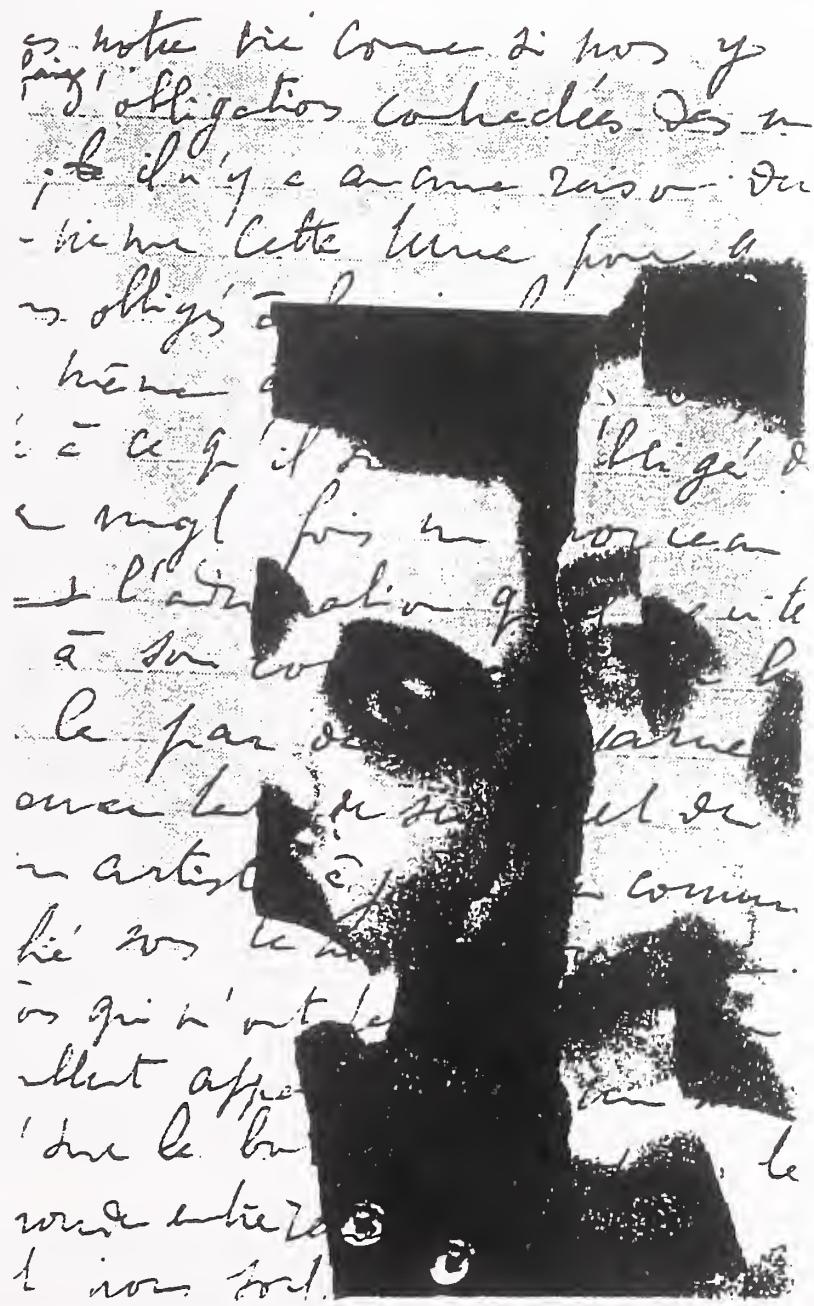


PROUST SAID THAT

Issue No. 6

March 1997



In This Issue: *Proust Said That* Goes to Berlin, Paris and New York, A Scholar Discusses Translations, The Proust Wake of 1996, A Plethora of Proust Sightings and other things



Letters.... and Email



Quel plaisir de trouver votre oeuvre! I am new to the Web, and had begun to despair of finding anything but masses of popular culture, if that is not an oxymoron...what a delight it has been to read your literate and literary work! The layout is quite perfect, as well...I have the sense of reading a literary journal which is not on-line, and I am sure that I will find myself smiling over it for several days to come. Thank you!
Alisa Bearov Landrum



I have been blessed with a shining vision of Proust. As I woke up from a long nod which lasted a few hours, I got a glimpse of Marcel Proust walking on a small street in a country town (Loir, I believe), he turned into a small alley where I followed him, and we both entered a small cafe with only three tables and pictures of Marcel Proust hanging from every bit of space on the wall. He preceded me into the cafe. I followed, primarily because I wanted a cup of coffee, and only secondarily in pursuit of Monsieur Proust. We each sat at different tables. I tried to avoid meeting his eyes; I didn't want to make him uncomfortable and I didn't want to give him the impression that I was a worshiper or groupie, still less did I want him to think that he was so important as to have captured my attention.

I looked in my bag for a book to read; that would give me the independence from the surroundings which included the little man seated across from me at a distance of about 10 feet. I took a book out of my satchel and after having ordered my coffee and roll, sat back snugly in my chair, took out a cigar, and opened the lifesaving book. But the one thing I had not foreseen was that the book would be *Du Cote de Chez Swann*, which, when I realized my faux pas, I blushed and became disoriented. The aroma of the coffee fell to the floor, the cigar smoke became bitter, my white shirt became dirty around the collar, I began to smell my own body odor, and the waiter, who had been quite gracious when he took my order and served me the coffee and roll, became surly and began to shoo away flies with his white table napkin and gave me that look which seemed to be saying "drink your coffee and go;

(continued on page 30)

Proust Said That is the unofficial organ of the hopelessly unofficial Marcel Proust Support Group of San Francisco. Until this issue, I could call this publication utterly unacademic, but we are graced this time with the excellent contribution of a genuine professor of Proustiana, Jerry Farber, who addresses the issue of English translations, a subject about which there have been many queries. Otherwise, we content ourselves principally in this issue with tales of the travels of your editor, publisher, principle writer and what-all, Miss P, with a fair amount to be said concerning the life of Marcel Proust, his interests, his words, and a few other things.

There are many people who must be thanked here for their immense assistance with issue #6. The unexpected gift of a ticket to Berlin from the lovely Maid Marian Goddell, and the equally unexpected gift of a plane flight to Paris from the wonderful Konstanze Kriese of Berlin made these stories possible. All the friends who contributed to the "Send PST to Europe" fundraiser, Alex Segal, whose contribution brought me back from Europe without starvation, and the delightful Leslee Sumner, who made my stay in New York so very entertaining, all have my unending thanks. As always, thanks to Dean Gustafson for drawing the Paris I saw but could not render myself, and to Bruno, the mysterious photographer at Pere Lachaise, for the photographs at Proust's grave.

I could not fail to mention the contributions of Cynsa Bonorris and Jeffrey Gray, who put each issue on the Internet, and help so much with the mysteries of computer life. Cynsa has a new web page herself (www.fixe.com) to delight you when you have finished with the online *PST*. And thanks to my housemate Gavin, who learned about scanning by doing it for me, and Miss Maureen Jennings, who found all my errors, and offered superlative editing advice.

This issue's unusual cover comes to us from Professor Jost Funke, the delightful artist I met across the table at the elegant dinner in Berlin for the German Proust Society. You will find more information about this artist's extraordinary work on page 17. He very graciously said he would be honored to do a cover, and I am very honored to have it.



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When David arrived, the conversation turned frequently to our shared literary obsession. Every so often one of us would turn to Brian and apologise, since he has not yet read Proust. This is, of course, what he was expecting in our company and perhaps our enthusiastic words might have hastened the potentially inevitable: surely, some day, Brian will surely find himself reading Proust. Perhaps some day, Miss Leslee will have written a novel, and be on a book tour, leaving Brian at home with *Remembrance...*

When we discussed places to go for dinner, I requested that we go for Chino-Latino, one of the few kinds of restaurants we don't have yet in San Francisco. After we had dined on half-Latin, half-Chinese fare, we made our way to the Algonquin Hotel.

The Algonquin seems to have remained the same since Dorothy Parker called it home and the brilliant *New Yorker* writers gathered at the Round Table, except for the fact that you can no longer smoke anywhere except in the bar. What would Dorothy have said about this? The bar itself, with gleaming wood so dark it seemed colored by decades of intelligent conversation, turned out to be most inviting. After a round of cocktails and merry conversation, my host and hostess took me to the wilds of Queens in search of my aunt's house. Leslee and I kept dozing and every time I looked over at Brian behind the wheel, his eyes were pried open like the protagonist of *Clockwork Orange* under therapy.

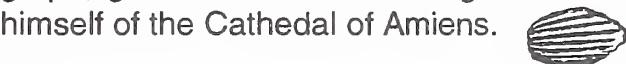
I did not mention Proust for 48 hours in Queens. Returning to San Francisco, arriving near midnight, I was met at the airport by two members of the original Marcel Proust Support Group, my wonderful friends Miss Harley and Miss Dawn. They took me immediately for the one thing I missed so very much in Europe, a great burrito, but there was so much to say and so little time to chew.



About Our Cover

It was at that elegant dinner party ending the Marcel Proust Gesellschaft's social rounds that I met Professor Funke, totally by serendipity. My friend Michael Sostarich thought we should choose seats for the dinner separately, so we might meet other members; out of respect to this group of associates, I waited until most of them had settled in their places of choice and then looked for the empty spots. It was one of those miracles that I, forever trying to cajole one of my artist friends into doing a cover for me, should find myself facing a fine artist who has devoted his career to the intertwining of Proust and art. We fell into a most pleasant conversation.

Professor Funke told me that ever since his first reading of Proust, he has worked in the manner which Proust called "involuntary memory" and all his work, be it painting or collage, draws passionately on our joint literary obsession. The piece on this cover is what Professor Funke describes as "a kind of palimpsest, in which fragments of pictures superimpose fragments of phrases", combining bits of the famous photograph of Proust and the original manuscript describing the death of Bergotte. In the one below, Proust's intense eyes, from that same photograph, gaze out from a drawing Proust had done himself of the Cathedral of Amiens.



Scott Moncrieff's Way: Proust in Translation

by Jerry Farber

Occasionally, readers of *A la recherche du temps perdu* in English may find themselves wondering, "How good is this translation?" My own short answer would have to be "Very good." But what I'd like to offer here is a somewhat longer and, I hope, more useful response to the question.

We'll need to begin with a little history.



I.

It was in London shortly after World War I that C.K. Scott Moncrieff began translating Proust. His version of *Swann's Way* appeared in September 1922, two months before Proust died and before the last three sections of the novel had appeared in French. Scott Moncrieff himself died in 1930, by which time he had translated all but the final section, which was subsequently translated by "Stephen Hudson" (a pseudonym adopted by Proust's friend, Sydney Schiff).

For the next half-century, the English text of Proust's novel remained fixed, (except for the last section, *The Past Recaptured*, which was retranslated in the U.S. by Frederick Blossom, and in Great Britain by Andreas Mayor). What did change, however, was the French text. There had been countless errors in the original French edition, particularly in the later volumes which were published after Proust's death. So, when a "definitive" scholarly French edition came out in 1954, English readers were left with a translation based on an out-of-date text (except for Mayor's version of the last section, which was done after the 1954 French edition).

Terence Kilmartin's revision of Scott Moncrieff was intended to solve this problem, that is, to bring the English version into accord with the current French text. And, while he was at it, Kilmartin set out to correct various mistakes that had been made in the original translation and also to eliminate what he saw as

certain stylistic weaknesses on Scott Moncrieff's part.

Kilmartin's revision came out in 1981 and would undoubtedly have remained untouched for at least another couple of decades if another, still more reliable and authoritative French text hadn't appeared in the late 80s: the new, four-volume *Pléiade* edition.

So, with Kilmartin's work less than a decade old and already out of date, D.J. Enright, who had assisted

Kilmartin in the earlier revision, did a re-revision, bringing the English version in line with the new *Pléiade* text, and, as Kilmartin had done, using the opportunity to make some other changes as well. This new version of the novel came out in the U.S. in 1992 in a six-volume *Modern Library* edition.

So—after 70 years' work on both sides of the Channel—is this finally it? Are we there?

II.

Not quite. For one thing, an entirely new translation, by Richard Howard, should be in print before long. Up to now, only a brief excerpt from this translation has made its way into print (in the *Paris Review*), an excerpt which is promising in many ways and, to me at least, worrying in others. As for the Scott Moncrieff/Kilmartin/Enright translation, though I would love to report that it is finally as close to perfect as any translation can be, that is not quite the case.

