

PROUST SAID THAT

Issue No. 7

July 1998



In This Issue: How Proust Can Change Your Life, Astrology,
Absinthe, Guns, The Wake of 1997, Literary Encounters,
Coffee Eclairs, Sightings and More



Letters.... and Email



For your efforts to set evolution back on track, thank you! What a refreshing change from the proliferation of inane junk being spewed from the processors of electronic prophets in the name of freedom of speech! As a white-skinned native of that Dark Continent called Africa, I am doing time here for the sins and missionary zeal of the fathers. (Needless to say, the Proust Support Group has proved itself invaluable in keeping the old humors from running totally amok during this time!) I can think of no better way of regaining lost time than spreading the word via PST that all has not been in vain. To which effect:

Please let me know how much it will cost to send a portfolio of all the hitherto published editions of PST to each of three of my soul friends in exile: In the UK, in Chicago and in South Africa. And how payment should be made — if and when my debtors decide to pay me for a change!

Charlette du Toit
South Africa

The latest edition that I am able to find is #5. Please say that there have been more issues since and that I am just having difficulty with my search. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Nicole DuCharme

I've been hearing all about your homepage and I just had to check it out. I surely wasn't disappointed!!!

Corey Higgins

While I surf the internet almost everyday, your site is one of the very few where I have read almost every page in its entirety. I am now looking forward to your next issue. In response to Robert Homes' comment about the Moncrieff v. Kilmartin translation I would like to point out that *In Search of Time Lost* is actually a literal translation of the French title *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* and Moncrieff was the one to take liberties with the translation of the title. For those who prefer the original Moncrieff translation, it can be found used at www.bibliofind.com.

S. Cornet

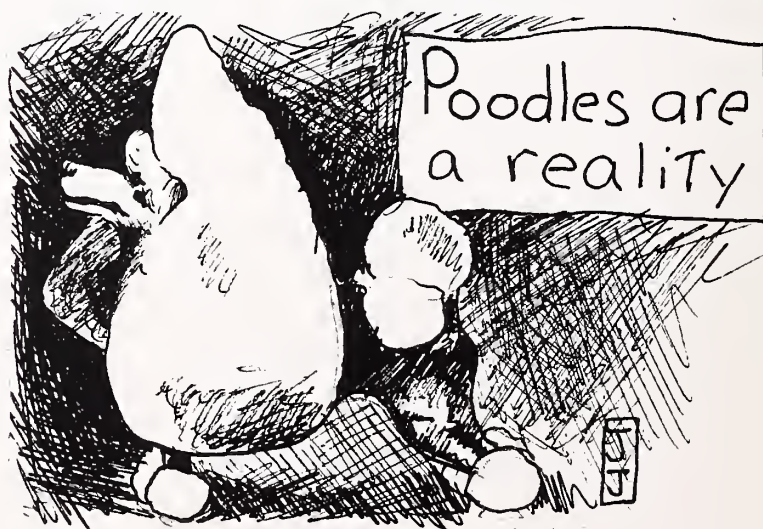
(continued on page 25)

Proust Said That is the unofficial organ of the wholly unofficial Marcel Proust Support Group of San Francisco. It is published as often as time and finances permit, usually twice a year; the objective is to cover the life, times, work and interests of the amazing Marcel Proust, as well as the exploits of our local support group, and the life and interests of Miss P, your publisher, editor, principle writer and recipient of all the bills.

I must begin every issue with thanks to the wonderful people who help make this publication a reality. Thanks first to Cynsa Bonnoris and Jeffrey Gray, who make the online version possible, and solve the myriad technical problems which arise. Once again, huge thanks to Dean Gustafson for the beautiful cover that captures the moment in *Remembrance* when Proust discovers he can write, to Alisa Lowden for her assistance, and to Gavin Wood for scanning all the graphics for me. In this issue I have the first contributions from Stuart Mangrum and Dana Cook, for which I am most grateful, the invaluable help of Vicky Pelino in casting Proust's chart, and of Jason Johnston for the luscious drawing of coffee éclairs. Thanks also to all the contributors of sightings, and to Hannah Silver for proofreading.

Subscriptions

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How Proust Can Change Your Life

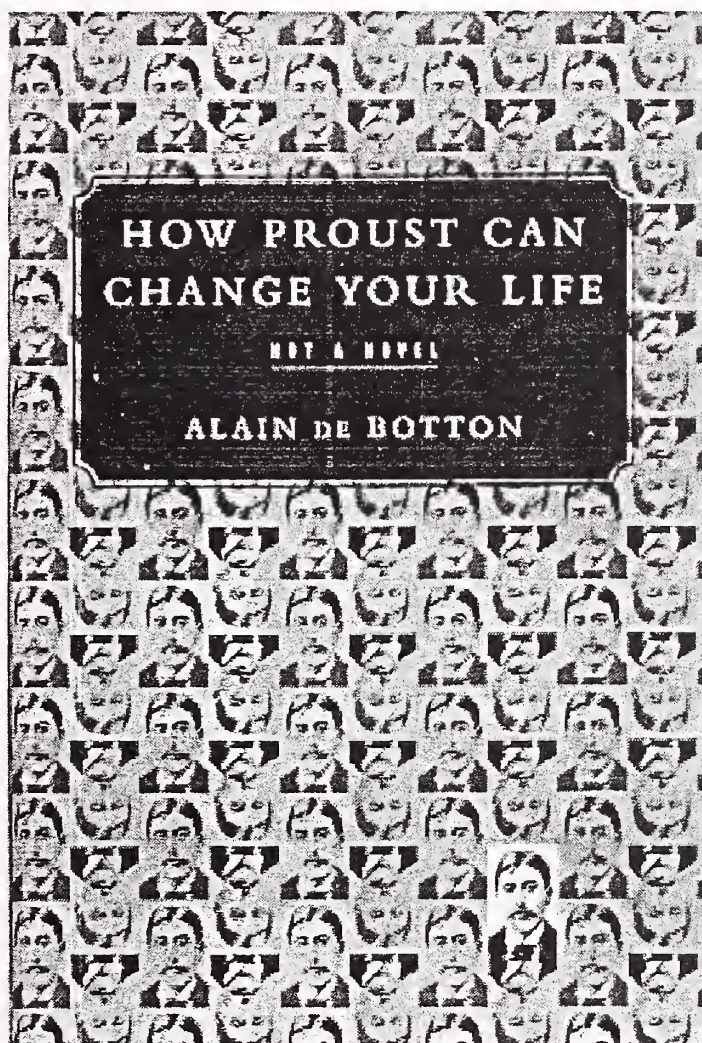
--The book I wish I'd written

I first heard about *How Proust Can Change Your Life, Not a Novel*, from the author himself, Alain de Botton, who found me on the Internet. Within days, I was hearing about it everywhere. My friend Michael Sostarich of the Marcel Proust Gesellschaft wrote from Germany to tell me about strolling by a bookstore in Paris at the very hour when de Botton was there for a book signing. Dozens of friends and Proust correspondents wrote or called to tell me about this book. Most remarkably, a Pantheon editor responsible for this work wrote to me and asked me if I would be willing to review it. And then, of course, other reviews began to appear in every publication I read, as lofty as John Updike's in *The New Yorker*, as unexpected as the one my friend Michelle Magrum found in *Elle*.

I began to berate myself immediately for not having thought of it first. Who could be a better inspiration for a self-help book than Proust himself, who had humanity so well figured out, and still emerged with his sense of humor intact? De Botton's book begins with a superlative and funny premise and does everything I hoped to do with my own Proust fixation: amuse the readers, pass along the wisdom and inspire The Big Read.

There is probably no one on the planet who could testify more than myself to the soundness of this book's objective. I know of no other person whose life has been so drastically changed by Proust than myself. Knowing that Proust had self-published removed the stigma of self-publishing. Suddenly it was all right to stop trying to sell work to other publications, where editors would slash and burn until very little of myself was left; I could be my own publisher, my own

editor, and like Proust, go into debt for it. The resultant zine brings me into contact with Proustians all over the world, including the author of this book. I am interviewed by journalists as far flung as Finland and Brazil. The editors at major publishing houses are writing to me, instead of me to them. Can Proust change lives? I would say so.



The book finally arrived during a two-week stretch of my life when I labor intensely as a caterer to support my writing habit. I returned from a job at 3:30am after working a 16-hour day and saw the package on the table at the top of the stairs. Ripping the package open, I admired the cover, and made the earliest possible retreat to bed with book in hand.

The laughter began with the table of contents. "How to Suffer Successfully" made me laugh so hard I had to put the book down for a moment. I thought, oh dear, I'm hysterical from overwork. But after plenty of sleep, the book still made me laugh with delight.

De Botton does not suffer from my own folly of writing about myself so much. But he is very thorough in pointing out the great lessons of Proust on a variety of topics, not the least of which is "How to Put Books Down". It was one of the Proustian lessons that I was having trouble remembering as I found every available minute to read de Botton's book to the end, where he tells us about that.

Of course, if you are already a Proust fan of some seriousness, some of the fun is spoiled by knowing exactly what de Botton is going to tell you about

certain things. This book, however, is a charming read and the absolutely perfect present for any friend who has never managed to read Proust, could use some help with life's problems and loves to laugh. I will personally buy many, many copies to give to those friends of mine who are constantly asking for advice with interpersonal problems; regardless of my Proust quotes on the answering machine, my magazine, and my frequent savory references to the author who changed my life, there are still many loved ones who have not yet had their lives changed in the same fortunate ways as my own.

I wish to personally thank Alain de Botton for this fine piece of work that shares and neatly accomplishes my own objectives so well. A toast to him, as I make to my German friends: "Proust!"

I ask Alain some questions...

*Can you describe the moment when you conceived of writing *How Proust Can Change Your Life*?*

I had just finished my nightly madeleine and "tisane" and was readying myself for bed ("When one is sad, it is lovely to lie in the warmth of one's bed, and there, with all effort and struggle at an end, even perhaps with one's head under the blankets, surrender completely to wailing, like branches in the autumn wind" Jean Santeuil), when I came across, in the pages of ARTP, a quote from the master: "There is no doubt that a person's charms are less frequently a cause of love than a remark such as, 'No, this evening I shan't be free.'" I was struck by the wisdom of the master anew, his ability to compress insight into sentences at once elegant, profound and witty. It inspired me to write a book that I define as a self-help book based on the life and writings of Proust.

How many times, after reading Proust, did you find yourself saying "Proust said that..."?

The effect of reading Proust is that on an almost daily, even hourly basis, one comes across things that "seem so Proustian," things which Proust has helped one to put a finger on. Only today, an average day in West London, I came across the following things that made me think of Proust - teenage girls buying hats (Albertine), a Philippino maid doing the shopping for her masters (Francoise), bitchiness in a work colleague (the Duchesse de Guermantes)...

Have you been able to internalize the lessons of

Proust on the subject of relationships, and feel less emotional pain? Or have these issues been ones that you could intellectualize and pass on, without having yet been forced to see how they work on you?

