that Issue #102 would be needed not long after, and for a Proust nut, #102 holds a special significance: it was at 102 Boulevard Haussman, Paris, that Proust began writing the fabulous *Remembrance of Things Past*.

I was already in possession of a drawing of Proust's most famous address, created by Dean Gustafson, Cacophonist par excellence, the splendid artist who has done so much to illustrate both this zine and the *Rough Drafts* I had edited. I told him I'd use his sketch of Proust's place for this issue, but he wanted to do yet another drawing in which the house number was visible. And, he said, the issue should be cork-lined, to represent the cork-lined interior of Proust's room. As luck would have it, it was a big month for events; only one corner remained in which I might inject a quote from the great Marcel.

Now that I've produced the official Proust issue of *Rough Draft*, I will let many months go by before I feel compelled to do another; I'll use the time to get on with *Proust Said That* instead.



## Subscribe!

Of course I will be delighted if you subscribe to *Proust Said That*, but here are a few other publications that I heartily recommend:

### *Rough Draft*

P.O. Box 426392

San Francisco, CA 94142-6392

*Rough Draft* will arrive monthly, advising you of a remarkable assortment of activities created by members of The San Francisco Cacophony Society. You never know entirely what to expect, but as you get to know these folks you will be certain to expect a lot. \$12.00 for one year, \$20.00 for two years.

### *Twisted Times*

P.O. Box 271222

Concord, CA 94527-1222

Stuart Mangrum's grand publication covers much of the most bizarre and interesting elements of contemporary culture. Recent issues have covered some of the most maniacal recent hijinx of The Cacophony Society, the fabulous Burning Man, my silly Halloween in jail, Survival Research Laboratories, and plenty else. Send him cash: for domestic orders, \$10.00 for four issues, for international orders, \$20.00 for four issues... or \$3.00 for a single issue.

### *Fat!So?*

P.O. Box 423464

San Francisco, CA 94142

*Fat!So?*, a zine "for people who don't apologize for their size", is the clever product of my friend and neighbor Marilyn Wann. Since I am Sicilian, I have grown up in a culture that regards being quite thin as a sad, but potentially solvable, situation. American popular culture works hard at convincing us that skinny is the way to go; Marilyn and her contributors

say poo-poo in a most delightful fashion. \$12.00 for four issues.