But the title, I'm glad to say, is finally right. *A la recherche du temps perdu* does not mean "Remembrance of Things Past"; what it means is what the 1992 *Modern Library* version is called: *In Search of Lost Time*. Scott Moncrieff borrowed his title from one of Shakespeare's sonnets; it's a pretty phrase, but inappropriate. Proust's title is more active; it implies a *quest*. What, unfortunately, remains untranslatable in the title is a secondary meaning present in "temps perdu," which can mean not only "lost time," but also "wasted time."

Now, finally, the titles of the seven major parts of the novel are right as well. Kilmartin correctly substituted *Time Regained* for *The Past Recaptured*. And Enright has replaced the euphemistic *Cities of the Plain* with *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Only *Within a Budding Grove* remains as a departure from the original—a wise departure in this case, since “In the Shade of Girls in Bloom” just doesn’t work that well in English. *The Fugitive* doesn’t correspond to the new French edition’s *Albertine disparue* (“Albertine gone” [or “disappeared”]). But Proust had been intending to call this volume *La Fugitive*, and changed it, at least in part because another book had been published with this title.

Readers of the 1992 edition should have a right to expect that three layers of translation will at least have filtered out the full-on mistakes, the embarrassing goofs that can show up even in the work of an excellent translator. And, by and large, this is the case. There’s a passage, for example, in “Swann in Love,” when Swann is about to kiss Odette for the first time, where Scott Moncrieff got a pronoun wrong (“her mind” instead of “his mind” [SM I,179]) and wrecked Proust’s meaning. Kilmartin, fortunately, caught it. There’s another passage in the last section of the novel when the narrator sees the setting sun illuminating the upper halves of a line of trees. Mayor misread this as a vertical rather than horizontal division, so that one side of each tree is in sunlight and the other in shadow. A trivial mistake, it might seem, but not in Proust, whose narrator up to this point has repeatedly enjoyed this particular effect of sunlight but now is dismayed to find himself bored by it. In fact, coming where it does, this constitutes a rather substantial plot development, which in Mayor’s version loses much of its power. Kilmartin let it get by him, but here Enright comes through—like an alert outfielder who snags a ball that has shot past two of his teammates—and gets it right. [K III,886; E VI,238].

But is there anything that has gotten past all three? Yes, I’m afraid so. One notable instance occurs in *The Guermantes Way* in the section dealing with the narrator’s grandmother’s illness. There’s a reference to the “rupture or obstruction of a blood-vessel which had produced the uraemia.” [K II,330; E III,434]. Medically this is nonsense, and, in fact, it’s not what Proust wrote. Proust’s wording is “qu’avait produit l’urémie”: “which the uremia had produced” (the “que” here is an object, not a subject) [P II,616].

Another mistake in all three versions occurs in “Swann in Love”; here we’re not dealing not with a grammatical error but with a rather interesting case of misreading. The narrator is talking about the effect music had on Swann.



And the pleasure which the music gave him . . . was in fact akin at such moments to the pleasure which he would have derived from experimenting with perfumes, from entering into contact with a world for which we men were not made, which appears to us formless because our eyes cannot perceive it, meaningless because it eludes our understanding, to which we may attain by way of one sense only. [K I,259; E I,336]

This would be a pretty good translation, except that Proust doesn’t say “we men”; he just says “we.” If you read the passage carefully, it becomes clear that the points he’s making about the peculiar nature of scents have to do with their effect on people in general, not just on men. Scents inhabit a formless, elusive world which we may enter only through the sense of smell. But the three translators, by adding “men,” project onto the text a masculine stereotype—“Hey, what do we guys know about perfumes”—and turn a Proustian exploration of human experience into a shallow comment on gender.

It’s uncommon, however, for all three translators flatly to get something wrong. Even Scott Moncrieff, working on his own, did a reasonably good job on this level. But his style was self-consciously “literary” at times in a way that departed from the original. And he translated with a certain prudishness. For example: at one point in *Swann’s Way*, if you are reading the revised translation carefully, you realize the narrator is talking about masturbation; there’s a description of semen smearing the leaves of a flowering currant [K I,172; E I,222-23]. Scott Moncrieff, however, is unwilling to be as explicit as Proust was, though he does add a gratuitous “until passion spent itself and left me shuddering” [SM I,121]. And it was Scott Moncrieff’s decision, which his two successors have respected, to give us that cutesy, A.E. Housman-ish quatrain:

*Frogs and snails and puppy-dogs’ tails,
And dirty sluts in plenty,
Smell sweeter than roses in young*

men's noses

When the heart is one-and-twenty.

[K I,134; E I,172]

in place of Françoise's trenchant folk wisdom:

*Qui du cul d'un chien s'amourose,
Il lui paraît une rose.* [P I,122]

which means roughly: "Fall in love with a dog's behind and it will seem like a rose."

Scott Moncrieff's quatrain, I'm afraid, is still with us, but, generally speaking, Kilmartin did a pretty fair job of fixing up the earlier translation. His revision is not an entirely unmixed blessing, though. To take one example: when Proust's narrator refers to the "double" that exists, in his imagination, of a white linen dress and a colored flag, Kilmartin uses "carbon copy"—a bewildering choice: how are we to visualize a carbon copy of either a white dress or a colored flag [K I,963; E II,657]?

Similarly, where Proust, in *The Captive*, has "leur double spirituel" ("their spiritual double" [or possibly "duplicate" or "replica"]), Kilmartin gives us "a spiritual Doppelgänger" [K III,288; E V,381]. As we can see, Kilmartin sometimes introduces a fancier diction than exists in the original. Proust, in *The Captive*, describes an impulse as "purement mienne" ("purely mine"). Kilmartin makes it "purely solipsistic" [K III,17; E V,23]. Proust, in *The Guermantes Way*, refers to the "Le dédoublement de Rachel" ("dédoublement" means a splitting or dividing in two). Kilmartin makes it "The deutero-Rachel" [K, II,166] (fortunately, Enright fixed this one).

Kilmartin's ear just isn't always as good as it could be. Where Proust, for example, uses a fairly neutral word ("mitoyenne") to describe the way the church in Combray sits between its two neighbors, Kilmartin says it's "cheek by jowl," which is, to my mind, a rather ugly expression to use in this particular context [K I,67; E I,85]. Again, in connection with the church, the narrator's grandmother, admiring the naturalness of the steeple, says that, if it could play the piano, it wouldn't sound "sec" (which means "dry" and can also connote "cold" or "unfeeling"). Kilmartin uses "tinny,"

which really misses the mark, especially because it tends to describe the sound of a piano, not the way it's played [K I,69; E I,87]

I have to say I almost regret that Kilmartin eliminated a bit of unintentional comedy in Scott Moncrieff, who had the Duchess saying to Marcel at one point: "apart from your balls, can't I be of any use to you" [SM IV,90]. Kilmartin soberly amends this to "parties." However, if Kilmartin taketh away, he also giveth. He has the narrator saying of Albertine early in *The Captive*: "her taste for sensual pleasure was chronic too, and was perhaps only waiting for an opportunity to be given its head" [K III,14; E V,18]. There's no giving head in the original here; Proust says "pour se donner cours," which could just as easily come out to "be given free rein."

*"Are you working? I no longer am.
I have closed forever the era of
translations that Mother favored.
And as for translations of myself, I
no longer have the courage."*

-letter to Marie Nordlinger,

De cember 8, 1906

The third translator, Enright, has done a remarkably good job. I myself wish he had been more willing to undo some of Kilmartin's work; still, he almost never leaves a passage in worse shape than he found it. There is one thing, though, that I wish he'd left as is: Brichot's silly pun in *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Brichot is talking about the "oriental god" who has more followers in France than any other. The god is "Je-Men-Fou" (in other words, "Je m'en fous": "I don't give a damn"). Scott Moncrieff translated "Je-Men-Fou" as "Ubedamnd." Enright comes up with "Dun Gifa Hoot," which may be a bit closer to the original in meaning, but which is simply not playable; it's too awful even for Brichot [E IV,481-82].

Obviously, a careful study of these translators' work would need a book to itself; what I have offered here can only be the briefest of samplings. And, in fact, it's hard not to keep going endlessly from one example to another: "No, Swann is not wearing a toupee in 'Swann in Love'; no, the narrator is not so tacky as to call one of Elstir's paintings a 'square panel of beauty'; no, some of the people at the reception in *Time Regained* don't carry replicas of streets on their faces." And there are countless instances of a subtler kind, which are by no means mistranslations, but which raise interesting interpretive or stylistic questions.

In any case, it hasn't been my intention to attack or undermine the Scott Moncrieff/Kilmartin/Enright translation. I thought it might be useful for readers of Proust in English to have some sense of the limitations of this translation, 'but, in fact, there is far more to admire in it than to cavil at.'

Howard's new translation will be appearing before long, and you can be sure there will be others to follow. But I doubt that any of these will simply "replace" the current one. C.K. Scott Moncrieff was a remarkably able translator, possessing style and flair, and passionately devoted to Proust's novel. He was, in some ways, temperamentally similar to Proust, and he shared Proust's interests in nature, music, poetry—even in genealogy. Equally important, as a cultivated Britisher in the 1920s, he was writing in a language and from a culture that in many ways closely paralleled Proust's own, whereas any translation that appears now will inevitably—whatever its brilliance, whatever its concern to be faithful to the original—bear the imprint of our own age.

The Scott Moncrieff translation has helped make it possible for Proust's novel to become, in Harold Bloom's words, "widely recognized as the major novel of the twentieth century." It has delighted and profoundly influenced successive generations of English-speaking authors. Even before the revisions, which have on the whole improved it, it was a masterpiece of translation. I hope that my own brief critique will be taken as a kind of tribute.



PROUST TEXTS CITED

SM = *Remembrance of Things Past*. Trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff. 7 vols. New York: Vintage-Random, 1970.

K = *Remembrance of Things Past*. Trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. 3 vols. New York: Vintage-Random, 1982.

E = *In Search of Lost Time*. Trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D.J. Enright. 6 vols. New York: Modern Library, 1992.

P = *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Ed. Jean-Yves Tadié. 4 vols. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade-Gallimard, 1987-89.



What The Critics Said Recently

"*Proust Said That* may be the most radical project on the Web, devoted as it is to inspiring interest in *Remembrance of Things Past*. The Marcel Proust Support Group is a boho San Francisco clan that formed to read the work in toto. P Segal's loving documentation of the group's activities has made PST one of the most affecting literary sites around. Its elegant pages contain everything from Proust-inspired recipes and travelogues to the young Marcel's replies to the questionnaire that bears his name today. If you love Proust, you will adore what this site has to offer."

-The Net



"Remembrance of Links Past

For your next literary fix, sample the highbrow shenanigans of *Proust Said That*... Each issue focuses on the life and work of the garrulous Marcel, but topics still roam playfully from bouillabaisse to Burning Man. Apart from being one of the quirkiest and smartest sites online, PST is also one of the very few that includes a recipe for Nesselrode pudding."

-Wired

"What started as a Cacophony spinoff dedicated to Marcel Proust has grown into a full-fledged zine of its own right. 'The Life of Proust, and Some of Mine' is a witty juxtaposition of Marcel with P, the zine's editor. Some noted differences: Marcel never had a job in his life, while the editor had to throw rent parties to keep a roof over her head; Marcel lived at the famous 102 Blvd. Haussmann. P in North Beach. We also learn about literary agents rejecting *Swann's Way*, the Russian pianist Sviatoslav Richter, and Proust's great love of coffee. A wonderful tribute to this unique author and a highly entertaining read."

-Factsheet Five

Proust's Paris

sketches by Dean Gustafson



"It is often said that something may survive of a person after his death, if that person was an artist and put a little of himself into his work. It is perhaps in the same way that a cutting of sorts taken from one person and grafted onto the heart of another continues to carry on its existence even when the person from whom it had been detached has perished."

-The Fugitive



"The very Seine was aglow with marvelous life..."

-Jean Santeuil

The Proust Wake of 1996

I woke up in San Francisco for the first time in three weeks, after the memorable Proust tour of Europe, and made my way into the kitchen at Proust SFHQ for morning coffee. It was the 18th of November, the day Proust died, and the day I was born, and six days before the Saturday on which we had scheduled the Proust Wake of 1996, to be held once again at the John Wickett Museum of Exotica.

As a professional caterer for the last 11 years, I had no qualms about throwing an enormous social event six days after returning from my travels, even if I should suffer from an unusual fit of jet-lag. I have found the perfect antidote for this travel problem, which seems to work every time. You must stay up all night, in the manner of MP, before getting on the plane; you will sleep the entire flight, being awakened only for servings of miserable airline food, which are usually worth sleeping through, and arrive at the destination ready to be awake. My expectation was to return to San Francisco and begin immediately with preparations for this annual social event at which the local Proustians would gather.