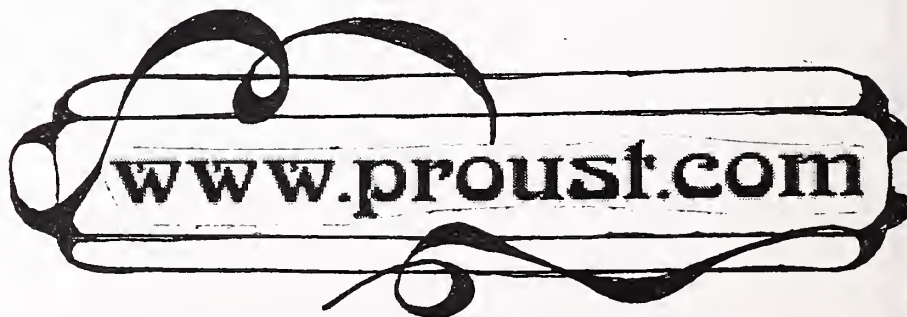
I always try to read books in such a way that I may change my life at the end of them. I open myself up to the book, I am ready for a transforming experience. In my case, unfortunately the woman that I first loved when I wrote my book on Proust (Kate, whose photo appears in my book) is no longer with me: we were involved in a narrator-Albertine style struggle, alternations of jealousy etc. Proust does not so much give one advice in these matters, he simply helps us to understand the dynamics.

Would you describe your formative years as Proustian?

There were certain Proustian things in my upbringing. For a start, I grew up in a French-speaking household in Switzerland, I had a nanny whose sweetness and practical intelligence are brought back to me when I read of the narrator's grandmother. Many of the foods we ate are in Proust's book, my family used to holiday in a big old hotel in the mountains every Christmas, and Balbec has become linked to this place, which also had its share of horrid posh people and lovely groups of girls - with whom I fell in love very intensely in early adolescence. I enjoyed a first kiss with a girl called Julia in her bedroom in circumstances very similar to the narrator's first kiss with Albertine. She too cancelled things early on, though did not ring the bell.

Are there any questions that you've never been asked, for which you have an answer waiting?

No one has ever asked me if I would have wanted to meet Proust. The answer is no, and I almost take my pride in my lack of desire to meet him. The best things are in the great book!



Alain de Botton Comes To Town

Alain de Botton came to San Francisco on a book tour in early August of '97. His brief stop in the Bay Area included two readings and innumerable interviews on radio and television. As the tour approached, Pantheon staff people called me to ask if I could let people know about the scheduled readings, which were also belated birthday celebrations for our Marcel.

Unfortunately, both the readings were scheduled at locations out of town. I entreated them to find at least one city appearance, but it had all been pre-ordained. The first was at Black Oak Books in Berkeley, the second at Clean Well Lighted Place For Books at Larkspur Landing. It was hard to imagine who might actually attend these early evening events, except for the Marcel Proust Support Group members who lived in those counties, and to my knowledge, there isn't a single Marinite among them. I told the people at Pantheon that Marin was not a good location, but they assured me that *How Proust Can Change Your Life* was selling very well there. Yes, I said, it probably is, but that has nothing to do with Proust. The copies of Proust on bookstore shelves in Marin are covered with dust. What the Marin readers buy is self-help books.

Half a dozen support group members did turn up in Berkeley, but almost all of them lived and worked in the area. From the beginning of the reading we were delighted. Alain de Botton is a charming, erudite and funny young man who has a right to airs but has none. We really wanted to take him out for cocktails after the reading because he seemed like just the kind of person we'd like to socialize with, but we were lucky to get a few minutes to introduce ourselves. The price of success is demands on his time; he was off to another interview.

Our first meeting with Alain de Botton made it well worth taking the ferry out to the wilds of Marin on day two. Marin is accesible enough if you have a car, but a bit of a stretch on public transit. I decided to add a bit of color to the long commute by taking the ferry, on which I could fantasize that I was vacationing, somewhere between the white cliffs of Dover and Calais. It was a lovely day to be standing on the back deck, gentle wind rippling my clothes and tugging at my hat, until half-way out into the bay where a huge

cloud of seasonal fog waited, as it usually does in San Francisco, to make summer clothing a mistake.

I did run into two other friends on the ferry, and another small group of the faithful did show for Alain's second appearance. Once again we enjoyed the reading tremendously, and tried to snatch the author away afterwards for drinks in the balmy setting of Marin. Once again, no such luck. I have dreamed myself of doing a book tour one of these days, but never imagined that an author could have so little chance for unscheduled fun. Of course the author of *How Proust Can Change Your Life* has evaded one piece of Proustian wisdom, and confesses to retiring early; so it was that even a late-night chinwag with the MPSG was impossible.

All of us who made it to the readings in the hinterlands of San Francisco look forward to the day when Alain de Botton returns and has the chance to play with us.

"We all come to the novelist as slaves stand before an emperor. He can free us with a word. Through him we abandon our former lot and know what it is to be a general, a weaver, a singer, a country gentleman, to live in a village, to gamble, to hunt, to hate, to love... Through him we are Napoleon, Savanarola, a peasant-- stranger yet, we are ourselves... Through him, we become the true Proteus who puts on all forms of life in succession. Exchanging them thus, one for another, we feel that to our being, grown so agile and strong, these forms of life are only a game..."

--"Poet and Novelist", 1998

Angels, and How To Be One

Rarely does the writer's life provide the funds for getting all the things we need. Fortunately for me, mine has provided an absolute wealth of friends, who besides providing me with the best of company, try to see to it that one way or another I do get the things necessary to carry on.

Two of the angels in my life have given me what was almost essential to make *Proust Said That* happen: the very computer gear on which I was able to create it, lay it out, print it and see it in the miracle of 256 colors, my wonderful friends Cynsa Bonorris and Marilyn Wann. They have both, as they well deserved, upgraded. The equipment they no longer needed was a godsend to me. Cynsa has very recently found an even better Mac for me, and purchased it, even though the only thing I can ever give her is rice pudding.

And there is my neighbor and Webmaster, Jeffrey Gray, who is willing to come to the rescue every time there is a problem with my computer or a simple ignorance of the thing, who gave me my first modem, and now surfaces regularly to fix the email he has wrought. When he doesn't come to my rescue, Cynsa does.

Other angels have sent me the one thing I have the least of: money. Madeline Lowe sent me a check for \$100 last week to aid the cause, even though she subscribes. Alex Segal has paid for many of the expenses of this publication, as has Jody Schreiber. Two members of the German Proust Society, Dr. Speck and Michael Sostarich, sent generous contributions. A gentleman I have never met sent me \$50, and a correspondent I know only through letters, Carol McCammon, sends me a \$20 every now and then. Without them all, this issue would never have happened.

Last year on the email list for the Burning Man, I proposed a special camp for people who had closets full of equipment they didn't use, in which they would carefully wrap up this old gear in plastic, to protect it from the desert dust, put in a note to explain why you are giving it away, in case some repairs are necessary, and leave it on a table for other celebrants to pick up

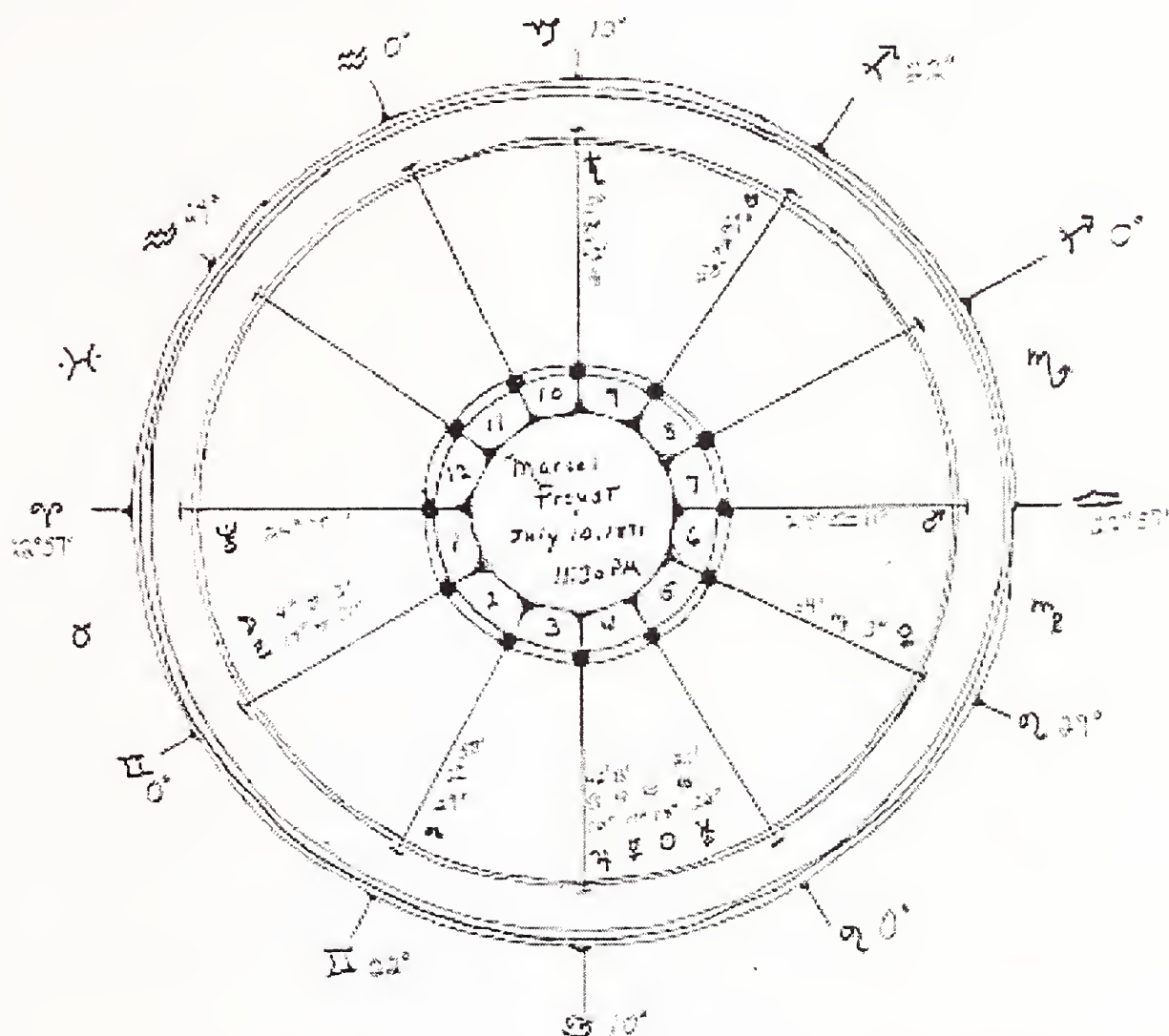
and take home if they wished. Perhaps they could include their name and address so the person who got the gift could write to thank them. How many artists, struggling writers, the financially disabled in general, would be thrilled to take home a functioning ten-year-old Macintosh? It was an opportunity to be angels, like Cynsa and Marilyn.

I don't know if anyone did that. There was too much going on at Burning Man to know; it was a small town in which every person was somehow interesting, creative, and funny. But the idea remains, and I am constantly reminded of it by the generosity of my friends. If you have upgraded and have an unused item that can mean so much to someone else, please do make someone happy. Send me email at psegal@well.com, and I will find someone for you who needs an angel.



A card from angel Alex Segal

An Astrological View of Marcel P.



Astrology is one of those subjects which arouses equal amounts of scorn and belief. Believers swear by its efficacy and accuracy, but nay-sayers pooh-pooh it, arguing that it is all a matter of gross generalities, that anyone could fit into the qualittes proscribed for the signs. In the interest of settling this question, the veracity of astrology, I asked one of my oldest friends, Miss Vicky Pelino, to cast Proust's chart, and see how well the stars could describe him.

Miss Vickie was unfamiliar with Proust's life, and hasn't yet read his work. Her interpretations, as a result, did not involve any skewing of possibilities. Anyone who has read a biography of Proust can agree, however, that what she found in his chart is a surprisingly accurate description of the nature of this extraordinary man.

She began by saying that his birth sign is Cancer, and that Cancers tend to be patient and moody. Cancer is the sign of the mother, and as a consequence it is a

difficult one for men. Readers of Proust and his biographies can attest to the fact that his mother figured massively in his life.