### *Hysteria*

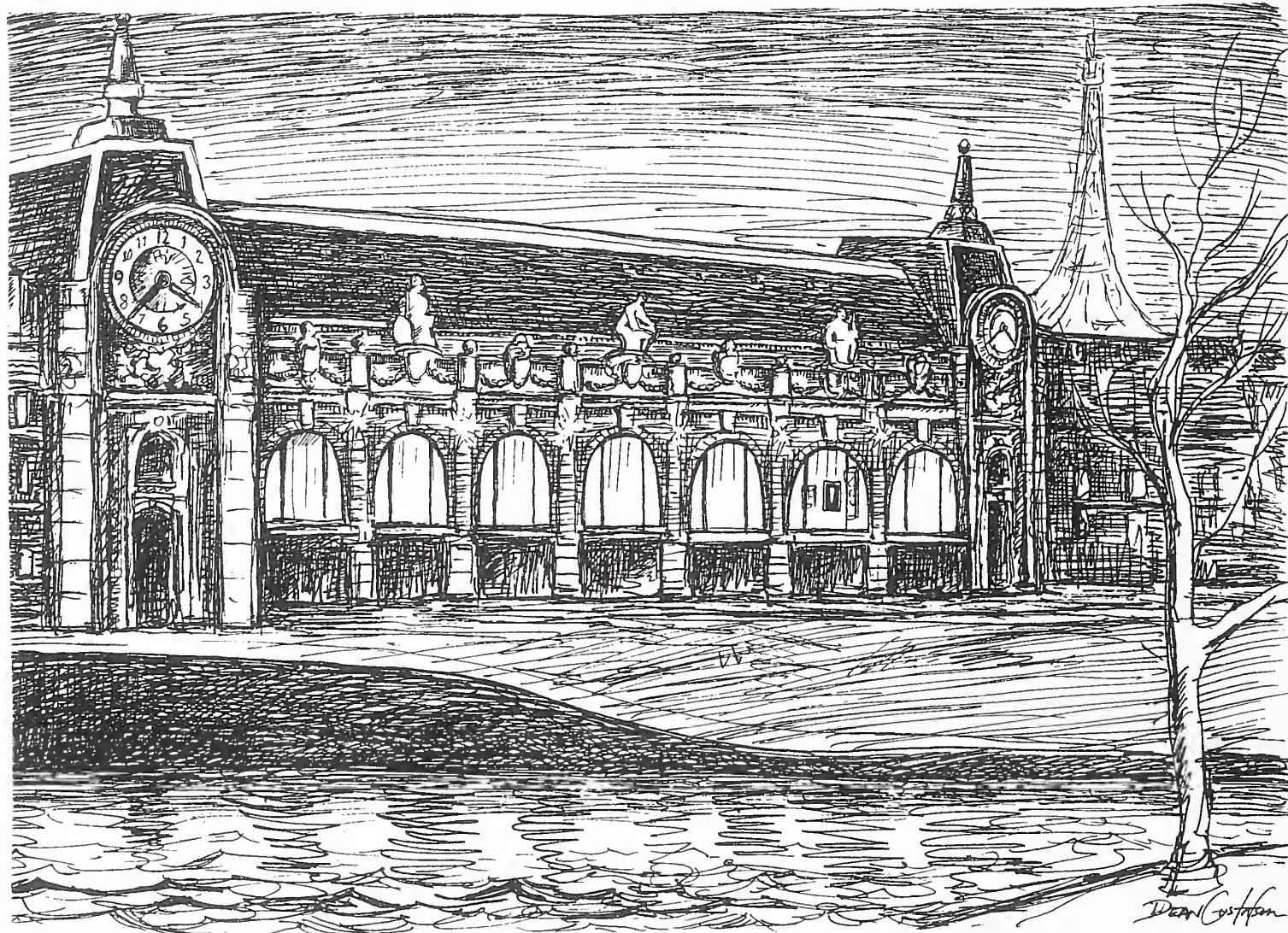
Box 8581 Brewster Station

Bridgeport, CT 06605

*Hysteria*, a quarterly magazine of women's humor, is the creation of Deborah Werksman, who formerly published the amusing *Quayle Quarterly*. Not only is this funny, but she's also recently published a piece of mine. One year subscriptions, four issues, are \$18.00, one issue is \$4.95. Outside the US, add \$8.00 for a year, or \$2.00 for a single issue.



# Proust In Paris drawings by Dean Gustafson



## Paris

I walked the streets, museums and cemeteries in search of Proust. My first day on this fine pilgrimage I found the Cemetary Pere Lachaise, where Marcel's remains lay beneath a large marble block, where I lit a single white candle and laid out two madeleines in his honor, purchased at the market nearby. I had a candle I received in Dresden, originally meant for Caspar David Friedrich, however, Proust got it instead.

Along with finding Proust's burial ground, I went to 102 Boulevard Hausmann, now a bank under reconstruction, complete with a commemorative plaque to MP, and also 45 Rue de Courcelles, another residence studied up on; this one had no plaque.

In the course of the days there, much was spent in the

glorious Musée d'Orsay, once the Gare d'Orsay, now one of the best museums in the world, if not the best museum of French art in the world. On the 2nd floor, in the sections of decorative, high societal arts, is where there is a portrait of Proust in his younger days by Jacques Emile Blanche. Next to him is a tall full length portrait of a coquettish high society woman in fancy dress (like Odette, perhaps.) I noticed the view out the window Proust's portrait had of the Seine and the SW corner of the Louvre, thinking what a place of honor to have one's portrait with a view like this, as if the writer still had eyes to see with, embodied in paint. So I did a quick sketch of Proust's view of Paris from his portrait.

Later in the evening I was in the Louvre. At the end of the hallway of Spanish painters, I wandered over to