As I made coffee, one of my housemates sauntered in with the household news: another of our inmates had given notice on the first of the month because he had been offered a job in Bangkok. Nothing much had been done to find a replacement in my absence, and there was, for once, no friend waiting in the wings to move in. The search for the new member of the household is somehow largely my province, and this became the dominant concern of the week before the Wake.

We filed an application for interested parties at a local service called Roommate Referral within 48 hours, and immediately, thanks to the one per cent vacancy rate in San Francisco, became deluged with calls. I spoke to at least 20 applicants a day as I prepared for the event, while answering the dozens of calls from friends to welcome me back and hear the tales of my

travels. As usual, the preparation of foods, props and other provisions for the Wake was done in Proustian hours, after midnight and until dawn.

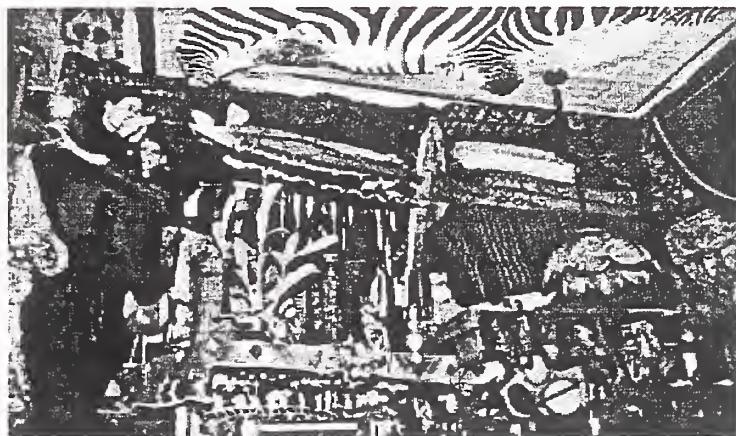
Please be prepared for another voice to keep appearing in this description of the Proust Wake of '96. My housemate John Casten, the wonderful musician who was responsible for the Marcel Proust Support Group of San Francisco in the first place, has inserted more than one comment here, particularly in regard to the chamber music that he arranged and performed, to my utter delight.

The day of the Wake, the 23rd, was lovely, I heard, although I never had a moment to look out a window or see the light of day. My friend Miss Lisa Archer, one of my favorite co-conspirators in event planning,

came early in the afternoon to assist. When I was getting together the fund-raising dinner I threw before departing for Europe, Lisa had asked me if there was anything I needed her to bring. "Well," I said, "I could use the Eiffel Tower, if you happen to have one." "As a matter of fact," she said, "I do," and she brought an Eiffel Tower her father had made from balsa wood, the main prop for the banquet table. Of course the Tower would be recycled for the center of the buffet at the Wake, and Miss Lisa's first job on this day was to fashion a huge French flag out of red, white and blue paper napkins and a roll of scotch tape, to serve as a table covering beneath it.

The catering for this year's Wake could hardly compete with that of last year's, as described in the fifth issue of *PST*. Need it be said that it included a sizeable quantity of madeleines? The food this year was low priority, but there were other appeals. The first, as always, was the Wickett Museum itself, the enchanting, mind-altering accumulation of objects in which we would meet. The second was chamber music, for which my housemate John needed to find an electronic piano of sufficient quality and the third, a considerable stash of absinthe to offer my guests.

the Wickett Museum



Last year, the day after the Wake, as I sat at the kitchen table in recovery, John had come home after an afternoon of playing chamber music with friends, and with a new revelation about the source of "the little phrase". He promised me that the piece he now believed to be The One would be played at the Wake this year, (*John here, along with a whole "bouquet of bon-bons", my favorites were "Thine Own" by Gustav Lange and "Lotus Land" by Percy Grainger, genuine trash.*) Their choices were somehow so appropriate, that when they did begin to play early in the evening, since Dr. Stevens, who played the piano splendidly, was a little out of his depth in the late-night hours, a hush fell over the part of the museum where the music could be heard, except, of course, for the guests who came over to talk with me while I was trying to listen.

The chamber music was the best element of the evening, aside from the company, so beautifully attired in their tuxedos and other black formal wear, and the ambiance, and I entreated John to give my thanks to Dr. Stevens for his assistance and wonderful playing. A few days later, when John remembered to do this, he was blithely practicing away during Proustian hours when he thought to make the call. Being a doctor, Dick Stevens was asleep at an early hour, preparing for a day of healing the sick, but the sound of the ringing phone brought him to immediate awareness of a possible life or death situation. Instead he got John saying thank you, and he was not amused.

Absinthe, of course, is considered illegal in every country except Portugal, England (where it is not made) and some parts of Eastern Europe. It was made illegal in France during Proust's lifetime because virtually the entire population of the country consumed "The Green Fairy" in copious quantities, beginning in the late afternoon, when the cocktail hour was called "the green hour". The popularity of this beverage hinged on the presence of a somewhat hallucinogenic ingredient, wormwood; if one drank enough of it, it was possible to get higher than a kite as well as drunk, and too many French persons seemed to find that prospect attractive, among them countless writers and artists. If you have ever wondered how Van Gogh got his astonishing world-view, now you know. The beverage comes down to us, sans wormwood, but otherwise in its former state, as Pernod.

...the little phrase of the sonata is, and I have never told this to anyone, the charming but infinitely mediocre phrase of a sonata for piano and violin by Saint-Saens, a musician I don't like."
- letter to Jacques Lacretelle (probably 1921)

I'm leaving the tale of how we got the absinthe to my friend Stuart Mangrum, the wonderful writer who gives us Twisted Times, which will appear in my next issue, and the credit to his adorable wife, Michelle, who actually did most of the serious work (*John here: they stayed up all night getting wasted after making it here at PHQ*). Huge thanks go to Michelle and Stuart and Tom Sheft, who gave us the original recipe, which he got from a friend in Burgundy whose family had been making their own at home since it was made illegal. Tom, who came to town from Portland for the event, brought a few litres of his own making and we had a considerable quantity.

To be absolutely sure there was enough, a few days before the Wake I jerryrigged yet another version, a hasty combination of Pernod and Everclear in which I had soaked wormwood leaf for 24 hours, a process which turned the clear liquid in which the grayish leaves had sat a brilliant emerald green.

One thing must be made perfectly clear: in spite of the popularity of this beverage in his times, Proust was not an absintheur. He was, in fact, not much of a drinker, although, late in his life, beer became a staple of his diet. He preferred cutting to the chase and just taking drugs. In the

interesting book *The Maladies of Marcel Proust*, by Bernard Strauss, this excellent doctor tells us that "Proust took drugs freely and often against his physician's advice." He describes in great detail the kinds of drugs Proust took, and the potential positives and negatives of each one, but never does he mention that, like the naughty of current times, he took them for their prelasurable potential; why else would he have written, as he did in *The Captive*, "It is easy to speak of the beauty of opium" or other such telling remarks? In fact, the hallucinogenic properties of absinthe are hardly noticeable for people who have experienced opium, heroin, LSD and other hard-core substances, and the major problem for the absinthe generation was that they had to drink annoying quantities of it to come even close. It was the alcoholism that made it such a problem, and got it banned.

The absinthe was the titillating, bad-children feature of the Wake. After years of searching, I had finally found an absinthe spoon at the great used cookware store in my own neighborhood, Cookin' on Divisadero.

The charming, funny, curmudgeonly proprietor, Judy Kaminsky, has been picking them up on her shopping trips to Paris yearly; for some reason it was the only esoteric bit of culinary gadgetry I had never thought to ask of her.

Service for the absinthe was proffered on a huge silver tray, with the requisite pitcher of water, bowl of sugar cubes, and the absinthe spoon, a flat and slotted metal wedge that vaguely resembles a small cake server. The absinthe shot would be poured into a glass, the spoon balanced atop the glass, a sugar cube placed over the slots, and then water poured slowly over the sugar until it dissolved into the mixture below, which grew increasingly cloudy as the water was added. This beautiful ritual of preparation is as soporific as the drink itself. After an administration or two, the guests were in that cheery, dreamy, state in which chamber music is so ideal.

John here: we played the Saint-Saens violin and piano sonata in D minor (much credit to Dr. Richard Stevens for a) procuring the sheet music; and b) working it up to a performance level). In an earlier article (PST #3) I declared that the origin of the "little phrase" could not have been this piece (song, as we would say). I would not go so far as to say that this

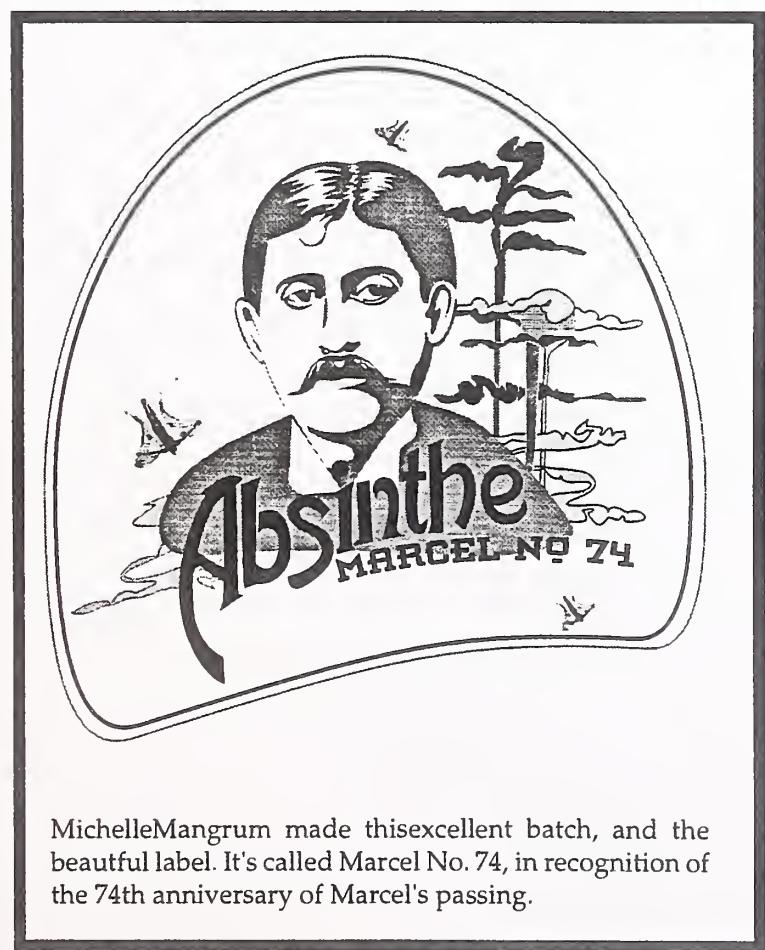
is the genuine source of the "little phrase", but then again I would not say that it is not. My feeling is that M. Proust probably did not have the most discriminating taste in music (his friendship with M. Reynaldo Hahn notwithstanding); however, the sonata in question does seem to satisfy the minimum requirements for what was encompassed in the description of what the piece was all about. There is a "cyclicalness" in the structure. There is a minimum satisfaction as to what an obsessional tune might embody (although, truth be told, the second phrase in question is not all that fine). It was fairly beautiful, thank you very much, I did my best, but not much to go on...

I go back to my original thesis, which was that like the characters in the novel, the source of the "little phrase" is a pastiche; an assemblage of what the author holds dear in his memory, his fantasy of what the ideal (a totally fag situation) of the world in which he lives should be.

Honestly, I sincerely apologize for having implied in my earlier article that the Saint-Saens sonata for violin and piano number 1 in D minor is a piece of shit, but the evidence bears out the intent, if not the uncouth expression.

I must concur with John; the Saint-Saens sonata was not what I was expecting. I'd never heard it before, and now I know why: it's not one of those crowd-pleasers that is so frequently recorded, and is clearly a difficult piece to perform, but without those melodic moments that cling mercilessly to even the musically untutored brain. Nothing, in short, that you would find yourself humming the next morning in the bath. None of the pieces fell into that category, but that was irrelevant. What was magical was this music of another era in this place of another era. As I sat, tapping feet to the well-kept tempo and warm performance, I felt so much the *maitresse du salon*. I found myself laughing at the thought of resembling that dreadful Mme Verdurin of *Remembrance*, and loving every moment of it.