I must also quote from a staple of my household library, *The Coffee Table Book of Astrology*, edited by John Lynch, regarding the "evolved" Cancer type: "... a master of many moods. The whole gamut of emotion lies open to him; he can feel, and make others feel, joy, sorrow, compassion, horror and despair as no other type can, seizing the imagination and holding it by the power of his imagery and the intensity of his own feelings. The past and future are as real to him as the present. His memory is retentive, and the history of his own nation, family or class is immensely important in his eyes. He is the teacher par excellence... His style is picturesque, vivid, often dramatic, and he continues to deliver and redeliver his message, changing and adapting his form while preserving its essence, until he succeeds in arousing the attention of his audience and kindling its enthusiasm... Public

speakers of all kinds are found under the influence of this sign, as also... literary men who have a strong personal hold over their readers..." But this, of course, is only one of those broad generalities sneered at by the detractors of astrology.

Three other things figure prominently in the astrological nature: which planet was rising at the moment of birth, the position of the moon and the planet in midheaven, at the very top, twelve-o'clock spot on the chart. In the case of Proust, he has an Aries rising, and the moon in Taurus, with Saturn near the midheaven. Aries rising in the house ruled by Aries, the house of the self, makes for a forceful personality. The position of Neptune near the ascendant distorts the forcefulness, and makes for a dreamier personality that utilizes charm to exert social controls. The moon in Taurus indicates a very feminine nature, patient and longing for stability. Saturn is a difficult planet to have at the midheaven. "Saturn is the Lord of Karma," Miss Vicky said. "There's a kind of heaviness about it, oppressive, tough stuff. Restrictions, limitations, and a very deep, but very narrow perspective, not the broader universal view, but an intense focus."

*"A thermometer was
fetched... We had no need to leave
it there for long; the little
sorceress had not been slow in
casting her horoscope."
-The Guermentes Way*

Proust was, of course, a forceful personality. He utilized everything at his disposal to climb up the social ladder, and then to escape from it in order to hide and write. To move up in society, he had tremendous charm, effusive and extraordinary correspondence, great wit, and the psychological control that the physically weak can exert on those prone to guilt or compassion. Later in his life, when he knew he must withdraw from the vacuous society of the Faubourg St. Germaine in order to accomplish anything, he used his health to absent himself without alienating the hostesses who had brought him into it.

As for the moon's position, he was homosexual, and so not manly in the ordinary sense. Only a patient man could have put in 14 years writing a single book. And the longing for stability is indicated by his willingness to live at home until both his parents died, the necessity of maintaining a residence that met all the requirements of his eccentric health regime, and the familial relationships he developed with his servants.

Neptune in the first house suggests a tapping into the universal subconscious, but perhaps a sickly person

with lagging physical dynamism, sulky, childlike and very sensitive to criticism. As is mentioned in the gun article on page 14, Proust was so sensitive to criticism that he emerged from his sick-bed to duel with the columnist who wrote a scathing review of his first book.

Pluto in the first house is open to interpretation. Since Pluto was only discovered in this century, astrologers have not had much time to deliberate all the aspects of this planetary positioning. The generally accepted implication is transformative, particularly of the self, and on the deepest levels. Anyone who has ever made it to the end of *Remembrance* can tell you that the Marcel who began life as a jealous child transformed into the man who realized the waste of jealous energy, and gave it up to become a writer instead.

In the third house, the north node of the moon in Gemini, in the house ruled by Gemini, u n d e r s c o r e s communication, and indicates a strong destiny to write. "This," said Vicky, "is like a 'beauty mark' in a writer's chart." It also suggests a sentimental soul,

and if Proust weren't sentimental, he certainly gave that impression.

The sun, Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune all appear in the fourth house. These planet indicate a highly imaginative dreamer, psychic impressions, an extremely strong, if not incestuous, attachment to the mother and the home, and good aspects for writing, as they suggest vivid imagination and deep psychological insight.

The house of love and relationships, the fifth house, is devoid of any aspects at all. Vicky asked me if he had been married, or had any children. "No," I told her, "He was gay, and most of his infatuations were with straight men, so he had no big relationships to speak of."

"Okay," she said, "No marriage, no children, no relationships, so no planets in the fifth house, and no problems there."

Venus is not particularly happy in the sixth house, the one ruled by Virgo, where it is quite repressed. It brings about an analytical soul obsessed with work,

service and health. Mars in that house suggests ambition, intensity, the urge to protect and defend. It gives energy and passion, but this seems to be repressed in the physical realm, and left to the service of his work and health.

In the seventh house, the house of partnerships, once again there is nothing. Together with the fifth house's emptiness, it spelled a solitary life for Proust. Of course, particularly in the last half of his life, this is exactly what he got. And in the eighth house, that of sex and death, not a single planet appears; not only was he to have a solitary existence, but a sexless one as well.

The ninth house is the house of exploration. In this house, Marcel was plagued with two things: the south node of the moon (things he shouldn't do) and that Lord of Karma, Saturn. Clearly, travel became one of the things that he shouldn't do. And philosophically, his was a difficult life; he had grown into a person of standing in society, and yet he was to discover the vacuousness of the society that had embraced him, and expose it in his work. His exploration of humanity was vast, deep and alarming, because there was not a single flaw he hadn't uncovered. His sense of humor saved the day, making his writing funny, while at the same time relentless in its honesty. Considering the truths he revealed, it is no wonder that he had become a recluse, destined to lead a solitary and sexless existence.

The last three houses in his chart are devoid of planetary influences. These three are the most impersonal of them all. The tenth, career, of course contains nothing because he never had one. The eleventh, universal brotherhood, seems an unlikely position to be filled in the life of an alleged snob and a recluse. And the twelfth, the house of spirit, remains equally uncluttered. In these three positions, once again, there may be nothing in them, but that also means that there were no problems in these areas either.

I stared with confusion at the two charts Vicky had given me, Proust's and mine. I had expected to see something that might explain why I became so,


fascinated with this man, of all men. As Vicky described the various aspects of my own horoscope, one thing did become fairly clear: it was the presence of the transformative Pluto in Leo, the sign of love, appearing in the tenth house, that of career and success in the public mind.

Proust gave me transformative knowledge in that ultra-sticky matter of love. It was when I had arrived at the end of *Time Regained* that my life really changed. After a life full of misery over the ends of loves, Proust pointed out to me that the breakups that made me miserable in the past was virtually inexplicable in the present, that other loves can appear and make one miserable all over again in some fresh way. There is no point, I realized, in suffering so hard and long when love is gone, as it is a waste of time. It doesn't mean that the deliriously happy moments of new love are pointless, only the desperation when it doesn't work after all. What a healing! I was truly transformed.

"Our lives are in truth, owing to heredity, as full of cabalistic ciphers, of horoscopic castings as if sorcerers really existed."

-The Guermantes Way

It was this lesson of Proust that made me want to start writing about him more than any other. I have written many things in my life, some of which have made me more money than this beloved magazine, which sinks me deeper into debt with horrifying regularity. But nothing I have ever done has planted me more firmly in the public eye, or made me so

many friends all over the world. I must thank Pluto for this fortuitous appearance, and Proust for having transformed me; I just wish I'd read him sooner. 

The Return of Mr. Pinkwater

Many months back, the wonderfully funny novelist, Daniel Pinkwater, earned his place in *PST* when he said he's stayed home every Saturday night for years to hear a serialized reading of *Remembrance* on the radio. Now I have another story to tell you about him and one that offers a special treat.

Actually, I'll let my friend and angel Miss Marilyn Wann tell you. Here is the email I received from her:

"My dear friend Daniel Pinkwater, NPR commentator and children's book author extraordinaire, was
(continued on page 27)

Absinthe, the Potent Green Fairy

by Stuart Mangrum

After languishing in obscurity for the better part of a century, absinthe is enjoying an unlikely renaissance in fin-de-siecle San Francisco. No fashionable party seems complete these days without hipsters sipping murky glasses of bitter green homebrew, or more likely dumping them into the potted plants when they think no one's looking. No wonder, really, that Proust stuck to his beer and heroin. Absinthe is an acquired taste, and a difficult one to acquire at that. I should know: I've been drinking the stuff for fifteen years, and I still haven't quite made up my mind.

My first absinthe experience was in a strobe-lit, over-amplified GI bar on Okinawa. What I drank was not the "Green Fairy" of the Belle Epoch but the "Purple Haze" of Koza City: a dangerous mix of gin, absinthe, violet and sweet & sour that we'd drink after recon missions to wash the radio chatter out of our heads. Japan is one of the few places on earth where you can still buy absinthe over the counter, but as a US national with a top secret clearance, I was theoretically risking my job every time I ordered a drink. For that matter I wasn't supposed to patronize the off-base drug stores either, where you could buy Valium and Dexedrine over the counter without a prescription, along with litres of medicinal ether and four-packs of Bron, that powerful, marvelous little speedball of a cough syrup. Oh well. As my friend Dr. Anderson always says, life without adventure is nothing.

Different bars in the vill all served their own variations on the basic Purple Haze formula, with escalating adjectives to let you know how much absinthe was allegedly in the mix: Regular, Super, Special, Extra, etc. My friend Takeo at the Rock House Purple Haze (actual bar name) created a worst-case-scenario he called the *Big Fire*, a warhead-like drink crowned by a mushroom cloud of absinthe that took up two-thirds of the glass. Surprisingly tasty, extraordinarily strong, and oddly beautiful under the black lights, upstairs on Gate Two Street, where the walls were covered with photos and the stereo moved enough air to push empties off the bar. Two Big Fires and you'd better hope you lost your car keys. Three or four and you'd

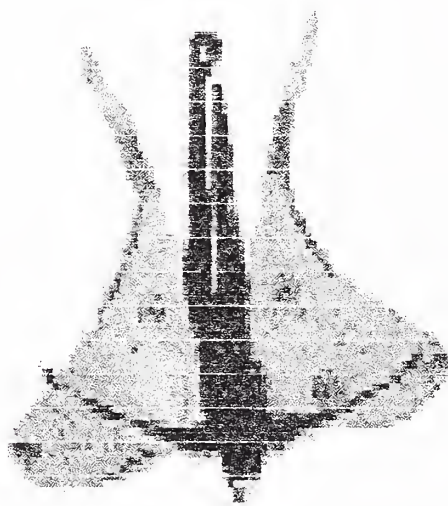
be hallucinating, and probably doing things you wouldn't remember in the morning. Or wouldn't want to remember. I woke up once in my dorm room, pants snagged around muddy boot-tops, tangled in purple-stained clothes that I couldn't quite peel from my stiff, aching limbs. No wallet, no car keys, no self-respect. Worse, the top of my head felt like it had been lopped off with a pavement saw. If there's any human condition more miserable than an absinthe hangover, I pray it never happens to me.

Yet despite all the mornings after, when I got back to the States I found myself pining for absinthe in the same way I'd once yearned for Mexican food on the other side of the International Date Line. Elusive and unobtainable, there just didn't seem to be any way to get it. Once a friend smuggled me back a quart in a green plastic

canteen, but it only lasted the night, and after that the memories began to fade. Then, years later, my wife Michelle and I obtained a recipe from a friend in Portland and decided to mix up a batch of our own.

To be fair, the project really belonged to Michelle and Miss P. They did all the work, measuring exotic oils into a pitcher of grain alcohol drop by drop and stirring the whole affair with a glass rod while I lounged in a kitchen chair sipping red wine, scratching the ears of Marcel the cat while P's roommate Lance, the smartest man he's ever met, lectured us all on the neurological effects of thujone, an isomer of camphor that is absinthe's key component.