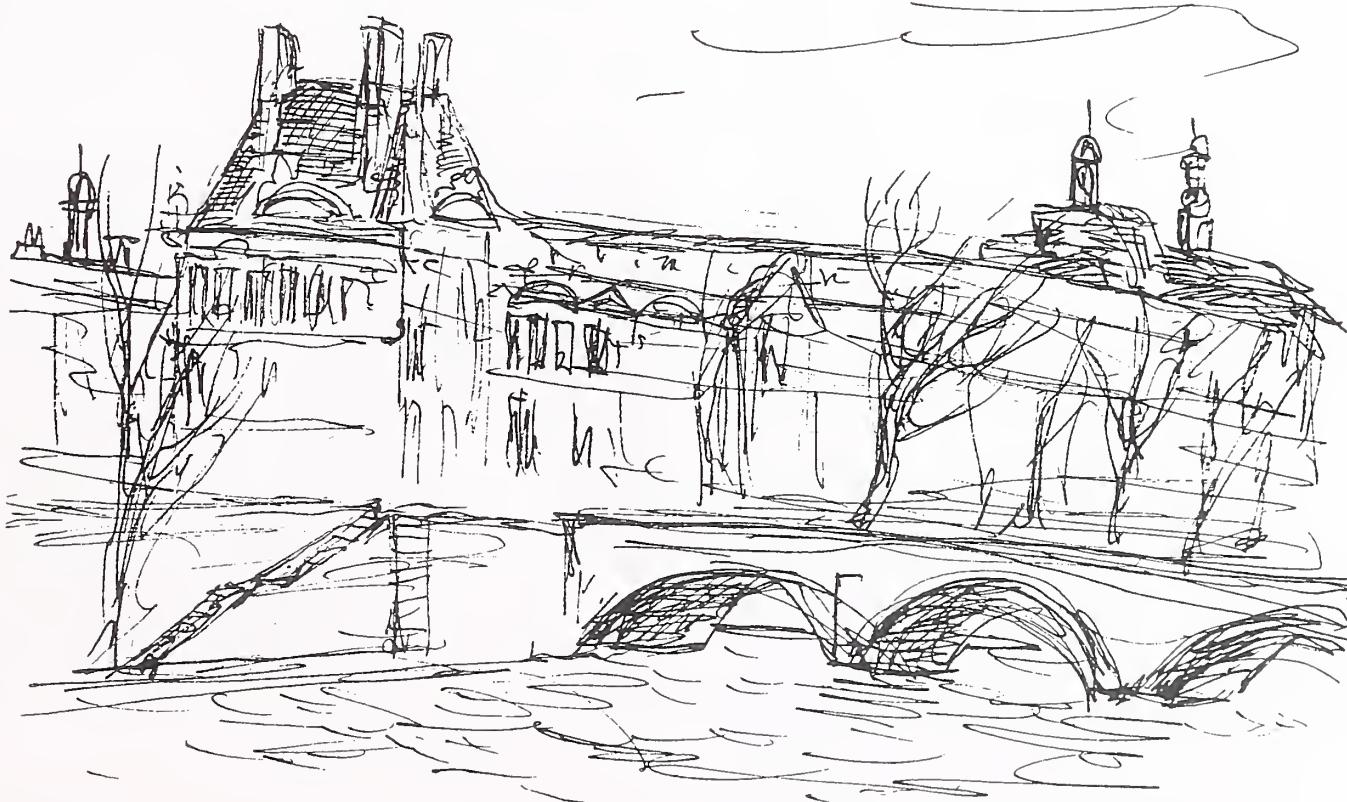
the window, to catch a glimpse of the Seine at night, shimmering with city lights. After standing at the view for a few minutes, I realized I was staring at the Musée d'Orsay, the building I had been in earlier. A small black rectangle, seen through a window with a solid shape of pointed white contour was clear— at this distance I was looking a Proust's portrait by Jacques Emile Blanche! Positive of this, I sketched this phenomenon, and returned to the Louvre collection refreshed by this curious circumstance of viewing Proust from such a distance and angle!

- Dean Gustafson



The very Seine was all aglow with marvelous life, and the boats cleaving it's surface opened up great veins of purple, and in a dazzle of radiance set hovering in the air a precious dust which, for they could not catch it as it drifted, settled down into drifts of gold.

-Jean Santeuil



Proust View

12.14

# The Little Phrase...

by John Casten

*"If Mme. Verdurin is going to start fingering her bronzes," said the painter, "we shan't get any music tonight."*

*"Be quiet, you wretch! And yet we poor women, "she went on, turning towards Swann, "are forbidden pleasures far less voluptuous than this. There is no flesh in the world to compare with it. None. When M. Verdurin did me the honour of being madly jealous . . . Come, you might at least be polite—don't say that you've never been jealous!"*

*"But, my dear, I've said absolutely nothing. Look here, Doctor, I call you as a witness. Did I utter a word?"*

*"Swann had begun, out of politeness, to finger the bronzes, and did not like to stop.*

*"Come along; you can caress them later. Now it's you who are going to be caressed, caressed aurally. You'll like that, I think. Here's a young gentleman who will take charge of that."*

*'After the pianist had played, Swann was even more affable towards him than towards any of the other guests, for the following reason:*