The naughty beverage we offered to the guests at the Wake of '96 did not seem to do anything to them except keep them socializing until 4:30 in the morning. The only other thing provided for the entertainment of the guests was a stack of Proust Questionnaires for them to fill out. Much to my amazement, only two people found this *exercice* amusing enough to complete. One was Stuart Mangrum, who had, at the first Wake at the museum, played Proust for me in the



Michelle Mangrum made this excellent batch, and the beautiful label. It's called Marcel No. 74, in recognition of the 74th anniversary of Marcel's passing.

seance described in issue #2., but he emailed his answers to the questions the next day. I had to laugh when reading, that among the virtues, he preferred all of them, but likewise all the vices, and that his favorite occupation was celebrating the completion of a creative project, a joy I adore. What most surprised me was that the other person was the young and half-bad boy Jason Sterling Girard, who, in his elegant Goth apparel and vampiric dental accoutrements, actually filled one out, naming Betty Page as his favorite heroine of history, H.R. Geiger as his favorite painter, power being the best quality in a woman, and scaring the hell out of mortals his preferred occupation.

Many things can be said about the friends who came to pay their respects to Proust, but the most significant is the enthralling quality of their company. With so much to discuss, there was no time to fill out a Proust Questionnaire in the seven and a half hours of this party. Of course, even with a pile of them sitting on my desk for a year, I've never filled one out myself. One wonders if the youth of Proust's generation actually found the questionnaire an amusing parlor activity, or were simply badgered into doing it by their hostesses. Or has my generation, the first in history, one supposes, to have had so many forms to fill out, just lost curiosity for the medium?



"Do you really find it necessary for writers to die of hunger?...without a doubt you also know the anecdote about Whistler's having several of the richest people in Europe for lunch. Enter bailiffs to attach his property. There were a great many unsold paintings there, a quarter of which would have sent the bailiff away, but none of the rich art-lovers thought of buying even the smallest grey and silver harmony..."

-letter to Sidney Schiff, Summer 1920

The Price of Love...

Is there an act of love that doesn't have, sooner or later, a price? Under the greatest of circumstances, the down side is having the person, or thing, that you adore come to a painful end, or an end of any sort; more commonly, one gives up, for the sake of love, other beloved things because you simply need to make a choice.

The creation of *Proust Said That* is a total labor of love on my part, and it does indeed have a price. Each issue takes at least 60 days in which I do not think, and haven't time to think, about material survival. By the time the issue has been printed and distributed, I have spent nearly a thousand dollars in reference materials, graphics, printing, postage, email communication and all the other small costs of putting it together for under 300 print copies. After it has been distributed I will spend countless more hours responding to my email, sending issues out to new subscribers, corresponding with potential writers and searching for new topics to research and address. In short, *Proust Said That* is virtually a full-time job which I must pay to have. As one of my other favorite authors, Charles Bukowski, said: "it's damned pleasant to be an intellectual or a writer and to observe these niceties as long as your OWN ass is not in the wringer." Amen.

With this, the sixth issue, I have sat in the wringer six times. Thanks to the presence of *PST* on Netscape's "What's New" section on the Internet, this magazine has been read by no less than a quarter of a million people in the last six months. Lots of them have written to me to tell me how much they love it, and I have received amazing reviews, but very few people have sent me money. Yesterday I got a letter from someone asking me to send them a copy so they could decide whether or not they wanted to subscribe; it will cost me thirty-two cents to explain why I can't do that.

I have yet to turn up a foundation grant for which I qualify, or to find any private sponsors. So I must appeal to all of you readers who understand the cost of love; if you love this magazine, will you help? A little cash would be grand, a potential foundation connection splendid: advertising will be cheerfully accepted, although, having done ad sales for a magazine in the dim, dark past, I wouldn't try to peddle them. Anything (continued on page 29)

A Plethora of Proust Sightings

Hardly a week has gone by since the last issue came out when I have not found mail from a reader containing sightings of Proust, or had some book or article handed to me by a friend here in town. This only enhances my conclusion that Proust has permeated millions of minds in the Western thinking (and particularly writing) world. Some day, someone will find Proust references for me in Asia and Africa, and I will not be surprised.

This issue is already too thick, overwhelmed with verbiage of my travel adventures, to include all the references sent. Perhaps the next issue, slimmer, will contain more from the massive piles on my desk, but here, at least, are many...

Two extraordinary books were loaned to me, both worthy of far more than a mere mention, and so I will save them for the next issue, when my travels have not occupied too many pages. Miss Hannah Silver brought *A Vision of Paris*, a combination of the photographs of Eugene Atget and the words of our Marcel, and Miss Christine Kristen offered Brassai's *The Secret Paris of the 30's*, containing his photographs of the demimonde and many Proustian references. Here are a single image from each, a preview of coming attractions.

Leslee Sumner has sent me many clippings lately, but one of my favorites is a clipping from *The New York Times*, date uncertain, by Janny Scott, called "A 90's Revival: Power of Positive Thinking". It describes a group other than my own which came together for the purpose of reading Proust. This company began with an idea by Ashton Hawkins, now executive vice president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and his friend Robert MacDonald, a publisher, when they were undergraduates at Harvard, and they have continued to read together for 25 years. Proust was their first companionable read, followed by other royalty of European literature, but 20 years into their joint activity they re-read Proust.



Eugene Atget

One silly item in Leslee's finds was a mention in a "Style" piece in *The New York Times Magazine*, date also unknown, by Holly Brubach, called "Literary Sachet". Brubach notes that Fragonard had brought out a perfume called "A Year in Provence", based on the book of the same name, and suggests that a rush is on "to sign up the olfactory rights to other literary properties..." When she gets to Proust, she speculates that his perfume would be "the definitive translation, with the unforgettable almond flavoring of teatime biscuits from the author's childhood and a whiff of the perfume his mother used to wear."

She also sent the *Vanity Fair* article in the July 1996 issue, "A Night to Remember" by Amy Fine Collins, about the black-and-white ball Truman Capote threw for Kay Graham in 1966. This was not only the social event of that season, but one that has been remembered throughout the seasons, and the invitations or lack thereof were a source of endless concern in the party world of New York; apparently, the not-invited are still living it down. As for the connection to Proust, Collins writes, "...unlike his 'secret friend' Proust (Capote sought to emulate the Frenchman in his projected magnum opus, *Answered Prayers*, a non-fiction novel biting many of the cafe-society hands that had fed him), who spent the first period of his

adult life immersed in the haut monde before retiring to the cork-lined isolation of his bedchamber to write. Capote tried to do it all." Bravo, Truman. I also want to do it all at once, minus alcoholism.

Leslee also found Proust in *Less Than Angels* by Barbara Pym. Beginning on page 221, there was this: "...once he wrote 'Do you remember that evening when we went walking by the river and sat on the seat by the elderberry bushes? The smell of them reminded me of childhood—a moment out of Proust.' Dierdre had not remembered the flowers particularly, only that she had declared her love for the first time, and he had seemed to accept it. Must I then read Proust? she

asked herself despairingly, seeing the twelve blue volumes with the red labels in Catherine's bookshelves, for she was not much of a reader at the best of times."

In *The New York Times*, July 5, 1996, in an article about a major Lautrec exhibition, Leslee spotted this: "...his lithograph of Bernhardt in "Phedre" can put you in mind of Proust, whose protagonist, after seeing the actress Berma in the play, wondered what all the fuss over her was about..."

When *The NY Times* ran a feature of 100 years of book reviews, Leslee, my tremendous source of references, came across the reprint of a piece first published on July 25, 1925, Rose Lee's critique of *The Guermantes Way* by Marcel Proust. In it, she quotes Ezra Pound, who said that the perfect criticism of Proust should be "written in one paragraph, seven pages long, and punctuated only by semicolons."

Once again, Alex Segal, my amazing source of references to Proust in the world of classical music, came up with two more. In *The Art of the Piano*, by David Dubal, he found this quote from the pianist Artur Rubinstein: "The great pianist smiled. 'I am now blind, I can't read my beloved Proust and Joyce, nor can I look at beautiful women... I am bored.'" And in the *Fanfare Magazine* of November/December 1995, in Peter J. Rabinowitz's review of "Evocation: Legendary Encores Played by Roland Pontinen", he writes: "Pontinen has arranged a bouquet of encores 'in the hope of conjuring up an enchanting atmosphere of a bygone era.' And whether or not he achieves his Proustian goal..."

Now, who was it who sent me the review, by Peter Brooks, in *The NY Times* (date, once again, not visible) of Julia Kristeva's *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature*?

My Proustian life has grown heavy and the result is that this little magazine has sprawled far beyond the limitations of a single person to operate, particularly a single person who shares Proust's conceptions of order, stacks of papers everywhere, with a special presence of stacks around the bed. I adore getting mail, but I get a lot of it, which lands on my desk, on the pile closest to the telephone, "things to do something with as immediately as possible", as I check the phone messages.

Immediately as possible, of course, is a designation of secondary necessity. There is the conflicting order of

things to do now, not when possible, and they are engraved on the desk calendar next to the telephone that is the brain center of the life of P. What I must do, who I must see and call, and why, is there, encoded in personal cryptography. When the lists on each day's space are long, as they always are in fall and winter, the heap of "things to do as immediately as possible" grows until it teeters, and is pushed slightly to the left of the desk-top to accommodate a space for a fresh stack. The first gets buried under packages I have carried in with the mail and dumped for future use; then, as the weeks go by, the first stack will be sifted through many times in search of one of those things I have found time to do, or must suddenly do now. Those are the dangerous moments when things that have come in mails past are separated from the envelopes in which they came, and I can no longer absolutely remember who sent me what.

By the end of the holiday season, there will be at least three stacks of things to be dealt with, and only thin strips of desktop visible. When the holiday season, my least favorite time of year, coincides with the assemblage of an issue of *PST*, I am hard pressed to ferret out the things Proustian from the rest. In January, if there is an empty, haha, day, I may begin to sort and conquer. One thing has become increasingly clear: *PST* needs an intern, badly. Once again, I use this forum for all my interests, activities and desires: is there an intern out there for me?



Brassai

Well, I can't recall who sent me this review. Was it G. Richard Hill? Leslee? Whoever sent it gave me a smile as I read what Brooks had written: "Proust continues to be the Mount Everest that French critics want to conquer... This work... has in the three quarters of a century since his death become the very definition of the modern in art." Thank you, Peter Brooks. So much for those who think of Proust as something of the past; I have personally always viewed his comprehension of the realities of human behavior as guidelines for the future, modern indeed.

I do remember who sent me the *Time Magazine* cover story of July 1, 1996, "Hilary vs. Liddy: Who would be the better First Lady?" That was my dear friend Lin Haley, who couldn't believe that I hadn't seen it already. The author, Richard Lacayo, comes up with a great line: "Like the little cookie in Proust, the words bring on a flood of memories, most of them foul."

Last fall, I missed an event I had really hoped to attend, a Cacophony Society tour of the Rosicrucian Museum in San Jose. Little did I expect that Lisa Archer, who did go along, would turn up a Proust sighting in the Rosicrucian bookstore, hidden in a volume called *The 3-Pound Universe* by Judith Hooper and Dick Teresi, with a forward by Isaac Asimov. Lisa, who is now a Reverend of The Berkeley Psychic Institute, couldn't figure out why this book drew her, and why she thumbed through the chapters, until she came to number seven: "Memory: From Sea Slugs to Swann's Way." It was for me.

I must quote the item in Leah Garchik's "Personal" column in San Francisco's own *Chronicle* on August 7, 1996, which was noticed by several of us. *The New York Review of Books* had run a story about synchronized swimming routines suggested by literature, and Rod Ottinger sent Garchik this one: "Proustomania: While the corps de ballet presents its narrative of *'A la Recherche du Temps Perdu'*, one lone swimmer at the side expresses the solitary nature of artistic creation, exquisitely demonstrating the difficulties of social commentary for one who is a neurotic agoraphobic." While I personally don't think Proust had the slightest difficulty with social commentary, it still made me laugh.

Also, in the last few days, I got email from one of my oldest friends, Miss Vicky Pelino, with a Proust sighting in Henry Miller. I am saving this one for the next issue, though, and just teasing you fans of these sightings

with the fact that it exists. Henry Miller was one of my first literary loves, and he will have an article to himself in the next issue, which will sail blithely into several issues of political incorrectness. I am in many ways politically incorrect myself, and do not wish to slander Miller in the least, merely to suggest that, in his brilliance, he hadn't the slightest concern with what was considered "right" for his times, one of the many things that made him one of my life-long heroes.

I also heard the other day that Proust finally made an appearance on "Jeopardy", the game show that requires contestants to know a lot of stuff. The friend who told me couldn't remember what the reference was, but it was almost enough to know that he'd appeared.