That first batch was, to put it bluntly, awful. Michelle and P promptly discarded the recipe and let their well-developed culinary instincts take over. Each of the six essential oils, which Michelle had obtained by mail-order, came under the intense scrutiny of two sensitive noses before being added to the second batch, with proportions adjusted up or down by consensus. The result was infinitely better than the first batch, but still bore little resemblance to the commercial absinthe we'd enjoyed in Okinawa. Batch three was better still,



but by that point our taste buds were too exhausted to tell. We blended the three to afford an acceptable compromise, then bottled the lot and hauled it out to Burning Man, where it made for an exciting and lively evening at Miss P's desert cafe. To my knowledge, not a drop survived the trip, and no potted plants were reported injured or killed.

After our return from the playa, the research continued. We learned from our friend Miss V, a landscape designer and expert on exotic plants, that while the drink may be illegal in this country its principal ingredient, the wormwood plant, is widely available as an ornamental. It's a low-growing, grey-green shrub with lacy leaves, known to the botanists as *artemesia absinthum*. Before long it was thriving in our suburban backyard, and Michelle was experimenting with an extract version of absinthe.

Making absinthe from the plant itself, rather than from processed oils, has two major advantages. First, adding oils to grain alcohol is the brewer's equivalent of making kool-aid; a shortcut approach that's never going to yield anything particularly interesting or complex. Second, wormwood oil cannot be legally sold if it contains more than trace amounts of thujone, its active ingredient. Unless you're working with the plant, you're only making flavored Everclear, not real absinthe.

Soaking crushed leaves in alcohol, on the other hand, yields a potent extract with all the active ingredients a refined absinthe fiend might hope to ingest. Michelle developed a new recipe, based around this extract and flavored with brandy and essential oils. Miss P, working independently, came up with another approach: take a bottle of Pernod, which is essentially absinthe without the thujone, and mix it up with wormwood extract. Both versions were well-received at the last Proust Wake.

To drink absinthe in the European manner requires a little patience and the correct equipment. A measure of the liquor is poured into a stemmed glass, over which is placed a small, slotted spoon developed specifically for this purpose (though a fork will do the job if you aren't lucky enough to own an absinthe spoon). Place a sugar cube on the spoon and apply a slow trickle of ice-cold water. With a little practice, you can get the sugar to dissolve without clouding or "bruising" the absinthe, yielding a beautiful green cocktail that will rip the top of your head off. Prousit!

Absinthe Facts

The word absinthe is derived from the Greek *absinthion*, meaning "undrinkable."

Wormwood is mentioned in the bible a dozen times, including the Revelation of St. John: "And the third part of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the waters because they became bitter."

The Russian word for absinthe is *chernobyl*.

Leaves of the absinthe plant are an effective deterrent to vermin. Thomas Tusser, in his 1577 book *July's Husbandry*, notes "Where chamber is swept, and wormwood is strown, no flea for his life dare abide to be known."

Pliny the Elder reported that the champions of Roman chariot races were given a cup of absinthe soaked in wine as a reminder that even victory has its bitter side.

The "Purl" of Tudor England was a drink comprised of hot ale and wormwood. Samuel Pepys mentions drinking it in his diaries.

At the turn of the century, the Pernod Fils distillery in Pontarlier, France produced 30,000 liters of absinthe a day, and shipped it around the world.

The Pernod plant was struck by lightning in 1901, causing an alcohol fire that raged out of control for four days. Hundreds of thousands of gallons of burning absinthe were discharged into the Doubs River, flavoring it with anise for miles downstream.

Celebrated absinthe drinkers included the painters Lautrec, Gauguin, Manet, Van Gogh and Picasso, along with the writers Rimbaud, Verlaine, Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allen Poe and Jack London.

Absinthe was banned by most countries in a fit of anti-alcohol hysteria earlier this century. Today it remains legal in Spain, Portugal and Japan.

Thujone, the principal active ingredient in absinthe, is chemically similar to THC, and is thought to attach to the same receptors in the brain.

—Source: [Absinthe, History in a Bottle](#), by Barnaby Conrad III (1988, Chronicle Books)

More About Absinthe: How To Make the Stuff

Absinthe Marcel No.74

1 C fresh absinthe extract*
3/4 C brandy
1/4 C grain alcohol (i.e. Everclear)
15 drops wormwood oil
5 drops hyssop oil
1 drop mellisa oil
18 drops anise oil
3 drops fennel oil
2 drops coriander oil
1 C distilled water
2 drops yellow food coloring
1 drop green food coloring

In a large glass pitcher, mix absinthe extract, brandy and Everclear. Add oils drop by drop from a glass eyedropper while stirring constantly with a long glass swizzle (this is best accomplished by a team of two: a stirrer and a dropper). Take particular care with the hyssop oil, as it's the most likely to cloud the mixture if added too quickly. Clean the eyedropper thoroughly in Everclear between oils. Add the water last, in a slow steady trickle, stirring constantly, once again taking care not to cloud the mixture. Adjust color with food coloring. Yield: about 750 ml.

*Absinthe Extract:

4 C fresh absinthe leaves
1 C Everclear
1 C brandy

Bruise leaves and cover with liquor in a glass bowl or large Pyrex flask. Cover to prevent evaporation and let steep for a week, agitating occasionally and mashing leaves down into the liquid. Strain through several layers of cheesecloth before using.

—Michelle Mangrum

Right: Absinthe service at the Wickett Museum for the 1997 Wake. This photo, and Proust in the coffin (pg. 16) taken by Lisa Archer.

"Loyal to her ancient ways, Mme Laudet refused to enter into competition with many of the farms on the outskirts of holiday resorts, which followed in the steps of the local wine shops and offered for sale absinthe, vermouth and cherry brandy... 'If they don't like it here they can go somewhere else,' said Mme Laudet, who was never one to entice new clients, but preferred to make access to her farm difficult, and was at pains to keep away customers whose insistence on absinthe—perhaps her dislike of it was due to the difficulty of serving it—inspired her with a feeling of mistrust, about which she would expatiate to her old regulars who had never in their lives asked her for such a thing. 'I'd rather have nothing to do with people like that,' she said..."

—Jean Santeuil



Proust, Duels and the Issue of Guns

It has become increasingly popular in America to protect us foolish children from ourselves. Each year we have more laws that save us from death, enabling us to live much longer, but with no freedom to take chances. Some of us, who relish the grand risk, might call this some kind of encroaching living death.

Of all the risky items slated for extinction, one of the most imperiled is that distinctly dangerous item, the gun. Our right to own guns has been guaranteed by the Constitution, and our obligation to bear them demanded by the government whenever the national interest necessitates that we use them to kill people on their behalf. In spite of these deeply-rooted American dictums, the right to own a gun for the purpose of sport becomes increasingly politically incorrect.

Firearms terrify many because they occasionally fall into the hands of the crazed and alienated. People die random and horrible deaths in drive-by shootings and other acts of senseless violence, and it cannot be argued that there is anything positive to be said for such affairs. In the ghettos of America, these weapons settle disputes, and often forever. Again, there is virtually nothing good to say about such matters, nor about the handgun accidents that take other lives.

One friend, with a rather cut-and-dried view of the human condition, made a t-shirt once that bore the inscription: "Handgun accidents are a vehicle of natural selection." He, like so many other members of the MPSG, has tremendous respect for firearms, enjoys them for sport, and maintains rigorous control of them. A loaded weapon is never left laying around; the ammunition and the firearms are stored separately, and are kept locked away. If every person who owned a gun took such intelligent precautions, guns would never injure children or dolts.

The US Constitution was penned in a time when owning a gun was the gentleman's prerogative

and in most places a necessity. In those times, it was considered useful for getting dinner, or an acceptable tool for settling a disagreement; the duel was an affair of honor. In these encounters, death was frequent, but not a necessary result. What mattered was that the two valiant souls had the courage to risk death in pursuit of honor. Often the matter was settled with a mere bang-bang in the general vicinity of the other party, or perhaps a grazing bullet that would draw blood but not much else. The show made, the gentlemen could retire once again to their drawing rooms with their seconds and friends for a self-congratulatory cocktail.

"My seconds in duels can tell you whether I behave with the weakness of an effeminate man."

*- Letter to Paul Souday,
November 6-8, 1920*

This is not to say that gentlemen were not killed in duels, because plenty of them were, but for centuries the notion of a man defending his honor without the employment of messy litigation was not offensive. A death on the field of honor was not murder; the victor walked away vindicated and free. This, of course, is an antiquated

notion that no longer justifies things like gang warfare, but in such cases the amenities are not observed, so it's not quite the same.

The notion of defending honor has faded in importance in these times. Slander cases appear infrequently in the news, and most cases of sexual harassment have more to do with the unacceptability of the amorous swain than proving the unassailed virginity of the victim. Surely honor still motivates law suits here and there, but far more frequently there is financial gain involved, at least enough to pay the lawyer.

Honor and money have become unavoidably intertwined since the days when disputes were settled on the field. Any dispute in America costs every American money, as does every issue that is called a crime. It is from our taxes that the monolithic legal system feeds. Every crime must be tried, and everything that is illegal costs us more money to prosecute; every criminal is supported by our taxes.

To make gun ownership illegal would provide one new expense, while depriving sport enthusiasts of their enjoyment. And would it put an end to murders and other crimes in a society that chokes on the bile of gross financial inequity?

What if the duel were to be reinstated? What if the desire to settle feuds in such a matter was again acceptable? There is the possibility that everyone would be happier because less of our money would go to finance litigation, and could be spent on more attractive alternatives; as a consequence, people might be less moved to crime. And a shooting would be criminal only if it did not meet the qualifications of an honorable battle. For that matter, might people be less inclined to shoot each other after having to think about it before doing it, and before witnesses, as the steps are taken back to back?

One member of the MPSG told me tonight over cards that historically many lives were saved in the days of dueling by the more level-headed seconds in the conflict. The job of seconds was to load the guns, and they would simply agree to load with blanks, or to decide when enough shots had been fired. In such cases, the conflict was resolved in a draw, no one's friends got dead, and celebratory cocktails were had by all.

The concept of restoring the duel as an alternative to litigation is as ludicrously complex as possible, and hardly to be successfully argued in a brief essay spurred by minimal research. Anti-gun militants will bristle at the very thought, think me mad, and perhaps cancel their subscriptions to this magazine if they ever got around to ordering one. To even suggest such a thing might cost me a few dollars, but what about this labor of love has not been costly? And how could I go another issue without bringing it up?

It was Proust, of course, who got me musing about the value of the duel, because he himself fought them. The Marcel of Remembrance also did the same. In his typical fashion, the author Marcel tosses off

the narrator Marcel's duels with a single sentence, while lavishing one hundred and forty pages on a single dinner party, and draws little attention to it, no doubt out of embarrassment.

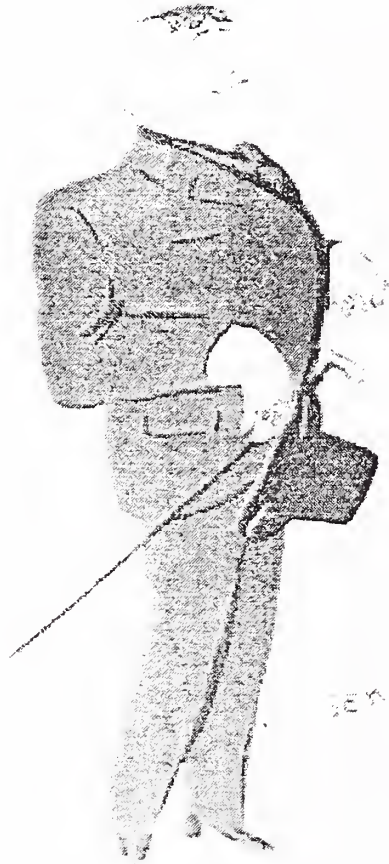
It was Proust who demanded that his honor be avenged when the columnist Jean Lorrain, a foppish, utterly decadent and malicious writer published a particularly scathing review of his first book, *Les Plaisirs et les jours*. It was not simply his own honor, but the taste of the society hostess Madeleine Lemaire, who did the illustrations, Reynaldo Hahn, who composed music for it, and Anatole France, who wrote the foreword, that were in question, as it was deemed an overly-precious bit of work and greatly overpriced.