*'The year before, at an evening party, he had heard a piece of music played on the piano and violin. At first he had appreciated only the material quality of the sounds which those instruments secreted. And it had been a source of keen pleasure when, below the delicate line of the violin-part, slender but robust, compact and commanding, he had suddenly become aware of the mass of the piano-part beginning to emerge in a sort of liquid rippling of sound, multifrom but indivisible, smooth yet restless, like the deep blue tumult of the sea, silvered and charmed into a minor key by the moonlight. But then at a certain moment, without being able to distinguish any clear outline, or to give a name to what was pleasing him, suddenly enraptured, he had tried to grasp the phrase or harmony—he did not know which—that had just been played and that had opened and expanded his soul, as the fragrance of certain roses, wafted upon the moist air of evening, has the power of dilating one's nostrils.' . . .*

Then, I'm sure you can believe it, it takes Proust four more pages to cut to the chase:

*'But that night, at Mme Verdurin's, scarcely had the young pianist begun to play than suddenly, after a high note sustained through two whole bars (bars of music, ed.), Swann sensed its approach, stealing forth from beneath that long-drawn sonority,'* and blah blah blah.

When Volker Schlondorf decided to make 'Swann in Love', he needed to come up with some representation of 'the little phrase'. The solution that M. Schlondorf (or the producers) arrived at was to hire a notorious modernist, Hans Werner Henze, and convince him to write in his romantic vein; and to hire Andre Gertler, a very good violinist, to interpret on screen. They succeeded in presenting a dreamlike and fevered realization, very much in keeping with the whole atmosphere of the film. If you have not seen 'Swann in Love', and your are reading this, then you may leave the room.

Proust tells us that the little phrase is found in the andante of Vinteuil's sonata for piano and violin. A great deal of conjecture has been made ever since publication, what piece this 'Vinteuil Sonata' might actually be, as if Proust were trying to be quite literal. And as we all know (the rest of you have left the room by now, I hope), Proust's characters were pastiches, pasted together, a whole universe of Frankenstein monsters, gnashing their teeth, ripping bloody chunks



Faure... Not mentioned in this article, but another composer considered a possible Proustian model.  
-Ed.



Debussy

of flesh from each other, but gifted with remarkable gab.

What were the pieces that contributed to Proust's idealized musical experience? The Cesar Franck violin sonata is a strong contender (if you can find it, the Wanda Wilkomirska, Antonio Barbosa recording on Connoisseur Society is the one to hear). The Debussy Sonata for flute, viola and harp is my personal favorite, in spite of the fact that Proust could not have heard it. This is a piece of music that gets many many obsession points (Boston Symphony chamber players on DGG). Some suggest Saint-Saens violin sonata #3. Saint-Saens wrote a few cool things, but I'm sorry, the violin sonatas are not. Nobody plays them, except maybe some lunatic with too much time on his hands, or someone who wants to take the world by storm, and introduce a little-heard masterpiece... Phooey.

Proust was very sly. This business of trying to figure out what piece the little phrase refers to is obsessional. This little phrase, as we are told becomes 'the national anthem' of Swann's obsession with Odette.

*... He would rap on the pane, and she would hear the signal, and answer, before going to meet him at the front door. He would find, lying open on the piano, some of her favourite music, the Valses des Roses, the Pauvre Fou of Tagliafico (which, according to the instructions embodied in her will, was to be played at her funeral); but he would ask her, instead, to give him the little phrase from Vinteuil's sonata. It was true that Odette played vilely, but often the most memorable impression of a piece of music is one that has arisen out of a jumble of wrong notes struck by unskilled*

*fingers upon a tuneless piano. The little phrase continued to be associated in Swann's mind with his love for Odette. ...'*