Do, please, keep those sightings coming! Notes of the dates they appeared are most welcome. I am just glad that this publication has no academic pretensions, so I can blithely mention these citations without the requisite footnotes and their essential information. Hah! The former unsuccessful scholar in me, who financed education working in a library, still wants to know.



The Price of Love...

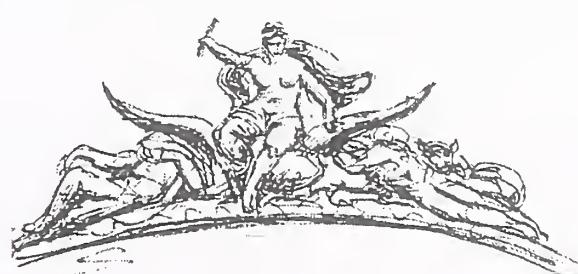
(continued from page 26)

over and above your charming letters of thanks and words of praise would do much to downsize the cost of love.



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Proust Said That PO Box 420436, San Francisco, CA 94142-0436



A corner of Paris by Dean Gustafson

More Letters and Email

(continued from page 2)

I will be needing your table, and besides here is Marcel Proust who requires all of my attention." I tried to regain my cozy feeling of just a minute past, and I read from the book, "Cela prouve bien que c'est un esprit faux et malveillant" At this very point that I finished that sentence, I looked up at the man seated at the table eating a madeleine and drinking tea, and as though by intuition he looked up at me, and he bowed his head slightly and took out a cigarette from a slim gold case. He lit the cigarette and took a long, deep draw from it and called out to the waiter, who came running softly and obsequiously to hear the command of the great master. Proust whispered something to him, and the waiter looked at me, at first somewhat perplexed, but then he smiled at me and drew near my table. I tried hard to read another line from the book, but everything became a blur on the page. I was reeling in my mind. I was upside down at my table. My heart beat so, that I thought it would give me away. But try as I may to conceal my pleasure, I dropped the book, at which Proust again smiled his understanding as he exhaled the gray smoke which rose up to join the beautiful blue smoke of my Cuban cigar.

The waiter by now was standing at my table. He bowed somewhat deferentially, and to my great astonishment he said to me almost in a whisper: Monsieur begs that you do not reveal having seen him here in this cafe. He is most anxious to remain anonymously dead. looked at the little man smoking his cigarette, and I said to him aloud across the room "Of course I promise, Sir, if only you will oblige me with a few dollars to buy some more of these wonderful cigars. He smiled again, and from a wallet which he took from his coat pocket he extracted a few French franks. He came to my table and very inconspicuously slipped me the bills so that the waiter could not see. And without any further ado on his part or mine or the waiters, he left the cafe in a hurry.

As I write you this letter, I am enjoying a good Cuban Cigar and fully awake from my nod. How could I keep such an encounter a secret?

Allen Dronet

Congratulations, Monsieur, on a visit from Proust, and the availability of good Cuban cigars!

...I'm sure you're aware of the fact that your zine has a distinctive charm all its own. It's very warm and engaging. You're quite a good writer—by the way, are you still working on the novel? How many pages by now? Is it enjoyable? Torture? Both? A tout a l'heure, cheri!
Christine

To my friend Christine, and to all of you, I must confess that I have finished a novel for the first time in my life, nearly 400 pages, and perhaps a few more by the time the rewrites are done. In fact, writing it was a huge pleasure, once I got started. To all of you who have written or told me how much you have enjoyed this magazine, and the writing in it, I must give my deepest thanks. It was your encouragement that made me turn my skill to the novel, and without you, it may have remained forever on the list of "things I will do someday"!

Strange to know now that technology was the solution to my isolation. I'm not speaking merely of my geographical location in Alaska, but of the ambiguous territory I inhabited after reading *In Search of Lost Time* on the north slope years ago. I have since taken a graduate seminar on the work and reread it (for the most part). It is nice to know there are others like me out "there."

I must say that "support group" is exactly the phrase because while what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, there is a certain period of recovery from trauma that precedes the supposed benefits of pain... Thanks for the site. Your tireless and unrewarded efforts shall earn you a spot in the great beyond without a doubt.

William J. Thompson
University of Alaska-Anchorage



I will no doubt be happy to have a spot in the great beyond, but I'd rather make a living as a writer.

I just finished No. 5, which I went to City Lights bookstore last Sunday to find—and did. (I had seen *PST* in Berkeley (I think at Cody's) last fall on a trip north, and didn't buy it because I was afraid I might not like it, and wanted, instead, to imagine, for a while, what it might be like. By this trip I felt foolish, thinking I'd never find it.) I particularly enjoyed the recounting of last year's Proust Wake, and laughed out loud at the "resurrection." I will be sending cash for all the

Proust Said That Goes to Berlin

For the last year, I have corresponded with a member of the German Proust Society, Michael Sostarich, who found *Proust Said That* on the Internet, and introduced it to his colleagues. Much to our mutual surprise, this bohemian and unscholarly work found favor in their eyes, and Michael urged me to come to Berlin for the society's annual conference at the end of October.

The prospect of attending moved me profoundly in three ways: the first was that it pleased me immensely to be approved of by members of the academic community, not because I wish in any way to be an academic, but because my university career was riddled with disappointment when I heard my work degraded for insufficient stuffiness. The second was the prospect of fraternizing with serious Proust afficiandos; I reasoned that people who have a deep understanding of Proust also have a deep understanding of life in its funny, albeit cruel, reality, and anticipated much humor and little bullshit in such camaraderie.

The third motivation was personal; six years ago, when I was about to go to Berlin for the first time, planning to arrive around the first anniversary of the Wall coming down, my beloved friend Miss X found a flyer on the bulletin board of the German Department at Berkeley, "East Germans Wish to Correspond with Californians." Write to these people, she said, and maybe you can stay there when you're in Berlin. We did write several letters, but I was too late in announcing the plans for arrival, and only found their prompt response, with instructions on how to get to their house, when I returned home.

Unlike most East Berliners, they had a phone, but the number was in the letter that I didn't receive in time, and much to my shocked surprise, there



was no telephone book for East Berlin. The taxi drivers in West Berlin did not know the streets of the city's other half. "Can't we look at a map?" I asked, and they looked at me in disbelief. "There is no map of East Berlin," they said. So I never got to meet my Berlin connection on that first trip, but

we continued to write to each other, and three years ago, my correspondent and three friends came to California and stayed at Proust HQ. We had such a great time with them that when they left California, I said they could come again as often as they wished, and send their friends. They have sent many friends, two of whom have come twice, and all of them have been stellar additions to our household. So by going to the Proust conference, I would have the added pleasure of seeing all these friends again on their own turf.

Returning from the annual Burning Man festival out at the Black Rock Desert after Labor Day, I devoted my energies to figuring out how I could raise the funds to finance the trip to Berlin. *Proust Said That* may have achieved a certain amount of gracious notoriety, but it has certainly not financed anything, not even itself, since the vast majority of readers will find it on the Net, and two months of my life are given wholly to producing each issue, months in which I don't work at anything lucrative at all. This magazine costs me a great deal to produce, and makes virtually nothing; the other months of my life when I can do paying work must provide the funds to support my literary habit, and travel is rarely in the budget; I must find creative means of financing my travels.

While I was contemplating creative fundraising, I hosted one of those annual "desert decompression parties" I throw each year on our return from Black Rock, occasions when many of our desert confreres gather to show each other photos and discuss the experience we have all

shared out there. One of my guests, the lovely Maid Marian, who I had met only briefly twice, but had gotten to know a bit through the on-line Burning Man email list, asked me what I had been doing since I got back, and I told her about the frantic effort to finance the trip to Berlin.

She looked at me thoughtfully and said, "You know, I have all these frequentflyermiles I can't use. I'll just give them to you." This was the first miracle of *PST*'s European Tour of 1996.

I flew into Berlin on October 29th, and was met at the airport by two friends, my initial correspondent, Michael Rauhut, and Big Joe Stolle, East Germany's most famous blues singer, who has come twice for a stay at Proust HQ and used photos of our house for his last CD cover.

They took me to the house of the charming Konstanze Kriese, our former guest whose name means constant crisis in German, a huge old flat where I would be staying. Konstanze, her delightful boyfriend Horst and their twin sons, five-year-old Konstantin and Leonardo, were in Tunisia for the first several days of my stay, but since I would be spending virtually all those days and evenings with the Proustians, this was an agreeable enough arrangement. I napped at my lodgings for a few hours, and then went out with Michael and Joe for some dinner, and a tour of East Berlin's very lively late-night scene.

The following evening I went to Humboldt University in East Berlin for the opening of the conference, and sat attentively through several

opening lectures in German, a language which I only occasionally understand, I met Michael Sostarich and I was introduced to several other members of the society, including the director, Dr. Speck, who has one of the most impressive art collections in Europe, I am told. After the speeches were done, a large group of people headed out for dinner, walking first to one possible spot, then to another, finding no restaurant able to accommodate such a large group. Michael and I finally opted to go off on our own, to find a restaurant in the Jewish quarter that has become a bastion for the arts in the eastern city, and continued our acquaintance without email. At about 1:00 a.m. I took a taxi back to what was already beginning to feel like home, and climbed the 88 stairs (twice the amount needed to reach Proust HQSF).



Alexanderplatz: thanks to this tower, you can always find it.

I put the key into the lock of the tall and solid door; the key twirled around and around; the door did not open. The key seemed pointless. I pounded on it, in the hope that their other houseguest, the Parisian, Pasqual, would hear me in spite of the massive thickness of the walls and his penchant for lengthy, deep sleep. No Pasqual.

Another round of applying the key to the lock-- still no progress. I inhaled deeply and went back down the stairs to the local cafe a block away, and ordered a Campari and orange juice, the beverage that one must drink frequently and daily while traveling to maintain robust health. I have two rules for travel in Europe: drink plenty of Campari arangeata, and wear a beautiful hat. Even the blasé Parisians adore the fabulous hat, and treat

the wearer with respect.

I and my hat sat at the bar downing Campari and debating the alternatives. Michael was in the process of getting a new phone number that week, and in the East Berlin fashion, they had disconnected his old number before connecting the new. Joe had left town that afternoon to do a series of gigs in other towns. I had several other phone numbers to call, not listed under the name of my friends, but they were all locked in the apartment. I saw a table full of friendly young men next to me, and finally went over and asked if any of them could speak English. One said yes, and I explained the dilemma, asking if one of them could break into the place for me. Understandably, they all declined, but suggested that I check the phone book for a locksmith. After they left, I realized that I had neglected to ask what the German word for locksmith was and, finding no other English-speakers, had to describe my dilemma in pantomime. Now I know the word, *schlosser*.

There was no *schlosser* with a 24-hour number to call, nor could I call, since all the pay phones in East Germany require cards, not change. The cafe was closing, and I went back to the flat, to climb the 88 stairs, in the hope that Pasqual had appeared. Before the ascent, I stopped in at the Turkish bakery on the ground floor to buy one of their flat, round loaves that were just coming out of the oven. The baker refused my money, but gave me a lovely loaf.

Pasqual had arrived hours before and, unable to get in, he had gone to sleep in the office across the street of Zynakreise, Horst and Konstanze's company that publishes, among other things, East German comic art All the banging in the world would not rouse him. I tried the key again, with false hopes, then sat on the stairs and

nibbled at the bread. When I was tired enough, , an hour or so later, I put the bread on a stair above, with my scarf below and above it, laid my head down upon it and slept for a couple of hours, awakening with a bread pattern emblazoned on half of my face when a door slammed on a floor below. Since the baker had given me his most beautiful loaf, it was a splendid pattern.

Until it got light out, I remained seated on the stairs, alternating between annoyance and fits of giggles. At sunrise I went down to the street,

searching for a cafe where I might sit over coffee until a *schlosser* could be found. The only things open were bakeries, where you could stand with a cup of coffee and eat some of the most glorious marzipan pastries on earth. In the bakery I chose, an English-speaking baker told me

where to find the closest locksmith, and I marched over for assistance; he would not open, however, until nine, and it was only seven. The *gemeutlich* corner place, where breakfast would be served at eight, took forever to open; I walked around the neighborhood in search of more immediately available options, and kept coming back, over and over again, while the staff inside prepared to open.

At last the doors opened and I went in to have coffee. I ordered cappuccino, while most of the other customers ordered beer. In the time it took to reach the bottom of my cup, two elderly gentlemen at the next table had ordered three beers. A few minutes before nine I went to wait at the door of the locksmith shop, and was his first customer. I told the story in pantomime. Yes, he said, I can do it, at one in the afternoon. Mmm, no, I said, it has to be done now; he gave me the address of another shop not far away.