Proust was consumed with anxiety before the duel, primarily because he feared that it would be scheduled for dawn, when he was usually going to sleep. Once the time of the match was arranged by the seconds for the reasonable hour of 3 in the afternoon, Proust's calm amazed everyone.

It was a rainy day at the Tour de Villon, February 3, 1897, when the antagonists met, bearing pistols, as neither of them were in good

enough physical condition to fight with swords. After they had both fired twice and missed, the seconds called the match settled. Ecstatic (no doubt to have avoided harm), Proust wished to dash over to his adversary and shake hands, but was discretely removed from the field by his friends before he could do so.

While staying at a hotel in Cabourg, he adamantly challenged Camille Plantevignes to a duel over a conversation between his son, Marcel, and a mutual female acquaintance. Proust was visiting the 19-year-old Marcel's room every night and reading to him from his manuscript. The mutual female acquaintance, who liked to rib Proust about his indifference to women, was about to go into a commentary about his homosexuality when the younger



Jean Lorrain

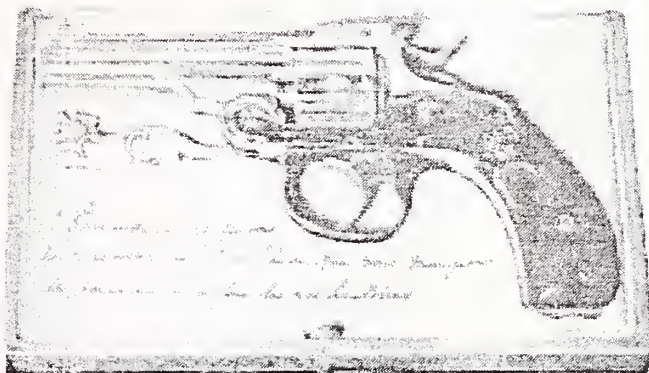
Marcel said "I know, I know..." He meant to imply that he knew what she was going to say, but the woman, relating their interchange, said that he meant "Of course it's true."

The father tried with two visits to explain the misunderstanding to the infuriated Proust, but was sent away to go find his seconds. On the third attempt, with son along, they did clear up the problem, but only after swearing that neither one of them had the slightest reason to believe such a thing. Proust asked the young Marcel how he knew what the woman was going to tell him; "Because" the young man said, "That's what they all say on the promenade." "How charming," Proust lamented sarcastically, "to arrive somewhere preceded by one's reputation."

If anyone should resort to taking shots at a modern day critic for a nasty pan, or someone who has possible theories about one's sexuality, that person would be taken under custody for psychiatric observation in a locked ward. Such action was not taken in France of the Belle Epoque, even though dueling was ostensibly illegal. The question remains: if people in our times were to think that their nastiness might bring them under literal fire, might that not encourage everyone to act with greater civility? Honor and civility are two greatly underrated phenomena these days, and whatever it takes, they should be restored to prominence in our lives. If you disagree, shall I meet you with my seconds? Some time in the late afternoon, please.

Before leaving the subject of Proust and guns, there is one odd story that must be mentioned. When his friends the Duc de Guiche and Elaine Greffulhe were married in 1904, Proust sent his mother off to buy them a present, very specifically, a revolver. The case was decorated by their friend Coco de Madrazo and inscribed with a poem written by the bride as a child. The revolver was displayed among the presents from everyone well-placed in French society, as well as from the

Queen of Portugal and King of Sweden. To make certain that this gift would be recognized as his, he realized that he should have new calling cards bearing his name in larger type; one wonders how many of the other guests knew that it was the Duc de Guiche himself who suggested such a gift, and what they thought of it.



The gun Proust gave as a wedding present

The pistol was purchased by Mme Proust at the best gunsmith in Paris. Several of the members of the MPSG looked long and hard at the only photograph I have of it to determine what it was exactly. The photo of the gun was scanned, blown up, emailed around and scrutinized carefully, but the general opinion was that it was a Smith and Wesson, an off-the-shelf deluxe model, probably a .32 or .38 caliber, which was enjoying some popularity in France at the time. Proust would have been horrified to know that such a gun was readily available through the Sears and Roebuck catalog in the States for a mere eight dollars. No doubt he paid more.



"Speaking of a duel I had fought, she said of my seconds: 'What very choice seconds'..."

-The Guermentes Way

*When the going gets weird,
the weird turn*

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The Proust Wake of 1997

As the years grow abundantly fuller, there is less and less time to orchestrate the grand Proust Wake, the Marcel Proust Support Group's only regular function of the year. This year's event crowded a schedule complicated by beloved visitors, other massive social events and the birthday I had hoped to obfuscate by sharing it so lovingly with the demise of Marcel P..

Curiously, the birthday has become more observed than ever. There were more celebratory lunches, dinners, cocktails and presents than usual this year, and lots more planned for the coming weeks. Today I went to my PST mailbox for the first time in days and found two birthday cards, one with no signature below the handwritten greetings and no return address. The other contained a lovely handkerchief, a gift from a sweet reader I have never met.

Planning the Proust Wake each year diverts my attention from the fact that I am about to be another year older, requiring that every available minute be consumed with planning and preparation. This year there was no time whatsoever to make printed invitations; the word was spread on the phone, at other social events, or over email.

Little coaxing was required to summon guests to the wake as it was once again scheduled at the John Wickett Museum of Exotica, one of San Francisco's most curious secret venues. The Wickett Museum is not open to the public, so invitations are valued, rare chances to spend an evening in this atmosphere of opulent oddity, redolent of many bygone eras and full of the best memorabilia from the city's long-lost Playland at the Beach.

As the date of the event approached, this year the 22nd of November, there were even fewer funds or hours available than usual; this, required some cleverness regarding the catering menu, and a lot of help from supportive participants who'd bring enough wine to make up for the small batch of absinthe I could concoct. It was out of the question this year to provide the more lavish elements of Proustian fare; I wracked my memory for occasions in *Remembrance* when the food was utterly simple. Finally I recalled the picnic in *Within a Budding Grove* where the band of girls ate sandwiches, an innovation in French fare which our

Marcel found so difficult to consume because the concept was so foreign, and left him settling for the little cakes alone, which, along with the apricot tarts, made dessert. There would be madeleines, of course, and the three pounds of cream cheese left over from a catering job mixed with strawberries, and whole wheat wafers.

Two members of the original MPSG, Miss Dawn and Miss Harley, came to spend the day with me in the kitchen getting the last of the evening's catering prepared. In the redwood back parlor next to the kitchen, Miss Lisa, who had come all the way from the far northwest to help with the preparations, hand-lettered the cards that would identify the dishes, while my roommate Jason drew Proust on each of them.



What I really wanted this year was to have Proust appear as he did the first year at the museum. Last year, the inimitable Stuart Mangrum, who contributed the absinthe story to this issue, and was largely responsible for this magazine ever coming together, refused to impersonate my literary idol because he'd spent too much of

the last wake stuck in an aerie with a cardboard tube and a crotchety old ridgeback waiting for the moment when the seance would begin. "Look," he'd said, "If you come up with a coffin I'd lie in state for you, so at least I could hear what's going on." Of course I hadn't turned up a casket, so Stuart was free to simply be a guest.

Photo: Lisa Archer

My friend Jerry James, the person who got me involved with the Burning Man experience (that changed my life as much as Proust, and was addressed in the fourth issue of PST), recently devised an elegant and sturdy coffin as an art project. So I called Stuart and reminded him of his terms for the previous year, and said I'd found the missing element. "Okay," he said, a bit disgruntled, "I guess I'll do it."

Stuart is as charming a guest as you could want to have, and so I couldn't imagine leaving him speechless in a box for the entire evening. What a waste of such a clever conversationalist. Within the usual seventy-two hours before the big night, I came up with a plan. Stuart/Proust could lollygag in the rear of the museum for the first forty-five minutes of so, while the coffin sat closed on sawhorses in the main room of the museum. The dried flower wreath that's been hanging on the Proust quote wall at MPSGHQ was draped over the grill on the coffin to obscure its emptiness. My housemates Gavin and Jane were able to put together a tape of sound effects, beginning with huge cracks of thunder, followed by the sound of pouring rain, and ending with more extremely loud thunder. At the first thunder, the lights in the museum would go out, and Proust would slip through the confused crowd and jump into the big box. The lights would go on, and there would be the body lying in state with the lid open, so he wouldn't have to deal with the all too uncomfortable sensation of being buried alive. And then when the thunder sounded again half an hour later, and the lights went out, Proust could rise to a sitting position, and give the guests the thrill of seeing him returned to life. That was the plan.

At first we toyed with the idea of carrying the coffin in with Stuart inside, but he admitted that he would have to be considerably sedated to endure such an entry. This second possibility seemed less annoying, and saved me from having to find sufficient pallbearers. The newest addition to MPSGHQ, Jason Johnston, agreed to cope with the cues for the tape, and Nicholas Lynch, one of the earliest members of the household, who came down from Seattle to help, would deal with the lights.

Of course this bit of theater didn't quite happen as early as planned and Stuart was relegated to the smoking section of the museum, the back stairs, for quite a while, along with half the guests and their cigarettes. He introduced himself to all and sundry out back as Marc Prowst and waited patiently for his cue. Finally the thunder sounded and the lights went out and Stuart moved quickly through the crowd and

jumped into the casket. Against either of our wishes, someone slammed the lid down. As soon as the lights went back up, and I noticed this, I went over and raised it, leaning over the inert body to whisper an apology.

Members of the MPSG approached the casket, moaning and declaring their unhappiness at the passing of the beloved Marcel. I laid a bouquet of flowers on his body, hoping none of them were rich in allergens that would make him sneeze back to life before the last cue. Cacophony Society ringleader Michael Michael asked if anyone would like to speak, and suggested that I should be the first.

I hadn't planned on this, so I had to wing it. Of course I can't remember much of what I did say, but I do remember this: "I only regret that Proust died before I ever had a chance to get to know him. I have a feeling that if he were still alive, I would know him..." I looked around at the splendid guests in their glorious costumes, tuxedos and evening gowns, "because I have the great good fortune to meet all the most interesting people in the world."

When the speeches had ended, I approached the casket and leaned over, my thick dark hair falling forward to obscure vision of Stuart's face. "How are you doing?" I whispered. "I'm thirsty!" he said. I brought my glass into firing range of his lips. "Have some of this," I whispered, and poured a small drizzle of absinthe into his mouth. Stuart smiled as I carefully poured, avoiding much dribbling on his elegant tux or white makeup; in retrospect, I'm so glad he didn't choke on it.

The second thunder cue got bungled because both Jason, Nicholas and I were all otherwise occupied when it went off. Tired of being dead, Proust finally sat up on his own. Of course the estimable Proust lovers made the most of Stuart's cueless return to life, exclaiming excitedly, cheering and clapping as the former corpse handed out flowers from his bouquet to his adorers. Sister Dana of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence spontaneously began a chorus of "You Light Up My Life", with a few others joining him in song. Now I was free to just enjoy the party.