Swann would continue to hear this little phrase, and each time the synesthesia would recreate the original effect, however shaded by the current situation. later, in the chapter 'Madame Swann at Home', young Marcel hears the little phrase played by Odette, and then listens to Swann explain it. Swann describes '*That what is expressed so well in that little phrase, the Bois de Boulogne plunged in a cataleptic trance ...*'. '*But what I understood from other remarks he made that this nocturnal foliage was simply that beneath whose shade, in many a restaurant on the outskirts of Paris, he had listened on so many evenings to the little phrase. In place of the profound meaning that he had* Muchlater, in the chapter 'Madame Swann at Home', young Marcel hears the little phrase played by Odette, and then listens to Swann explain it. Swann describes '*That what is expressed so well in that little phrase, the Bois de Boulogne plunged in a cataleptic trance ...*'. '*But what I understood from other remarks he made that this nocturnal foliage was simply that beneath whose shade, in many a restaurant on the outskirts of Paris, he had listened on so many evenings to the little phrase. In place of the profound meaning that he had so often sought in it, what it now recalled to Swann were the leafy boughs, ordered, wreathed, painted round about it (which it gave him the desire to see again because it seemed to him to be their inner, their hidden self as it were their soul), was the whole of one spring season which he had not been able to enjoy at the time, not having had—feverish and sad as he then was—the requisite physical and mental well-being, and which (as one puts by for an invalid at he dainties that he not been able to eat) it had kept for him. The charm that he had been made to feel by certain evenings in the Bois, a charm of which Vinteuil's sonata served to remind him, he could not have recaptured by questioning Odette, although she, as well as the little phrase, had been his companion there. But Odette had been merely by his side, not (as the phrase had been) within him, and so had seen nothing—nor would have, had she been a thousand times as comprehending—of that vision which for none of us (or at least I was long under the impression that this rule admitted of no exception) can be externalized.'*



# Proust in Venice

sketches by Dean Gustafson

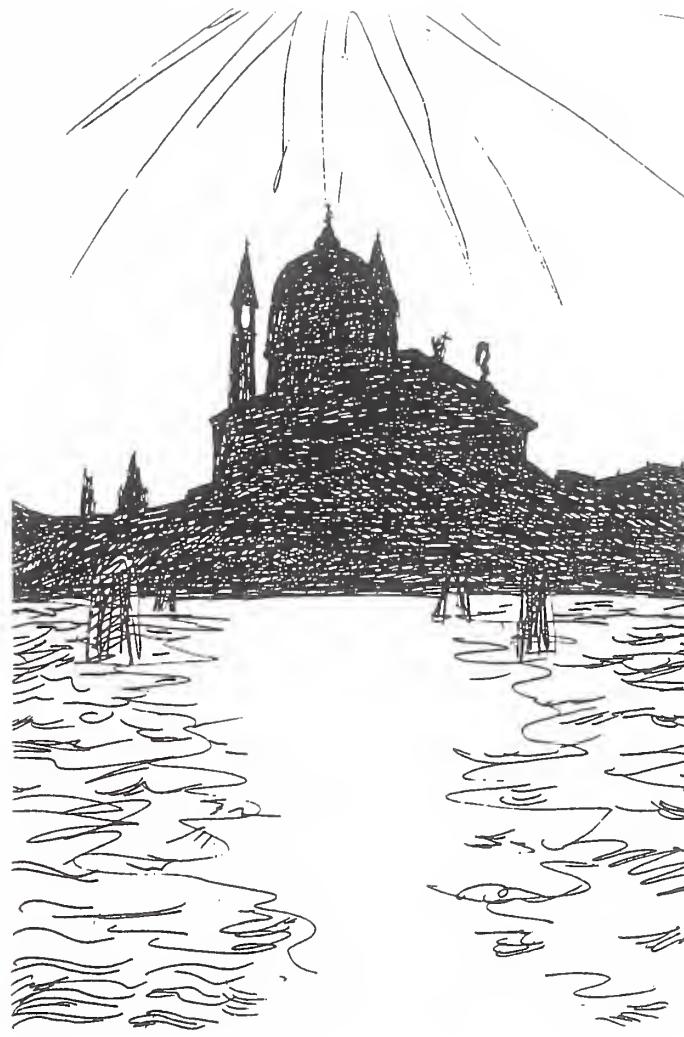


My gondola followed the course of the small canals; like the mysterious hand of a genie leading me through the maze of this oriental city, they seemed, as I advanced, to be cutting a path for me through the heart of a crowded quarter which they bisected, barely parting, with a slender furrow arbitrarily traced, the tall houses with their tiny Moorish windows; and as though the magic guide had been holding a candle in his hand and were lighting the way for me, they kept casting ahead of them a ray of sunlight for which they cleared a route....

-The Fugitive

The next day I set out in quest of my beautiful nocturnal *piazza*, following *calle* after *calle* which were exactly like one another and refused to give me the smallest piece of information, except such as would lead me further astray...