At the second shop, they agreed to come

"No longer was it a question of going into his own room where friendliness like a river bore him up. On the contrary he had, hurt him though it might, to try to break through the ice, to force an entry."

-Jean Santeuil

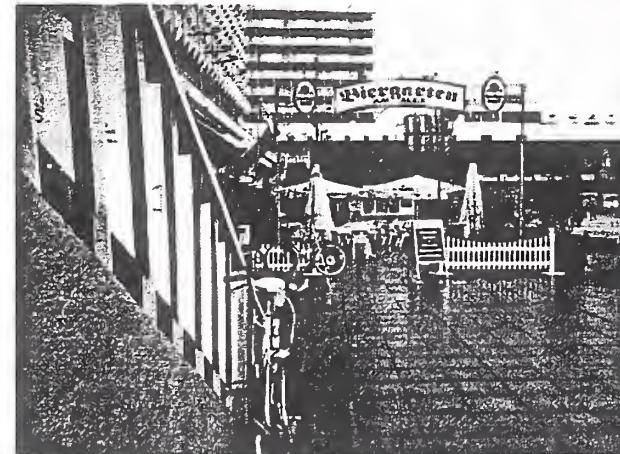


immediately, but refused to take credit cards, traveler's checks or American dollars; cash only. Fortunately I had enough on me to cover the cost. So the locksmith walked back with me, up the 88 stairs, and began an hour-long process of getting the door open. At last, the door opened, but the lock never budged. He simply pushed it open, requiring some minor repairs to the entire door, but at least I was inside. I sat waiting, and hysterically laughing, while he continued to work on the lock.

"You need a new lock," he said finally. "How much?" I asked, "and will you take a traveler's check for the extra cost?" "No," he said, "cash; I'll close the door again, go to the shop and get the lock, and you can go to the bank." I was agreeable enough, until it was clear that he couldn't get the door closed again. Perturbed, he said "Okay, I'll go get the lock."

An hour later, the door was fixed, and the locksmith had left, telling me I must come back to the shop later and pay them the balance of the bill. I promised to come later in the day, after I had napped on the sofa near the door, so I would hear my friend Michael's knock when he came to meet me two hours later, to take me to the Proust conference at Humboldt.

It was pointless to sit through the lectures I wouldn't understand, but it was essential to join the Proustians at the university, because they would be leaving from there to go to a cocktail party at the home of Nicholaus Sombart, a well-known writer and Proust fanatic. It was only socially that I could get to know these brilliant people and chat with them in my barely mediocre French and their excellent English. All the members of this society spoke at least two languages fluently; most of them knew three languages, slipping back and forth among the tongues, depending on to whom they were speaking.



The requisite and ubiquitous biergarten

Nicholaus Sombart lives in an elegant old apartment off the Kurfürstendamm, West Berlin's glorious shopping and dining avenue. Dark olive green walls lit by crystal chandeliers were lined, up, down and across, with artwork of obvious value and beauty, and where there was no art, there were books. The coffee table in the living room provided only a few inches of space for one's champagne glass, as all the rest was commandeered with stacks of things to read. My own house, too, is similarly endowed, and by the time I have added the same number of years as my host to my collecting mania, it might look just the same.

I had only met a few people at the party, and many eyed me curiously, the unknown face sporting the superb, if slightly eccentric, hat. I simply did the cocktail party social thing, and spoke to everyone with whom I could make eye contact, introducing myself as an American visitor to the conference who did this small magazine. At this, everyone brightened, including the host, an immensely successful and gracious gentleman with an obvious comprehension of bohemia, and told me they'd heard about it and would love to see it. I began to pull out copies and every minute of the event I saw people reading them. They praised my loving and unscholarly work that was helping to bring Proust to the world, apologising profusely for not speaking perfect English. At that moment I knew that after hosting the Proust Wake of 1996 six days after my return home, I would be turning myself in to the Goethe Institute for classes.

It surprised me that few people really spoke to me about Proust, although his name certainly came up often enough. What they wanted to talk about was what I was doing and I was able to explain my efforts with the short presentation I had prepared in French, the second language of the conference.

After the party, 14 of us wandered off in search of dinner, and occupied an assembled table in an Italian place a block away. Given the ambiance, the exchange shifted occasionally into the fourth language, Italian, as food and wine nudged Proust into third place in the general conversation. A great deal of English was spoken on my behalf, or particularly witty bits explained to me. After dinner, eight of the 14 at the table lit up an after-dinner cigar. Not a single person in the place so much as noticed, probably because they were smoking, too.

I was sitting next to a most intelligent and lively young woman, a non-smoker who nonetheless had a pack on her, and had one after dinner. The brand she offered me was called "M", and I recognized it immediately as the European version of the brand I favor in the US,

More, slim, long, brown things. Once, years ago, I shifted to More Light, recognizing in this name Beethoven's last words. It became apparent over the next few days that if "M" became the brand of choice for me, Miss P, the combination of these single-letter names would be MP, Marcel Proust. Well. Then someone pointed out that the other interpretation would be PM, and what could be a more appropriate naughty habit for the hopelessly nocturnal?

It was not too long after midnight when I made it back to the flat in Prenzlauerberg, the Soho of Berlin, after an annoying acquaintance with the new key and the peculiarities of its operation, a short fit of giggles when the first couple of tries were unsuccessful, and finally making my way in with extreme relief.

Fortunately, the next evening's social event would not begin until eight, so I had enough time to sleep off the dilemma of the lock. During one conversation with Dr. Speck, I raised the question of why all the conference events had begun so early. Proust, after all, a chronic nocturnal, would

*"...only a roundabout way of
reaching the Spee..."*
-The Guermantes Way

never have been able to get to any of them in time, and I had fallen easily into my noon to 4:00 a.m. schedule, nearly Proustian, quite easily on this other continent. An eight o'clock function, however, gave me enough time to get some cash and make my bewildered way through the ups, downs, arounds and throughs of the U-bahn and S-bahn (and finally just flag a taxi).

The entirety of East Berlin is under reconstruction. In the six years since my last visit to this fabulous city, the Alexanderplatz that was barren and empty has once again grown into a massive hub for the city, with cranes and construction everywhere, and the labyrinthine subways that cross there offer an aerobics workout to anyone with dubious comprehension of the temporary directional signs. Everywhere in the eastern city, tram lines end before they should because vehicular traffic stops where streets are torn up, or the sidewalks themselves are full of contractors or housepainters at work. Finding anything becomes increasingly complicated.

Saturday night's destination, the Ermelerhaus, is on the bank of the Spee, the river that divides the city, its current broken by the presence of an island devoted solely to museums. Berlin has more museums than any city I have ever visited, containing, among other things, the finds of those intrepid German anthropologists who first scoured the world for the remnants of antiquity. At the Pergamon, you can walk through an ancient street of Babylon, or you can spend a rainy afternoon at the Egyptian Mueum in a burial chamber. My directory of Berlin, which bewildered me, had four pages of museums listed, and I vowed to see at least ten percent of them after the conference was over. But first, I had to find the place where this most elegant of dinners would be happening this evening.

As I said, I eventually gave up and got a taxi, but even the taxi driver had some difficulty, as the banks of the Spee were also under reconstruction. He could not drive to where I was going; he did

leave me off a block or so from the place at the river, and pointed me in the right direction.

The site of this event confused me, as I was expecting a restaurant, but found instead an elegant old building with little sign of its function, which I conceived to be a gracious private hotel. Following the sound of voices up a curved staircase, I found myself in the reception area for the event, where familiar faces were seen behind champagne glasses, and conversation was lively. Once again, I met several people who wanted to discuss my magazine and congratulate me warmly.

Beside the reception area, two adjoining rooms were full of tables lavishly decked out for dinner service. After a while, we were advised to move into the dining rooms and take a seat of our choice. I didn't know any of the people surrounding me, as Michael had suggested we mingle, but soon found myself quite happy to be where I was. Next to me on my left was a charming woman who said, "You know, there are two kinds of people in this society, the scholars, and the lovers. I'm a lover." Immediately to her left sat a dashing fellow, Andreas, who had just received his master's on the theme of Proust and art, but who thought his PhD should be on Proust and humor, so I found him quite delightful immediately. Across from me was a woman who books concerts for a Bach ensemble in Cologne, and since Bach is the official music behind the creation of PST, we had a fine conversation. Beside her sat a professor of art at a German university, an artist who had devoted his career to a series of drawings based on Proust. On the whole, I found myself

exceptionally well-situated.

It was a dinner in the European tradition, beginning with an appetizer, followed by a soup, then the fish course, then the meat course and dessert, several wines and cigarettes throughout, sparkling conversation, and much lingering at table long after the last of the food and drink had been consumed. Just before dessert, Michael had appeared to ask me if I might come over and meet one of his friends, and she in turn took me to meet her two elegant sons in their early twenties. They had seen parts of *Proust*

Said That, which Michael had printed out to show them, and they were both curious and excited about the potential of the Internet. In a matter of a few days, one of the brothers would be getting a new computer, and Internet access, and both were looking forward immensely to what they would find.

When the Proustian part of the evening had ended, in the tradition of the San Francisco contingent, I proposed we go on to some late-night entertainment to further my knowledge of the fabled Berlin-by-night experience, and was able to rouse a party of four. At the suggestion of one member of this party, we made our way to a club in the section of town I was already beginning to know, Orianenstrasse, the old Jewish sector that contained seemingly endless warrens and byways of contemporary arts. When we had all consumed our absolute fill of cocktails for the night, we sought taxis to take us in our varied directions, I to return for a decent night's sleep, and my usual rising at noon. For the others, it would be an early day, the last of the conference, when the last of the business would be addressed and the round table discussion for members

"Such are the blessed mornings that a sleepless night, the tossed nerves of a journey, a physical exaltation, some event out of the common, will hollow out for us in the hard rock of our daily lives, mornings that retain the delicious feverish colors and the dreamlike charm which sets them apart in our memory like an Aladdin's cave, magical and prismatic in an atmosphere all its own."

-Contre Saint-Beuve



would take place.

I did need to rush over to the University for the closing hours of the day, if only to say goodbye to Michael, who would be leaving Berlin in the late afternoon, and to the other members of the society that I had met. After the usual confusion on the U-bahn, S-bahn and other forms of transportation, and the inevitable taxi to the destination, I found the auditorium where the previous three days' events had transpired totally dark and empty. Was I so late?

I wandered down the stairs from the auditorium lobby and around the building in search of someone who might know what had become of the Proustians. I walked out a back door and into a garden, in search of one of the people in charge of the building who I had seen about over the last few days. Finding no one, I went back to the building and discovered that the doors had been locked behind me, leaving me stranded in the garden. So I pounded on this door, and pondered the locked door karma of my time in Berlin.

After standing like an abandoned waif, peering into the building for some time, I gave up and began a careful examination of the garden's periphery in search of an escape route. I had made it about three-quarters of the way around when one of the building people came out into the garden and spotted me, let me into the building, and said something else that was clearly important, but beyond the limits of my German. I chose this to mean that I should just head out through the front door and remain in the publicly accessible path to Unter den Linden, the avenue that everyone can figure out how to find, even the befuddled tourists.



An East Berlin store front

Following this imagined advice, I made it out to the other side of the building and stopped for a moment on the steps leading up to the sculpture out front, to regard the building and try to fathom where the Proustians had gone. A gentle rain was falling on this gray late afternoon, and I was sorry to have missed the chance to thank these people for letting me join them and for all their gracious responses to this magazine. I stood alone in the

square, in my black swing coat, sensible but somehow elegant black lace-up boots, black leather gloves, and the black hat reminiscent of Madeleine gone awry, having a moment as dark as my ensemble. I missed them.

But then the doors of the building swung open and they began trickling out, some of them noticing that I was there and stopping to exchange parting words. Dr. Speck came by and reminded me that the Proust library needed copies of each back issue, and mentioned something of an exhibition. I missed Michael entirely, as he had left while

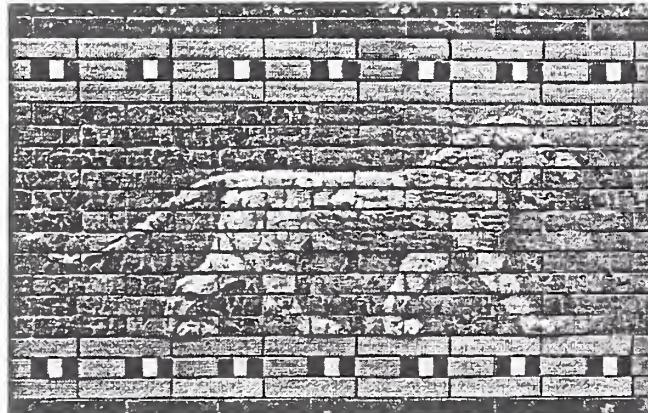
I was locked in the garden, but I did wait until the last Proustian was gone, like some self-appointed farewell committee for the conference.