My friend Nelson Johnson spent a large portion of the evening playing French cabaret songs of the twenties on his accordian. I'd brought CD's of Debussy and a few other appropriate composers, but never got around to playing them. In this band of the highly social, the sound of conversation is music enough.



A Dessert Worth Tasting Twice: coffee éclairs

The last issue of *PST* contained no piece on food; I made up for it with a lengthy article about cafés and restaurants. As I neared the completion of this issue, I wanted to do something foodie, but what? It would have to be quick to make and inexpensive. *Boeuf à la mode* was out of the question in spite of the fact that the political incorrectness of other things in this issue begged for red meat.

The monthly writers group was going to be meeting at MPSGHQ last night, and since I always try to regale them with something, it might as well be a Proustian dish. In this way I could write about the food and the group at the same time. At the last minute, after long debate over what would be the least expensive dish to make, I decided on the coffee éclairs Marcel was eating when he finally met Albertine.

The éclair, that phallic take on the cream puff, is not unknown to me. I have dealt with *pâte à choux* many times, and knew what was in store: a process that requires considerable upper arm strength unless one is in possession of a dough hook on an electric mixer, which I am not. On the other hand, I did have all the ingredients except the cream, and the budgetary constraints would just have to be supplemented with grueling physical labor. I took this recipe from *Dining With Marcel Proust* by Shirley King, but altered it slightly, omitting uncooked egg white and adding a wee bit more sugar to the cream filling.

Eclair au Café

Choux paste:

- 1 1/4 cups water
- 1 stick butter, cut in pieces
- 1 1/4 cups flour
- pinch of salt
- 4 small eggs OR 3 1/2 large eggs

Filling:

- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1 Tbs. strong coffee, sweetened with
- 1-2 Tbs. powdered sugar

"When Elstir asked me to come with him so that he might introduce me to Albertine, who was sitting a little further down the room, I first of all finished eating a coffee éclair and, with a show of keen interest, asked an old gentleman... to tell me more about the old Norman fairs."

-Within a Budding Grove

Icing:

- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1 Tbs. strong coffee

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Put the water and butter in a smallish heavy pot and bring it to a boil until the butter is melted. Throw in the flour and salt all at once and beat it furiously until it has turned into a solid mass that leaves the sides of the pot. Remove it from the heat immediately and transfer it into a deep bowl. Now the fun begins.

Beat in the eggs one at a time. Do not add another egg until you've thoroughly incorporated the one before. I know strong men who flag by the fourth egg, unless they have one of those swell dough hooks. I was very lucky to have one of my housemates, Miss Jenny, in the kitchen while I was undergoing this ordeal, and she took a couple of turns at beating in the eggs, and held the bowl down while I stirred. The problem is that this dough cannot be beaten too much, and the pleasure in the result is in direct proportion to the pain of the process.

When the last egg has disappeared and the ball of dough is a shiny mass, load it into a pastry bag fitted with a 1/2" tip, or just use a teaspoon and your fingers to make 3" long strips of dough on a baking sheet. Bake them for twenty minutes. Remove them from the oven, cut a slit along the side of each to allow the steam to escape, turn off the oven and put the pan back in for another 15 minutes. Remove the pastry shells from the oven and let them cool.

While they are cooling, make some espresso and get out two small bowls. In one, mix 1 Tbs. espresso and 1-2 Tbs. powdered sugar. Into the other mix 1/2 cup of powdered sugar with 1 Tbs. espresso. The second mixture will be thick.

Beat the cream until it is stiff and add the coffee with the smaller amount of sugar. The cream filling should not be too sweet. As I was doing this part of the proceedings I thought about the upper arm strength of the Belle Époque cook. This dish was literally whipped up as the finale to a beautiful meal without the assistance of the mixer. No wonder Francoise was cranky.

Cut the cooled pastry shells horizontally and scrape out any globs of dough, leaving only the crisp outside. With a teaspoon, fill the pastries and scrape off any cream sticking out when the shells are reassembled. With another spoon, heap a bit of the icing mixture on the top of each one and spread it evenly around.

The éclairs were finished and laid out on a doiled tray just as the first of the writers arrived. The tray was placed in a tableau on the kitchen table and my roommate Jason began to draw them for me. We are all mesmerized somehow by the presence of artists in action, and so for once, the writers congregated around the kitchen table instead of in the back parlor where my collection of Proust portraits lines the mantle.

Jason drew meticulously and slowly as the writers eyed the éclairs, contenting themselves with the usual excesses of wine, words and smoke. Only one member, the only non-smoker, could not deny the need for oral gratification and snatched one from the tray. I fumed and reassembled the remaining ones to maintain the visual composition. We suggested he read what he'd written this last month so he would be able to ignore the pastries more easily.

The comments were made regarding his progress and the second writer read us her work for the month. By the end

of the chapter, the drawing was done and the éclairs were fair game. They disappeared in minutes. The writers exercised their vocabularies with variations of my own comment ("pretty *damn* good") and finished off the wine.

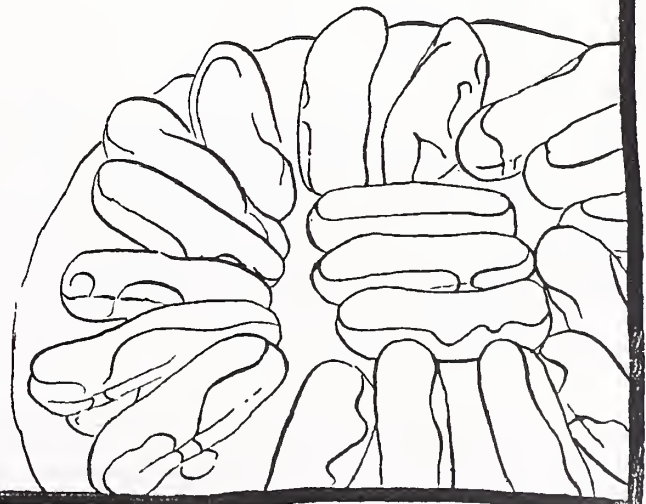
Soon thereafter, one of the lightweight writers excused herself and dived into the bathroom off the kitchen. Moments later we could not help but notice the sounds, the hurling of wretched excess. One might have felt complete sympathy for her plight were it not for one decided advantage: she got to taste the éclairs twice.

This was a dessert so good that it gave me an entirely new take on the narrator Marcel putting off the introduction to Albertine. "I first of all finished eating a coffee éclair," Proust wrote. First of all indeed. This is a taste treat so delicious as to completely absorb the eater's thoughts. It was not merely that he was trying to be coy and keep Albertine waiting; the pastry dominated him completely for a few minutes. The conversation he was having might have been finished for effect, but the coffee éclair was, at that point, more compelling than Albertine.



Nineteen Éclairs for Pand Friends

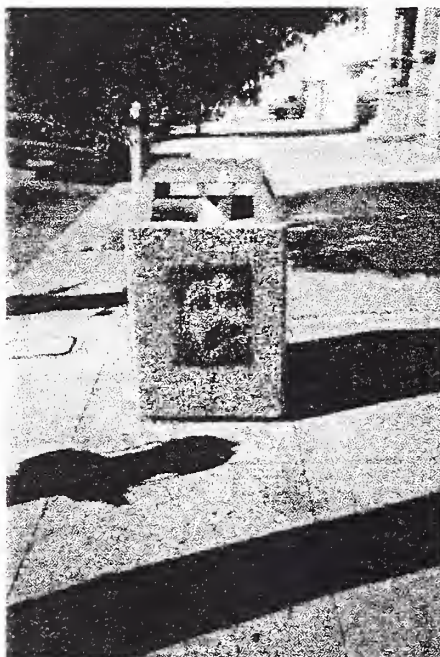
JJ 8



More Proust Sightings!

How many places could that Proust show up? The diversity and surprise of his appearances staggers the imagination, and this column has quite the assortment to prove it. He has turned up in the middle of the Nevada desert, on road signs, at shooting ranges, in crime reports, and perhaps mostly oddly of all, in a report of an ultra-geek computer book. He surfaces in books of all kinds, and here are just a few examples.

Last August, when Alain de Botton was in town, Proust literally appeared everywhere possible on the road between San Francisco MPSGHQ and the Berkeley bookstore where he would read. A beautiful stencil had been made, and clearly from the cover art of the very first PST, Proust's portrait by Dean Gustafson, and spray painted on street signs, garbage cans and the tall pillars that support the BART train platform from Oakland to Berkeley. No one has stepped forward to take credit for this as yet, but certain members of the MPSG are seriously suspect. Dean is not one of them.



Last Labor Day, Proust appeared out in the middle of the Nevada desert, where we had gone, as every year, for the fabulous Burning Man experience. My friends who make this project happen give me the chance to actualize my life-long fantasy of owning a café. Every year for a week, in the middle of nowhere, but in the very center of a camp of thousands, I run the café of my dreams; it never closes until the event is over. Last year I was particularly thrilled because the delightful Bob Stahl built it entirely to specification, and as elegantly as I could have hoped. For weeks before I arrived (with the hundreds of pounds of coffee et al) Bob and a volunteer crew were out there hammering away at construction. When I got there it was complete and pristine, but one of the construction workers had added a graffito to the untouched exterior: a quote from Proust. He never identified himself either, so I never could give him a kiss.

My dear friend Hannah Silver sent me a note in the mail that I decided to include here, instead of with the letters, because it was one of the weirdest sightings I could remember. "While reading the latest issue of

your delightful journal," she wrote, "A Proustian memory came rocketing out of my unconscious. And I wasn't even eating a madeleine. While living in the Hyde Park section of Chicago, I heard a tale about a group of graduate students whose apartment had been robbed. The robbers took everything— every stick of furniture, every kitchen utensil, even all the clothes. Only one thing remained— a copy of *Remembrance of Things Past*— lying on the living room floor."

A group of my gun-loving pals were out one weekend on a shooting party in a remote California location, the Celebrity Shoot-Out staged by the black-humored Bigrig Industries folks. They had created a series of targets featuring well-known faces responsible for one sort of angst or another. When the Proust target went up, my photographer friend Peter Field offered five dollars to anyone who had the nerve to tell me about it. Dennis Borawski, who can do no wrong in my estimation, jumped to the challenge. "Not only will I tell her," he said, "I'll bring her one." He did, that very night. However, he left it with the

housemate who answered the doorbell, preferring not to be there if I went ballistic. Dennis guessed correctly, though; I could only laugh.

And now, on to the holier appearances, the ones in print. I found the first one myself just days after the last issue went to press, in the *SF Chronicle's* Sunday "pink section"; now only a few pages of it continue to be printed on pink newsprint, but it will be called the "pink section" as long as natives are alive with the memory of its former pinkness. It was in a dance review about the hot Cuban dancer who's got the dance world swooning harder than Nureyev ever did, Joan Boada. He "returns this week with the Jeune Ballet de France to perform with The San Francisco Ballet School. To call what is in store a set of student performances is akin to referring to Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* as a first novel— true, but hardly the whole story."

My delightful correspondent Elaine Wilson sent an envelope full of three sightings from the New York

press. The first was in an lengthy review of *My Name Escapes Me*, the autobiography of Alec Guinness. "As a captain in the Royal Navy," it said, "he read Moncrieff's 12 volumes of Proust which 'would fit neatly into the pocket of a duffel coat'... Now he rereads Proust in the Kilmartin translation." The second was a tiny review of a noteworthy new book, *The Love Affair As a Work of Art* by Dan Hofstadter. "Studying writers from de Stael to Proust, Hofstadter shows that art often gets in the way of other obsessions..." And the third, an article about the actress Mary Louise Wilson, talks about her one-woman show, "Full Gallop" about Diana Vreeland. She is pictured on her terrace, high above the Big Apple, with one of the volumes of the Kilmartin translation in her hands, and she says "I'm reading a book now that's delicious, *How Proust Can Change Your Life* by Alain de Botton. It's so witty and true. I'm going to write him a fan letter."