-The Fugitive



I told my mother that I would not leave Venice, but she, thinking it wiser not to appear to believe that I was saying this seriously, did not even answer. I went on to say that she would soon see whether I was serious or not. The porter brought us three letters, two for her and one for me which I put in my wallet among with several others without even looking at the envelope. And when the hour came at which, accompanied by all my belongings, she set off for the station, I ordered a drink to be brought out to me on the terrace overlooking the canal, and settled down there to watch the sunset, while from a boat that had stopped in front of the hotel a musician sang *O sole mio*.

-The Fugitive

# Sole Food: Proust's Last Favorite

While contemplating which recipe to try for this issue, leafing randomly through my two precious cookbooks with Proust in their titles, I felt the pull towards some main course fare, something to serve before the madeleines and Nesselrodes of previous issues. A photo of a *boeuf a la mode* glistening in period table service like a heap of dung in sculpted amber brought my perusal to an abrupt halt.

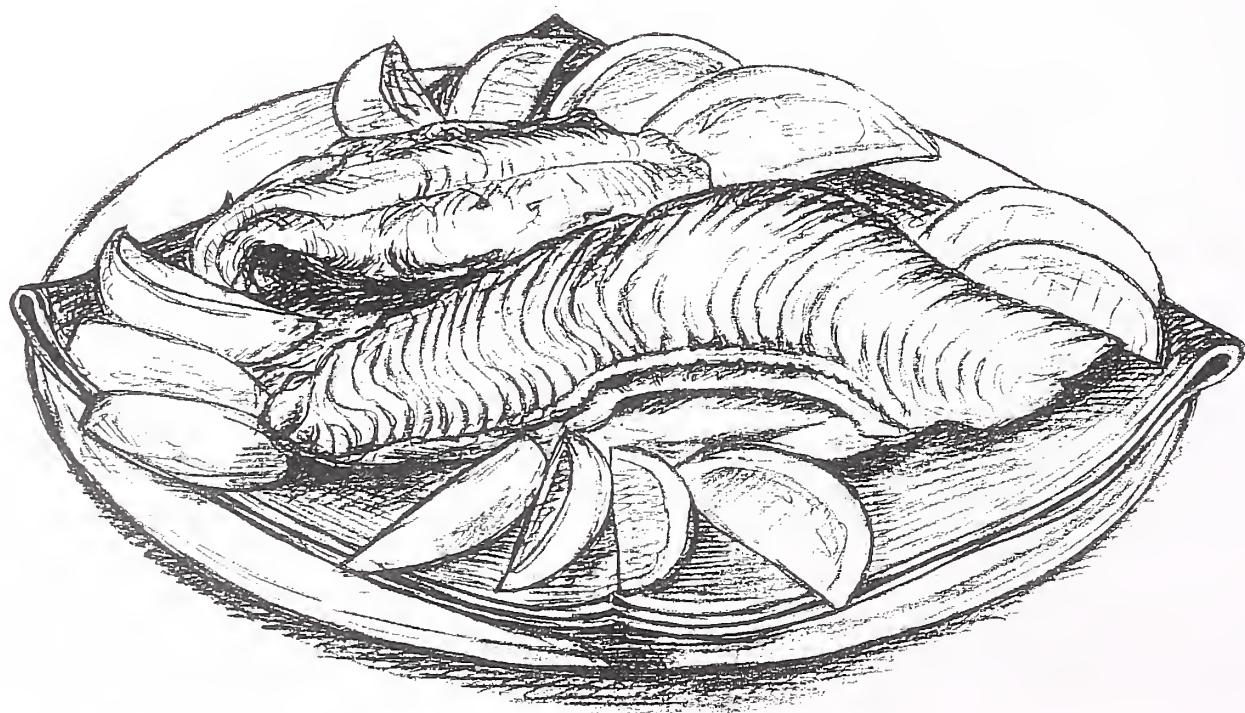
Proust makes much of this *boeuf a la mode*, a culinary masterpiece of such value that for its sake the narrator of *Remembrance* will tolerate the insufferable housekeeper, Françoise.

I contemplated the name, giggling immediately at the American translation (uh, beef with a scoop of ice cream?), then further at the very *boeuf* itself. *Boeuf...* alone, in the kitchen of Marcel Proust Support Group headquarters, I mouthed the word, recalling the discomfiture of my high school French class, of the contortions of face, tongue and sinuses required to pronounce authentically.

To utter this *boeuf*, which sounds approximately like “boof”, one must protrude the lips in a kissy pout, force the first consonant to rumble sonorously but quickly through the nasal cavities, and flick out the final consonant with a slight mow of disgust. After doing this a few times, I was amused again, thinking of boof being the sound of a playful swat. Weeks passed while I contemplated making this *boeuf a la mode*.