The sky was getting darker and I wondered if this was the hour or an approaching storm, and cast a quick glance at my Proust watch. This watch, a present from *PST*'s fan Jay Reeg, has no numbers, but the first sentence of *A La Recherche de Temps Perdu*, in French, spiraling out from the center to the edges of the face. It had been a hit at the conference, all right. The darkness was only a matter of time, as the Proust watch said five o'clock. Later, I was to remember this moment, and find in it some curious connection.

I spent the next week in East Berlin, prowling the vast and labyrinthine corridors of the museums, S-bahn, and U-bahn, discovering the telephones that worked on credit cards, as the phone card that I had acquired made only local calls, and waiting in the lines at American Express. The one public transit system connection I learned without much ado was the one that took me from Alexanderplatz station, where there was the right phone, a huge revolving indicator of the time in San Francisco, a place to exchange American dollars, and the only source I had found for "M" to the tramline to Prenzlauerberg. It was easy to learn, as it passed so many things of interest, like the Casino, beer gardens, and the most fabulous yuppie food emporium I'd seen since my last visit to New York.

This department store in East Berlin, the Kaufhof, is like the department stores of the past, places where you could get just about everything you needed, stopping on the way out to get the groceries. Specialty islands in the market offered hundreds of kinds of cheeses and wursts, perfect international produce; the aisles offered hundreds, or was it thousands, of sweets, cookies, candies, cakes. Almost every afternoon I found myself in there investigating the mysteries of German cuisine.

Every evening there was something to do with friends. The days and nights were entertainingly full, waiting for either Pasqual or Horst to be ready to make the drive to Paris, the next destination of the Proust tour. Konstanze had insisted that I should not take the train, since both of them intended to go there anyway, and it was just a matter of dealing with the essential business before leaving. Much as I was enjoying the week, I had really hoped to spend as much of it as possible in Paris, but I waited anyway, grateful for



Detail of a street from Babylon at the Pergamon

the chance to drive through the countryside and see so much. On Thursday it was decided that Horst would drive, but he couldn't leave until Friday night.

I came home on Friday evening with provisions for the drive from the Kaufhof, to the second miracle of the trip.

The radio that day had kept up a running report of the news from Paris: the truckers were on strike and barricading the roads in and out of Paris. The media in Berlin was full of information; for three days it had maintained a running commentary and full reportage of the presidential election in America, covering even the nut

case candidate who campaigned from a toilet seat, who no one had heard of here. One afternoon on the radio I heard a fifteen-minute report about a good friend of my old roommate, Fil Slash, the musician Gary Floyd, who was performing in town. So the truckers' strike had bothered Konstanze all day, and on the way home, she had stopped at her travel agent friend's office and picked up two plane tickets for us that would deposit us in the city limits, and save Horst the eleven hour drive each way that might not even get us into town.

The flight would leave at an ungodly, un-Proustian hour the following morning, but we all sat for hours at the kitchen table drinking Campari and orange juice, laughing, talking and wishing that Konstanze would be coming with us. And at an hour late even by Berlin standards, we went off to pack and sleep for at least a couple of hours.



"To all of them he said that he would return the following year, and perhaps stay longer. He had loved so many things too well.."

-Jean Santeuil

Proust Said That Goes to Paris

Upon arrival in Paris, we went to the hotel reservation desk and discovered that reasonable hotel rooms were hard to come by. We settled for the best bargain they had to offer and began the series of transports that would take us there. En route, I watched the street signs, and felt massively gleeful when the bus followed the Boulevard Haussmann for many blocks, before depositing us at the Opera, where a brief Metro trip and two short blocks of walking took us to the door of the hotel. We were in the 9th Arrondissement, Proust territory, and the suitability of this location filled me with excitement.

We dumped our baggage at the hotel and hit the streets, beginning our explorations with the corner cafe, where Horst noted immediately that the beer was too expensive. Welcome to Paris. We wandered through the commercial district, getting off the main streets and investigating less crowded thoroughfares. After a few hours, the priority became choosing some place to eat. Being bewildered by the options, we made up our minds only when stopping for food had to be done at that very second whether we liked it or not, and at the inconspicuous corner cafe right here, which served the best *pommes frites* in memory.

Food reminded our bodies that we had hardly slept the night before, and after another couple of miles of walking, a recuperative nap before dinner sounded like the best plan. Collapsing, we slept much too long. I woke up at four in the morning, but Horst wasn't conscious until almost seven. For the first time in my life, I was the first person in the hotel dining room for breakfast.

There was no question about what I wanted to do first on this day in Paris: I wanted to go to see 102 Boulevard Haussmann, the address at

which Proust had written most of *Remembrance*. The bank that had bought it and forced him to move still owns it, but they had at last reopened the apartment, complete with new cork on the walls and other historical restorations, although his furniture is now in the Musee Carnavalet. I knew that it would not be open on a Sunday, but I would come back on the Monday, the only weekday of our short stay in Paris, and stand in the room where this great act of creativity had taken place, hoping that the aura of genius would still permeate the space and leave its mark on the visitors.



The Champs Elysee in the rain

We walked down the Boulevard Haussmann and, as we got closer, I began to feel more and more excited, but insisted upon enjoying the things we passed, having a good look at them, not just running straight for the destination that was so

important. These were, after all, the streets He had walked, the things He had seen, and as such they retained a special significance not to be ignored.

"It's here," Horst had said, and the tingling suspense of approach avalanched into heart thumping and pulse racing. I walked to the building and put my hands on it, standing for a moment like a blind person at a dead end. Horst stood by obligingly, like the companion to an autistic while I let the energy in the walls course through me. After a few moments, inhaling deeply, I began to examine the front of the building. It was at the front door of the bank that I finally saw the notice, advising customers that the bank would be closed on Monday for the holiday.

The holiday! Of course, November 11, the day of the Armistice! The bank was going to be closed on my only weekday in Paris, information sufficient

to blacken my mood, send me stamping in small circles with arms flapping up and down ridiculously. Any of you who have read the last issue of PST may remember that the opening essay of that issue was how terrible holidays are, how they put all the agreeable things of ordinary life on hold, and never had I felt more irritated by one of these observations.

Horst scoured the adjacent buildings for a doorbell to ring or some neighbor to approach in the effort to keep my anti-holiday fit at bay. Resourcefully, Horst reminded me that my inability to get in only made it necessary for me to come back. How true, I admitted; I must come back, just the excuse I needed to make this all happen again soon.

It was time to make a telephone call to another correspondent who had offered to do the museum tour of the day, to see the portrait done by Jacques-Emile Blanche at the Musee D'Orsay and MP's furniture at the Carnavalet. When we spoke, we arranged to meet at the monument underneath the Arc de Triomphe in an hour.

A soft but nasty rain fell as we paraded up the Champs Elysee. The sight of the hundreds of flags hanging limply from the streetlights down the entire length of the avenue, as colorful and atmospheric as it was, did not cheer me much, and the hour that we spent under the Arc, huddling in the small sections where the rain didn't splash through, asking strangers meeting the general description of the person we were waiting for if they were our unseen friend, plus the deepening layer of dampness pervading our clothing, made matters worse. When an hour of waiting had ended, we gave up, needing very much the warmth of a cafe interior, and the recuperative aid of Campari and orange juice, the central heating of coffee and the experience of

pommes frites.

Revived, we hurried to the Musee D'Orsay to see the portrait of Proust. In the annoying tradition of holidays, what is not closed is horribly packed; the line waiting for entry stretched out dismally, and I was concerned. Only a non-flash camera is allowed in museums, and the light on this gray day was failing. I needed to find Proust as soon as possible; I asked at the front desk immediately upon entry, and was told to go all the way to the back and up the stairs, and ask the docent at the rear desk.

Getting to the back was like navigating Macy's shortly before Christmas and there were dozens of things that drew the eye and attention, but I was not deterred as much as I would have liked, making resolute and unaccompanied passage to the second floor guide. Asking him, I got general directions and set off on the quest, but couldn't find it where expected. In a slight panic I headed back for more explicit directions, and was told that the piece might be out on loan to another collection, or might have been moved recently. Seeing my agitation,

he questioned it and got the ultra-quick description of my concern. "Are you American?" he asked curiously. "Yes," I

said. "Why?" He stared at me with a certain weary solicitude and said, "I'm sorry for you."

I would have loved to question his odd remark, but raced off instead to find the piece I'd come specifically to see. This time, with some further information about the likely spot, I did find it. I know this piece well, as it appears in a considerable percentage of books about Proust, and I have seen it on postcards. Standing in front of the actual portrait, though, was oddly moving, and I



Bread in a bakery window

*"The Louvre and all the other museums were closed..."
-Time Regained*

stood there for a very long time, and nearly cried.

I have seen many portraits painted in my lifetime, and have sat for a few myself. Standing in front of the oil paint on canvas, my imagination ran back a hundred years to the studio of Jacques-Emile Blanche, to the sittings in which the artist had Proust's company while he painted, and the deeply scrutinizing, almost other-worldly gaze to capture.

Blanche hated this portrait so much that he tore it up, and Proust was only able to salvage the upper torso and head. It reminded me of the time when my dear friend Harley Biermann, who is a wonderful painter, asked me to pose for a portrait. I did, and when she was happy with it and I had a first look, I said, "Miss Harley, the nose is enormous." She surgically reduced the nose to a more believable proportion and I found the result beautiful; she, on the other hand, detested it, found the finished piece without character, and relegated it to the back of her closet. She has moved twice since, and I suspect that this piece met with a violent end.

Looking at this portrait was like looking at a dead friend. I was mesmerized for so long that I began to hear people saying "Why is she looking at that for so long?" and others whispering "That's a portrait of Proust," which seemed to explain everything. This brought me to my senses, and I pulled out the camera to get the photo before it was really too late. Of course those pictures never came out. Even later Horst tried to photograph me next to the portrait, and those came out even less.

It was dark by the time we left the museum and walked quickly to the Louvre. Admission at this hour was hopeless, but at least we could ascertain whether it would be open the next day, which, of course, thanks to the holiday schedule, it would

not. Horst's plan to visit there while I went to Proust's last residence, Pere Lachaise, was dashed, but he gallantly assured me that he also wanted to go to the famous necropolis to visit Jim Morrison.

By the time we had finished with Paris for the day, it was 4:00 a.m.; I had been awake for 24 hours and was nearly as dead as Proust. But there were very few hours free for sleep, or for horizontal inactivity, because tomorrow evening we would be flying back to Berlin, and there was still too much to see and do.



It was still morning when we headed out to Pere Lachaise, still gray and still raining slightly. With Horst along, I was spared the necessity of comprehending the Metro and when he said "Let's get off here," I simply followed him.

We had exited at a stop called "Stalingrad". For an East Berlin resident, who had lived through the conversion to democracy and had seen all the names, statues, sites and strongholds of the former regime disappear over time, he was fascinated by the reference to this happily forgotten past and had to have a look. We wandered around this working class district trying to recall the history, searching for an explanation, but enough Stalingrad was enough, and we opted to head on to the cemetery. As we returned to the Metro, I took a few photos of this untouristed district.

We got off the Metro before the Pere Lachaise station and entered the grounds from the back, wandering and marveling at the immensity of the place and the artful mansions of the dead, realizing soon that finding our beloved departed was not so easy. After a while we encountered some other tourists armed with maps they had acquired at the main entrance and got our first bearings from them. Half an hour later we stopped others with maps and got an even better conception. We

finally found the simple black marble slab that contained the Prousts, a mere few hundred feet from the main entrance, so Marcel could have an excellent view of the comings and goings of the dead and the living.

Right beyond the entrance, I saw numerous florists open for this busy day when everything was closed except the cemetery and, after a moment or two of standing at the grave, I decided to go and get him some flowers. I chose a small bunch of violets, flowers I had brought my mother regularly for years, and went back to lay them beside his name. For some reason, the sight of this tomb did not sadden me like the portrait I had seen the day before. The prospect of leaving a copy of *PST* with him, and taking a full-daylight photo of the magazine at the grave, filled me with excitement for the assembly of this issue.

With unbridled glee, I pulled a copy of *PST* out of my purse, stood it up next to his name, and laid the violets beside it, then pulled out the oh-so-portable paper camera and stepped back, grinning, to get this snapshot that I had dreamed of since the prospect of coming to Paris had arisen. I moved around until the elements were all aligned perfectly, put my finger on the button and pushed.