Alex Segal, my absolute personal authority on the subject of classical music, invariably finds at least one sighting per issue of *PST* in the only thing he actually reads faithfully, *Fanfare Magazine*. *Fanfare* is an excellent English publication comprised of nothing but reviews of new recordings. A review of Alfred Schnittke's first opera, "Life with an Idiot", mentions Proust, but if the plot of this ultra-post-Soviet work is not described, the mention is utterly inexplicable.

In Act 1, the main character, "I", is sentenced to life with an idiot for some crime that is never explained. He goes to the asylum to choose an idiot and takes one who seems to have a brain, but can only say "Eck"; he chooses Vova (Lenin's nickname), who comes back to live with I and Wife. Act 2, all goes well for a while, then Vova goes postal and rips up the apartment. I tries to restrain Vova and argues with his wife about it. Vova throws him to the ground and makes love to the wife. She gets pregnant, and although she wants to keep the child, she has an abortion. This infuriates Vova, who becomes lovers with I instead, and they are happy together. Wife goes mad; Vova kills her, then disappears. This is all too much for I, who loses his own marbles and turns himself into the asylum. Apparently there is a chorus in this opera, too. "When

the men become lovers," James H. North writes, "it becomes a 'Chorus of Homosexuals' and eggs them on. Another form of chorus is Marcel Proust, who is occasionally on hand to look after his own interests—he is Wife's favorite author; Vova tears up his books, and I replaces them."

When sweet, young Jason Johnston came to live at MPHQSF, he had never even heard of Proust, but it took him only days to become indoctrinated. He heard of all the sightings, of course, and found it amusing that we Proust nuts keep stumbling over MP at every turn. Less than 120 days in Proustland, Jason received a book in the mail from a friend, *Forbidden Knowledge* by Roger Shattuck, an exploration of the dark side of human imagination and ingenuity. Of course Roger Shattuck is well-known for his great book on Proust, and Jason quickly found Proust mentions in this book.



Marcel Proust

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That same day I had a long telephone conversation with a new member of the MPSG, James Kennedy, who was telling me about a day spent recently in the renowned Shakespeare and Company bookstore in Paris. Describing the general disarray of all the store's contents, he said he'd miraculously found one of the few books he'd sought for years: Shattuck's book on Proust. Jason and I laughed about this synchronistic mention of Shattuck and Proust, and he went off to the library. He came home with a stack of books and promptly retired to his room to read.

A few minutes later he was back in the kitchen, wild-eyed and astonished. "I found another one!" he said, and handed me *Eye to Eye, Twenty Years of Art Criticism* by Robert Pinchus-Witten. On the very first page was this: "Admittedly, nostalgic Proust-cultism still bridges the gap between a lost and living dandyism...."

Now, my friends, tell me that this isn't the most inexplicable sighting of all... My Webmaster friend Jeffrey Gray turned this up on the Net. At the on-line mega-bookstore, Amazon.com, in a listing for

Intention-Based Diagnosis of Novice Programming Errors by Lewis Johnson, hidden away amidst a forest of computer-language mumbo-jumbo is a section of similar books by subject. In that corner of arcane script are two recognizable things, *Debugging in Computer Science...* and Proust.

At Last! The T-Shirt



At last it has happened: that cozy, comfortable, suitably extra-large garment that everyone has waited for, that one thing most pleasant to sleep in beneath the comforter on a blustery night, or to wear without a jacket on a balmy, but not yet hot, spring evening has gone into production; this t-shirt will announce to the viewers in the outside world your contribution to the ongoing life of this magazine, and your pleasure in the reading of things Proust, and may even provide an opportunity for you to encourage others to explore the literary treasure given us by the man whose name it sports, and for all these happy functions the wearer need only send one slim twenty-dollar bill, one of those bits of currency that so easily slip through one's hands without providing even the slightest pleasure so continual, memorable, useful and supportive, and that negligible expenditure includes not only the cost of this piece of clothing, which you may well wear until it falls into shreds from countless launderings, but also the cost of postage and handling, unless you are a resident of a country other than the US, in which case postage will be slightly more.

Send CASH, that green stuff, to *Proust Said That*, PO Box 420436, San Francisco, CA 94142-0436. Include all the particulars of your mailing address, and that you specifically want the t-shirt as opposed to a subscription, or better yet, send \$8 along for a subscription, too.



"Remembrance of Things Past. I can never recollect whether I've read it or not."

About Our Cover

PST's superb artist, Dean Gustafson, in conjunction with Miss Alisa Lowden, provided us with this issue's cover. Those of you who haven't made it to the end of *Remembrance* will not recognize this moment of the narrator's experience, when he knew he would be able to write the great book. This is what he said:

"...In my absent-minded state I had failed to see a car which was coming towards me; the chauffeur gave a shout and I just had time to step out of the way, but as I moved sharply backwards I tripped against the uneven paving-stone in front of the coachhouse. And at the moment when, recovering my balance, I put my foot on a stone which was slightly lower than its neighbor, all my discouragement vanished..."

Literary Encounters With Marcel P.

brought to us by Dana Cook

Some people collect stamps. Some people collect butterflies. Others collect beer bottle caps. Dana Cook, a Toronto freelance editor/writer and self-styled litterateur, collects Literary Encounters, which he describes as "first-person accounts of meetings (in person or print) between prominent literary figures. ("I pulled up a stool at the Key West bar and there, salt-and-pepper beard, daiquiri in hand, holding forth on bullfighting and tarpon fishing, was..."). He hopes to some day see them between covers.

Combing autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, journals and letters, as he does, Dana comes upon many references to the patron saint of this publication and has been passing them on to us. Some of his Proust sightings follow.

...Jacques Raverat...sent me a letter about Mrs Dalloway which gave me one of the happiest moments days of my life. I wonder if this time I have achieved something? Well, nothing anyhow compared with Proust, in whom I am embedded now. The thing about Proust is his combination of the utmost sensibility with the utmost tenacity. He searches out these butterfly shades to the last grain. He is as tough as catgut & as evanescent as a butterfly's bloom. And he will I suppose both influence me & make out of temper with every sentence of my own.

—Virginia Woolf, diary entry, 8 April, 1925

Source: The Diary of Virginia Woolf (edited by Anne Olivier Bell), Volume III 1925-1930. London: The Hogarth Press, 1980. p. 7.



Tuesday 25 July

A much better day, pressing on with Mr Proust. I have now got four volumes under my belt. He is an exquisite writer but for pomposity and intricacy of style he makes Henry James and Osbert Sitwell look like Berta Ruck. What a

tiresome, affected ass he must have been, but what extraordinary, meticulous perception.

—Noel Coward, diary entry, 1950

From: The Noel Coward Diaries (edited by Graham Payn & Sheridan Morley) London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982. pp. 152-53



(...)...Neal [Cassady] liked reading Proust aloud, saying 'Listen to this, now. I want you to just listen to this—this is one paragraph, mind you just one paragraph...' and he'd read the intricate prose slowly and precisely, ignoring Jack's [Kerouac's] attempts to correct his French pronunciation. (...)

Source: Cassady, Carolyn. Off the Road. New York: William Morrow, 1990. p. 196

* * *

I read Proust slowly and realized I really can write like he does. [Those Beats sure did think big!] Of course he's better but I'm younger, and while less brilliant, still have a chance to learn how, with your help and patience. I'm terribly interested in life and wish you were here to share my musings and comments about living and dead things that pass so abstractly before me.

—Neal Cassady, in a 1953 letter to Carolyn Cassady, cited at p. 212 of above



July 16 [1946]

(...)

Lunch with Barleto in the home of a Brazilian woman, a novelist and translator. Charming house on the side of a hill. Naturally there are a lot of people, and among them a novelist who is said to have written the Brazilian *Buddenbrooks*, but who manifests a curious cultural ignorance. If I am to believe B., the novelist was heard to say "English authors like Shakespeare, Byron, or David Copperfield." At the same time he's obviously well-read. Since it doesn't matter to me if he mistakes

David for Charles, I find him very intelligent. At lunch the Brazilian couscous turns out to be fish cakes. When I ask to see a soccer game, the guests get very excited, and when I mention that I had a long career as a soccer player, I provoke a general delirium. Unwittingly, I've stumbled upon their principal passion. But the mistress of the house translates Proust, and everyone present is profoundly knowledgeable about French culture. Afterwards I suggest to B. that we take a walk in the city."

Source: Camus, Albert. *American Journals*. New York: Paragon House, 1987. pp.

82-83



"Marcel Proust's bedroom, in the house on the Boulevard Haussmann, was the first darkroom in which I witnessed almost daily, or to be exact almost nightly, for he lived by night, the development of a great work. He was still unknown, but we acquired, from our first visit, the habit of regarding him as an illustrious writer. In that stifling room, filled with benzene fumes and the dust which covered the furniture like gray fur, we watched a toiling hive in which the thousand bees of memory manufactured their honey.

* (single asterisk in text)

"I cannot remember first meeting Proust. I see him, with a beard, on the red banquettes at Larue (1912). I see him, without a beard, at Madame Alphonse Daudet's. I see him again, dead, with the beard from the beginning. I see him, with and without a beard, in that cork-lined room cluttered with medicine bottles; I see him in his sordid dressing alcove, buttoning up a lavender velvet vest over a wretched squat torso that seemed to contain no more than machinery; I see him lying down, *gloved*; and I see him standing up, eating a plate of noodles."

Source: Cocteau, Jean. *Professional Secrets: An Autobiography*. (Drawn from his lifetime writings, by Robert Phelps.) New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970. p. 450



"Annette Kolb, whom I did not much care for, to dinner. (...) She had high praise for a French novelist by the name of Proust, or something like

that. Escorted her to the tram."

—Thomas Mann, diary entry, 1920

From: Mann, Thomas. *Diaries 1918-1939*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1982

æß(...) The first part of Swann's Way entranced me; and I said to myself, Ah! I have kept away from Proust too long; this man reincarnates me as a Frenchman, just as Tolstoi does as a Russian, and every hour one spends with him lengthens one's life by a year. True: as long as he kept to the little provincial society of Combray. But Paris and Swann left me with a brackish taste. A marvellous picture of jealousy and even at times of love, but tedious in the way that obsessions are tedious, and beneath it one felt the sourness and boredom of French society, despite its cultivation, refinement, finesse, intelligence; that sense of perpetual unyouthfulness which makes one say to oneself as one walks along the Boulevard des Italiens: Thank heavens I am an American! If I had to live here, I would become a whiff of anarchy, yes, a hurricane, and blow it all away!"

Source: Lewis Mumford, letter to Josephine Strongin, June 23, 1929. Cited in: Mumford, Lewis. *My Work and Days: A Personal Chronicle*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979. p. 324



"(...) ... Senhor Padroso's somnambulism also made me think of Marcel Proust and his remembrance of things past, Proust, who let himself die of hunger, revolted at the thought of going on living after he had put the last full stop to his masterpiece, Proust, who, in effect, committed suicide elegantly by ceasing to feed himself ... and I wondered whether Dr. Oswald would end up, like the illustrious writer, with the illusion of having recaptured time past..."