My first reservation about this recipe was the aspic, which is, after all, animal flavored gelatin. It will compromise my reputation as a foodie to confess this, but I must admit that Jell-O is one of those childhood pleasures I might enjoy in secret, if it is red flavor. Not cow flavor. Even Proust’s encomiums on the aspic failed to mitigate my distaste, but perhaps I’ve never had a great one. A bad aspic, or even a mediocre one, is nasty.

I spent several hours studying half a dozen recipes for the creation of boof a la mode, after which it was perfectly clear than the creation of this potentially



unattractive dish would take many hours and perhaps two days. More inclined to a simple preparation, I perused the choices in the two Proustian cookbooks. At last it occurred to me that in the last years of MP's life, he couldn't stand the odor of food cooking, and he ate very little. The one thing he asked his housekeeper, Celeste Albaret, to make once in a while was a fried sole, a fine and simple dish to prepare; and so for this issue, it's what I would make.

Of course I hadn't realized that the recent torrential rains had limited the supplies of sole in local markets. This problem was solved by my beloved friend of many years, the brilliant and amusing Genevieve Carter, who had not only given me the fabulous *Dining With Proust* cookbook, but who also toured her extensive collection of foodie emporia to provide me with sole.

#### Fried Sole (Sole Frite)

4 Dover sole/flounders  
1 Tbsp flour  
1/2 tsp. salt  
a bit of pepper  
1 1/4 cups oil  
2 lemons

Have the heads of the sole cut off and the fish skinned. Lightly dust with flour, salt and pepper. Heat the oil until a small piece of bread crisps in 1 minute. Fry the fish one at a time, turning once. Keep warm in a low oven.

Proust's housekeeper, Celeste Albaret, mentions the sole inclination in her book, *Monsieur Proust*. "My dear Celeste, I believe I could manage to eat a fried sole.' So I... fried it hastily and served it on a large

The evening of the same day, saying he felt better, he asked her to cook him a sole. Sole was what his mother had given him to eat during childhood illnesses...

-Ronald Hayman, *Proust...A Biography*

But sole, yes, sometimes he would again fancy a sole.

-Celeste Albaret, *Monsieur Proust*

china dish, on a damask napkin folded in two, so that the oil could soak in and with half a lemon at each of the four corners of the napkin... Sole were about the only food he could eat at the end of his life."

This is, without a doubt, an extremely easy main course to prepare; removing the oil from the napkin on the plate is definitely the hardest part.



...Françoise, rejoicing in the opportunity to devote herself to that art of cooking at which she was so gifted, stimulated, moreover, by the prospect of a new guest, and knowing that she would have to compose, by methods known to her alone, a dish of boeuf en gelée, had been living in the effervescence of creation; since she attached the utmost importance to the intrinsic quality of the materials which were to enter into the fabric of her work, she had gone herself to the Halles to procure the best cuts of rump-steak, shin of beef, calves'-feet, just as Michaelangelo spent eight months in the mountains of Carrara choosing the most perfect blocks of marble for the monument of Julius II... The cold spiced beef with carrots made its appearance couched by the Michaelangelo of our kitchen upon enormous crystals of aspic, like transparent blocks of quartz.

-Within a Budding Grove

# More Mail!

making me crazy. Reading about subjunctive cases, compulsions, the "avid protection of the soft inner core," I recognized my man immediately. Perhaps some neurosis of my own keeps me in or maybe I just like the craziness of him.

Yours in careful handling,  
Kimmel



*Amazing, is it not, how neurosis shares behavior in so many creatures? The splendid Miss X, who provided me with wisdom on the issue, has sent the following letter remarking on her current inclination towards neurosis... And there will be more on this subject in the future.*

I see my position as that of the old guard who must eventually step aside and make room for those who would try to understand / indulge in / suffer with / and become compulsively engrossed in neurotic interaction. Proust is so relevant, because the neuroses follow a pattern that is constant, or universal. Such are my views, which are a synthesis of years of nervous breakdowns, and are supported by readings such as Freud and Horney on the one hand, and then the *artistes* on the other. We know something of the plunges into madness, but as time goes on, and the severe cases plunge into suicide, the romantic gives way (for me, at least), revealing a kind of ecology of preservation of the self and a longing for simpler beings to inhabit my universe... enter flora and fauna, austere walls, museum studies like those I have been doing: hanging out with people who have been dead for 9000 years. These new friends are quiet, don't give me complicated social interactions to manage (at least I haven't crossed over into this murky *philia* yet...) and I am able to see how fleeting our lives are by the presence of those who have gone before us. In their previous 'soft tissue' manifestation, they lived, breathed, had sex and suffered parallel to us. Finally, our 'soft tissue' will fall away and what will be left is a calcified souvenir that we once existed. This takes me far from the prankishness of my earlier years, which I remember fondly and still utilize those gifts of insight gained in the process. In short, I am now more identified with the naturalists. I still have no problem seeing the connection between the sojourning naturalists who traveled and collected specimens and such and the naturalists of art and literature. Though the naturalist movement in art seems to be the