The button did not move. Confused, I looked closely, and saw that there were zero photos left to be taken. Glee gave way to ridiculous frustration, enough stamping of feet to disturb the dead, followed quickly by a black-humored fit of giggles. Horst suggested that it was time for him to find Jim, but perhaps I might go out to the commercial

district around the entrance and look for another disposable camera, then meet him later.

There were two camera stores in the district, both closed. Everything was closed, except the cafes, restaurants, florists and a shop selling Chinese knick-knacks, items which Proust's friend Leon Daudet had once compared to him. Totally frustrated, I found no option but to return to the grave to say goodbye.

On the way in, I saw a photographer smoking a pipe as he bent and stretched to record beautiful grave sites on film. As on the night when I found myself locked out of my apartment in Berlin, I was without shame in requesting the help of strangers and dashed over to ask this gentleman if I could pay him for a photo.

He listened politely, but demurred. "You need a professional photographer," he said, "and I am just an amateur." "Well," I responded, pulling the irritating paper camera out of my purse, "I am more of an amateur; I just want a snapshot, really." But he declined, embarrassed to be unsuited to the task, and I thanked him for listening and marched dejectedly back to pay my last respects.

At the grave, I turned when I heard the sound of footsteps moving swiftly over the less famous remains in Proust's neighborhood and saw the photographer, with pipe still clenched between his teeth, coming in my direction. "I changed my mind," he said, "I'll do it for you." But he insisted that I, too, should be captured in this photo, and posed me over the slab.

It has always been my intention to leave myself out of the magazine, to be the unseen Miss P, or, for those who have not read every word of this magazine carefully, perhaps Mr. P. I am always charmed when my readers think I am a man; this means that the novels I write (and the first was



finished a week before I left for Europe) will contain characters that would be believably masculine as well as feminine. But I could hardly argue with his offer, and added the rain on the grave to the assorted wetness on my black coat, thanked him profusely, offered money for postage which he refused, left him with a copy of *PST* and my card, waved goodbye and blew grateful kisses. Before I left, I moved the increasingly soggy copy of *PST* to the top of the slab, where the rain and even the briefest interludes of sun would leave it somewhat permanently affixed, until it, too, would deteriorate, like the beloved body below.

When I met Horst later and told him this story, I was certain that I knew the reason the photographer had changed his mind. "It's the hat," I said. "Parisians cannot resist this hat."

Our next stop was the Museum of Contemporary Culture in the Bois, because there was a show of Asterisk comics there and Horst wouldn't leave Paris without Asterisk t-shirts for his twin sons, who are serious fans. For me, the attraction was merely the Bois du Bologne, Proust's childhood playground, but by the time we arrived, it was getting dark, and there was no time to locate the Allee Marcel Proust. It was only a few hours before our plane would take us back to Berlin.

We returned to the Metro. "It's time to go back to the hotel and get our stuff," Horst said. "What time is it exactly?" I looked at my Proust watch. "It's just about five," I said.

Horst left me at a cafe by the Opera, and kindly ran back to the hotel for the baggage while I had a final Parisian Campari. When he returned he had a last expensive beer, and we picked up the bags to head out to the bus. As we exited the cafe, a Parisian spoke to me for the last time of that visit. "Quelle jolie chapeau!" he said.

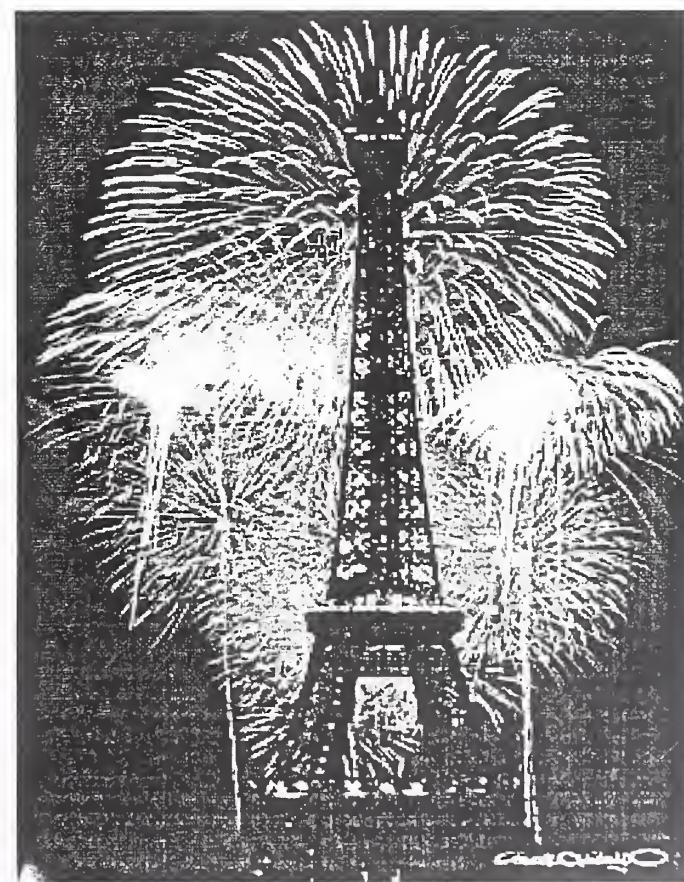
At the airport, I checked my watch to see how soon we would board. Much to my surprise, it still said five o'clock and has remained there since, stopped at the time when I was reminded that I must leave Paris, and at the same hour that I saw the last of the German Proustians in Berlin.

We flew back to Berlin, and I filled the last few days there with confusion on the undergrounds and visits with friends. On my very last night

there, Konstanze threw a party, inviting all the East Berliners who had ever been guests at my house in San Francisco. For the first time, I saw this group of friends all together, and we toasted each other through the night.

"And of something which a year before made me yawn I have said to myself with anguish, longingly contemplating it in advance: "Shall I really be unable to see this thing? I would give anything for a sight of it!""

-Time Regained



A Last Stop in New York

I had a very long stop-over in London, waiting for the plane that would deposit me in New York. I had sliced three days off my time in Europe to see two people in the Big Apple, my charming correspondent Leslee Sumner, who contributed an article to my last issue, and my aunt in Queens. Because I was to spend several hours sitting around at Heathrow, I took advantage of the time to cruise the duty-free shopping mall and settle into an airport cafe to write about my last days in Berlin. Those days were without moments for reflection or writing, given over entirely to visiting with friends, last-minute adventures on the underground, and one errand by car to a perfume-maker in West Berlin who I asked to reproduce my long-adored, and only perfume, di Borghese, now no longer made, with Horst and Konstanze. On my last night in town, Konstanze had invited all the people who had been guests at my house in San Francisco, more than a dozen friends, and we stayed up all night remembering all the funny things we had experienced together across the world.

In the airport cafe, the words raced across the pages of my antediluvian notebook. A laptop would have been grand, if heavier than a real camera, but I grew up writing with paper and pen and still do it with a certain proficiency. When I had written of the last minutes at the airport in Berlin that morning, I looked up at the clock, and realized that I had missed my plane. My arrival in New York was much delayed.

My intriguing association with Miss Leslee was born of our mutual love of Proust, but became much more personal as we learned about each other through our frequent email connection. By the time I had rung her doorbell, two hours later than planned, and saw her for the first time, I felt as though I'd known her for years. She and her gracious husband, Brian, made me feel once again at home, and we almost immediately went out for a drink at a local bistro to toast our meeting, in person, at last.

The next day we walked out into the vibrating streets of Manhattan, beginning with a long stretch through Central Park and a foray along Amsterdam Avenue, a substitution for no stop in Amsterdam during this

European tour. Ever since my first sight of the city of Vermeer I have gravitated there, in love with the visual charm of the place, and the anything-goes attitude of its more than civilized population.

Having visited New York many times in the last few years, I had no demands of tourism to color the day, and the millions of pieces of art I had seen in Berlin made museum stops of secondary interest for once. We did go to Soho to see the Basquiat show at a gallery and have a look around at other charming things, but mostly our peregrinations were based on three of our mutual interests: gourmet establishments, public bathrooms, and then I took her to see , the street of shoe stores, East 8th Street, where I must go every time I am in New York. Leslee and I share the Imelda Marcos fetish, and are both horrified by this season's offerings of hideous footwear. This was the first time I had been to New York without coming home with new shoes; but, when the fashions turn to the feminine again, I have left Leslee with a regular destination for her own schedule.



A corner of the Algonquin

By early evening, we had made it back to Leslee's to prepare for the evening's outing, a meeting with her friend David, yet another Proust fan, a dinner out and further cocktails at the Algonquin, the perfect spot for a literary chinwag. As she prepared the cheeses, olives, bread (from the splendid Gourmet Garage in Soho) and cocktails of Lillet with a blood navel orange wedge (Balducci's), I watched a Proust documentary made by Wolfe/Carter productions for South Carolina Educational TV, "Marcel Proust: A Writer's Life."

This well-done documentary features an actor, a lovely, wan creature who appears hovering behind lace curtains, writing in bed and in similarly unconvivial moments. I was mildly troubled by his moustache, one side of which seemed to hover slightly above the other, and he did not look gay enough or sufficiently "oriental" in his beauty. I much preferred the actors in "102 Boulevard Haussmann" or "Celeste", but was still moved. How sad to be reminded that our friend Marcel had spent so much of his life in seclusion and a deep sense of loss.

back issues.

By the way, although it's probably not current enough to be a sighting (more probably it's now a citing), you may be interested in John Ashbery's comments on Proust's novel in an interview with Peter Stitt for the Paris Review (c. 1980), found in the collected Writers at Work (Seventh Series) and in their poetry number, Poets at Work. A snippet: "I also identified, on account of [a] girl in my art class, with the narrator, who had a totally impractical passion which somehow both enveloped the beloved like a cocoon and didn't have much to do with her."

Joseph Mihelarakis, Los Angeles

Just visited your Proust site and wanted to tell you it made my day. Wonderful. Such a labor of love and so beautifully done. Proust would be proud; you've certainly stirred tender feelings in me. Bravo.

Douglas McMullen, NYC

Unbelievable this site, if only Proust could see this. He certainly would have gazed at it. I was brought up by Proust, my master. It's good to see he is not a forgotten man.

Reynier Molenaar



When you have a moment, please check out my "Selections From Proust", which is on my home page.

Jim Hammond

<http://members.aol.com/soren/home.html>

Hi. I'm just letting you know about a small group of us in Seattle who started reading *Remembrance* last year and plan, slowly but surely, to make it through the whole thing. We are a little book discussion group which formed almost five years ago, specifically because I needed some people to read *Ulysses* with. Where did I find these people? In a University of Washington Experimental College class on Faulkner, where else? I figured if I were ever to find such people, that was my chance. So it came about, we of course annually celebrate Bloomsday, etc., etc. But enough about Jimmy, what about Marcel. Someone got it into her head to read *Remembrance*. We agreed to start with just one volume, which we read last year. We read slowly and discuss, like sipping a fine wine, or whatever. Anyway, everyone loves the thing and so we do hope to make it through - over the years. When I came upon the Proust Support Group it was interesting to see the math - that one could read it in eleven

months by reading 10 pages a day (I think that was it). We will probably take a few years - but what better way to spend them? So, I'm just getting around to contacting you, so you know of another small cadre of the obsessed . . .

Leah Kosik

Read on, my friends! I only hope that our mutual attempt will inspire others.

I'm not sure what I was expecting when I clicked on the Proust button (thingy, whatever). I like Proust, so I thought I could legitimately select a focus group who liked him. I have to say that I REALLY enjoyed your writing. It was liberating, thoughtful, and exacting rather like, well, Proust.

Jim Philipchuk



What would Marcel have made of E-mail? There is his essay on the telephone, in which the demoiselles are assimilated to remote goddesses. He found the disembodied human voice, conjuring up as it does a whole personality, to be a notable phenomenon. Celeste made all his calls, and Celeste/Francoise carried his messages tirelessly. He liked their interposition and mediation, and relied heavily on it to insulate himself from the wear and tear of the everyday, while he made a new world. So perhaps he would have used E-mail... Pretensions to the mastery of technology amused him; Brichot would have been a notable bore on the subject of RAM and throughput.

Laurence Pope

I just wanted to let you know how much I've enjoyed Proust Said That.... I have sadness about no longer having any more articles to read. I hope issue 6 comes out soon..

G. Richard Hill



"How kind of you to have written me that magnificent letter! I could have no greater honor...but... what a strange idea you have of my life! 'Huge dividends' makes me smile sadly, for I earn nothing from my books."

- Letter to Robert de Montesquiou, end of April 1921