—Blaise Cendrars, *Sky: Memoirs*. New York: Paragon House, 1992. p. 286



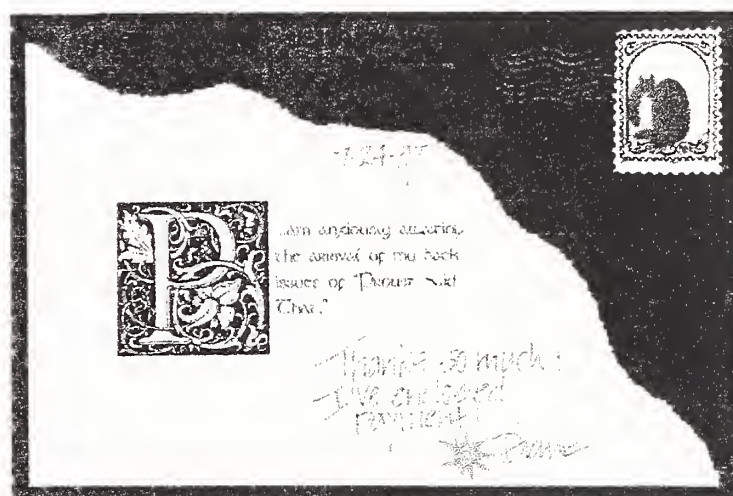
More Letters!

Dear Mr. Segal, and all the members of the Marcel Proust Support Group,

I'm delighted to have stumbled across your site. As I had entered into a period of my life in which I was given to reflecting at length on my own reactions, intellectual and emotional, the two being as hard to consider separately as the physical phenomenon of the sound of a friend or loved one's voice and the mental image that voice immediately conjures up, should we hear it at long distance, over the telephone for example, of the speaker's posture, facial expression, the size of his or her torso and the relative vitality of his or her spirit at that moment, to the curious interaction, defiant of the laws of time and space, that occur in our spirit between persons, events and situations, some of which long past, but still visible in the mind's eye constantly beneath the busy surface of quotidian affairs, others filling the daily sphere of present occurrences, still others perhaps to come, fantasies the stuff of which is necessarily a composite of all that has come before, animated by the newest forces of desire, will and recent habit, but which, once they or what arrive, to our surprise, in their stead have come to pass, are wholly different, having the odor, weight, momentum and strangeness of real life, and relegate our plans to the realm of dreams whose value slowly erodes as the passage of time diminishes their size in our memory, looking back, as a landmark is reduced in our field of vision as the carriage-and-pair passes it on the road and continues until it vanishes altogether, the memory of "Remembrance of Things Past" came again and again to the front of my consciousness; for, years before, I had read "Swann's Way," and, years after that, had read it again, continuing on to "The Guermantes Way" and then "Cities of the Plain," before stopping, my attention unavoidably drawn to other readings and other pastimes which more insistently clamored for me to occupy myself with them, but always its inimitable style and wisdom stayed with me, to such an extent that whenever I encountered other writers with a similar method of analysis or description, even without the uniquely elaborate sentences that Proust favored, a whole world of memory and sensation came flooding back, not unlike Proust's narrator's experience with the madeleine; and so, not content with merely starting again at the beginning of his oeuvre, I also began to search out other references around and about Proust, and came to your web site. I'm actually kind of jealous of you guys for already

having finished. Then again, I can still look forward to the pleasure of finding out what finally happens! There's a great book, which I haven't finished reading because I'm back into the story of Swann and Odette, so it'll have to wait, called "How Proust Can Change Your Life," by one Alain de Botton, who is English despite the French name. I'm reading it in the French translation and it's marvelous—on one level, a spoof of self-help books, on another quite serious. I don't have it with me right now, so I'm not sure who publishes it, but I'll let you know if you haven't already discovered it.

Verbosely yours,
Tom Storer



I've recently discovered your Proust newsletter. What a treat: It's admirable and needs to continue.
Richard French

Great Proust website! Maybe you or your friends/ readers can help me with something that's been bugging me for years. In A LA RECHERCHE... Proust talks about the wonderful smell of the hawthorns (aub pines) that grew in Illiers-Combray. I'm trying to find out what type of hawthorns they were, and how I can get them. I once called the French embassy, and they told me not even to bother, because even if I got the right one, which they didn't know, it would not be the same because I don't have "french sun, french rain, and french soil!" That being the case, undoubtedly, I'm still searching for the hawthorn! I understand, or at least someone told me, that the hawthorns in I-C were long ago replaced by egline (sp?) roses, but in all that's been written about MP, someone should know, shouldn't they? Any help is greatly appreciated. Ruth at email rbtc@philly.infi.net

I'm very delighted to see a Proust Web Site on the Internet. Here in my country, Turkey, there are very few Proust fans. And only the first two volumes of *Remembrance of Things Past* have been published until this year. I haven't read the rest of the novel yet! I'm 26 years old and I knew Proust since I was a child. He helped me to build my own way of seeing life (although I first read him in my late teens). I'm very keen on reading your pages. If you have ever heard of another Turk who has written to you please send me his/her address... My address is: swann@turk.net
Tugrul Ozkaracalar
Turkey

Dear Miss P,
Today I bought the third volume of the "Remembrance..."! Yes, 'Yapi Kredi' published the third volume! Earlier than I expect. I suspect you've warned them! For a long time I've been very busy. So I couldn't read all of the issues of PST. But this week I plan to read every article in every issue. I've had a glance to all of the titles. While doing that, I said to myself "Now Mr. Tugrul, you'll need much time. Really 'much' time..." After my reading, may I disturb you with my questions and comments? I have one already: Did *Celeste Albaret* make an impact on the literature society when it was published about twenty years ago? I've found some striking points there.
Tugrul Ozkaracalar

Much enjoyed your Proust pages.
I wanted to let you know that I have written a book on Proust that you might like. It's called *How Proust can change your Life*, and is published by Pantheon in May 1997.
Alain de Botton

I've just come across this web site devoted to my all time favourite writer and I must I'm astounded. It seems that the whole world of opportunities is opening in front of my eyes. I really would like to get in contact with Proust devotees. I would appreciate any letters or email from people around the world. I'd love to discuss some of the issues. It could be interesting to see the perception of Proust's work from different nationalities point of view. Please write or email to:
Ireneusz Barczak
Os. Rusa 47/5
61-245 Poznan
Poland
irekbae@novci2.ae.poznan.pl



I just discovered the on-line version of *Proust Said That*. I must admit that I was a little amazed by it all. I never imagined that I would find such a thing on the web. It's nice to learn that others are out there trying to win converts to the Proustian cause. I'll soon send the money for a subscription, and I'll tell my students about your site.

Sincerely yours,
Curtis Bowman
Department of Philosophy
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA



I thought you might be interested to know that at tiny little Cornell College, in Mt. Vernon, IA, there is a senior seminar course devoted solely to Proust and *Remembrance of Things Past*. The college functions one-course-at-a-time (each course lasting 3 1/2 weeks) and the seminar focused on the first "volume" of the Montcrieff translation. As a veteran of the course, I can assure you of the pressures placed upon students to complete the first 1/3 of the entirety in only 3 1/2 weeks! I found myself struggling with the text, alternately hating and loving Marcel, fighting not to be drawn in to his life. The daily four hour discussions on the novel plagued me. By the third week, I crested, and in a tantrum tore my book in two down the middle, flinging one of the halves to the floor. The other half I kept, and continued to read. At the end of 3 1/2 weeks I was hooked, so much like opium was the narrative. I voluntarily organized and participated in a second, independent course, in which four hardy souls read and discussed the second "volume." And then I tackled the third on my own. When it was over, I didn't know what to do with myself. Where was I to get my next Proust fix? It came in the form of a lovely, and lengthy, biography. And now I tackle *Jean Santeuil*. Thank goodness *Proust Said That* will be there when I finish! It was a pleasure stumbling upon your newsletter.
Christine Parker

Enclosed please find fifty dollars which I hope makes it through the postal service to you. I'd like to have a copy of the most recent *PST* and of its five predecessors. As if you don't have enough Proust stories by now, here's one more: my wife and I began reading ROTP to each other out loud in early 1995 and now are close to the end, down to the last hundred pages. We began because we each fell asleep when we read it to ourselves. We still occasionally fall asleep while the other is reading, but find it marvelous

drifting in and out of sleep while listening to Proust. Please accept the remainder of the cash as a well-earned contribution to your efforts. If you are in Philadelphia, we would be happy to meet you.

Tom Csaszar

Thinking of Proust and modern technology I have to say that it is a good thing that Proust never had a computer and a word processing program. It is well known that he used to rewrite most passages several times, and when Gallimard asked him to proof-read his texts he never corrected errors, but instead used all available space to add new sentences between the old. If he had written his novel with a word processing program he would probably never have gotten beyond the first page (just like me, with my great novel, that is). While on the subject I can also add that we should be thankful that Walter Benjamin (who, by the way, has written an interesting essay on Proust) didn't have a photo copying machine and that August Strindberg didn't have an e-mail account.

Malte Persson

Goteborg, Sweden

Translation News!

Dear P Segal,

I've been reading, with pleasure and interest, the latest issue of PST, especially the article by Jerry Farber about translating Proust, as I am one of six members of a team of translators currently engaged in putting together a completely new translation of *A la recherche* for Penguin Books. The other translators are Lydia Davis, Mark Treharne, James Grieve, John Sturrock and Peter Collier, and we are working under the general editorship of Christopher Prendergast. The translation is scheduled for publication in 2001.

Penguin has set up a new website (www.penguin.co.uk/proust), which so far has very little on it: perhaps you should tell people on that site about yours? And anything you and your network have to offer would be very welcome.

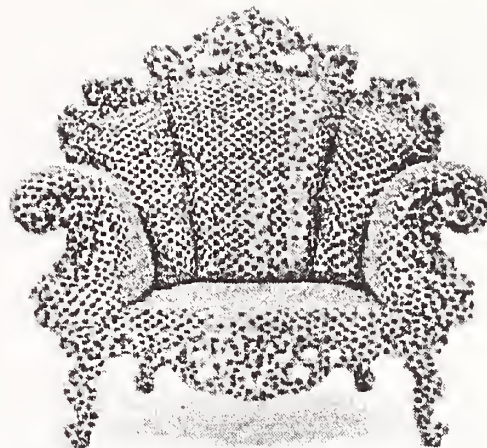
Are the first 5 issues of *PST* still available anywhere?

Anyway, this is just a note to establish contact.

Best wishes

Ian Patterson

King's College, Cambridge



This is the
Modern
World:

FURNISHINGS
OF THE
20TH CENTURY

This extraordinary piece of work is *Poltrona di Proust* (Proust's Armchair) designed by Alessandro Mendini, a gift of Mrs. S.M.B Roby and Samuel Putnam Avery Fund to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. This sighting was the gift of Jay Reeg, proprietor of the 1968 Museum and friend through Proust who sent me the first of my collection of Proust watches (two).

Pinkwater (continued from page 9)

lamenting the fact that his publisher, Random House, had decided not to fill any more orders on his novel *The Afterlife Diet*. Evidently, the big publishers set a profit quota for each book and when they make that money during the first month or two of a book's release, they cease to have any interest in the book and move on to other titles. In Mr. Pinkwater's case, this meant that, although Random House printed 15,000 copies of his novel, they only bound 7,000. This 7,000 sold during the first two months or so, Random House made its money, and they decided not to bother binding the remaining copies, despite the fact that there were plenty of people who still wanted to buy the book. Ah well, such is corporate wisdom, huh? So the book is basically out of print. The rights reverted to Mr. Pinkwater. And he enlisted my help in publishing the entire text of his novel on-line, at the FATISO? website! We've decided to call it a weblishing event! Each day, visitors will be able to read another chapter of the novel, until the entire book is uploaded. Then it will remain on-line for a brief week, or maybe two, after which time it will disappear again into the ethers. If you'd like to check out the set-up, stop by..."

<http://www.fatso.com/pink/>