decadents rather than the lovingly petted 'true naturalists'. There is so much that is wretched in our world, but for the young, who are wonderful sponges and in whom we must put our faith and dreams (no matter how starved) there is only tomorrow and the wonders of life. For me one of these wonders was the proud, complex, motivated and tormented neurotic.  
xox Miss X

*Ah, Miss X... The young years we spent together glow with Proustian marvels, and so do the current ones!*

As an avid WELLurker of several years, my curiosity was piqued when in the course of some WWW-surfing I saw the name cynsa, which I recognized from weird, or books, or classical, or wherever... Cynsa led me to Proust Said That, which I have enjoyed browsing.

I was inspired to e-mail, however, by something quite more curious than seeing Cynsa's name on the Web. I am a collector of fine art photography, especially portraiture, and I like very much Dean Gustafson's cover for the premiere issue of PST. I liked even more the use of M. Proust's eyes as an icon. But I liked INCREDIBLY much the design of the two madeleines, which seem (to me) clearly to be a morphology of the eyes icon.

Merci mille fois...  
jrigney



*My charming friend Cynsa is a member of the Well staff, and she and our friend Jeffrey Gray (vision) are responsible for the presence of PST on The World Wide Web. They have also brought me onto the Web, in spite of my lack of knowledge about this remarkable phenomenon, and I have already become an e-mail junkie. Dean Gustafson is both a serious fine artist and now a superb computer artist as well, but the gorgeous transition of his work into the WWW version has been the splendid action of Jeffrey Gray.*

Just discovered you on The Web. Thrilled, delighted, wishing I were reading him right now. Do you know if there are any Proust lists on the Net? Would anyone be interested in joining one? Would anybody have the technical ability to organize one? Nothing would make me happier. I've read in search of lost time three times now, and would love to reread/discuss it with other fanatics/fans/ appreciative souls.

Thanks,  
annie



*Well, Miss Annie, I do not personally have the ability to organize such a computer activity, but I can assure you that other e-mailers are potentially inclined in this direction. If the perfect candidate sends me mail, I will introduce you! Here, in fact, is e-mail from a likely person...*

Wow! I really love your newsletter. It's amazing. I am a grad student in psychology, spending my spare time working my way through RTP. While I spend most of my spare time reading Proust, I spend some of it on the Net, and today I was thinking what a great thing it would be if there was some way to combine the two, and clearly, your newsletter is exactly the thing. I will likely get no work done now, but how happy I will be.

I haven't read much of the newsletter yet, though I used to live in Santa Cruz, and I purchased a large quantity of that peppery cameo portrait featuring the cameo of Proust on the label.

Do you know of any newsgroup or something that does discussions of Proust?

Thanks loads,  
Mark Sabbagh

*I don't know of a newsgroup discussing Proust; but perhaps you and Miss Annie should become acquainted? I suspect that likely candidates for this activity will make themselves known to PST, and I will be delighted to introduce you to each other.*

I've just gotten my Web connection fired up, and I've spelunked (I'm not sure why, but this caving term is the metaphor I like to use for browsing cyberspace) upon the Proust Said That pages. Cool. My utmost respect to the Remembrance of Things Past reading group; a truly significant accomplishment. I read part of it in a class on 20th century continental literary treatments of time (amazing the courses one can find in liberal arts.) I clearly recall the day we tried to diagram a Proustian sentence. We concluded that an N-dimension hypertext blackboard would be necessary for the task...

Kevin S. Eves

*Thanks for your kind words, the amusing diagrammatic suggestion, and the virtual howdy!*



"Tchaikovsky was the most famous homosexual in Russia. Shortly after his death his photograph, along with Proust's, and by mistake Alexander Siloti's, was published in Germany to illustrate a caption, 'Famous Perverts of our Era.' "

*-Scriabin* by Faubion Bowers

