

# PROUST SAID THAT

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Premiere Issue

August 1994



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In This Issue: The Marcel Proust Support Group,  
Nocturnalism, Drugs, Pink Floyd, Stephen Hawking, The  
Dreyfus Affair and Madeleines

*Stuco 20*

# Why Would Anyone Want to Read This Zine?

There is out there in the reading public, a plentitude of Proust nuts. Those happily afflicted ones might buy this just because it says "Proust" on the cover, and because the name would lead them to suspect the contents of being intellectually agreeable. But for every Proustite there are a thousand other fans of serious literature who shrug him off as unreadable, long-winded or intimidating, a prissy purveyor of purple prose, the butt of literary jokes. In some ways, this publication is targeted towards this latter group, the ones who haven't yet made it past page ten, or haven't even tried.

Proust is an author for humanists, individuals who have sprung beyond the half-perspectives of feminism and male chauvinism, the ones who recognize that all humans are in this cultural cuinsinart together. Getting past the romanticized glorifications of the Goddess and Iron John and the separatist politics of sexual persuasion, the humanist wants to know what men and women are really like, so we can realistically evolve some solutions. Proust microscopically dissects human interaction, emotion and habitual behavior, calling members of both sexes on their flaws, fears, pecadillos and bugaboos. No one escapes scrutiny; we are all equally exposed.

Proust may be a serious writer, but his black humor, deep and subtle, keeps us laughing at the agonies of love; if we can only transfer this amusement to our own lives, they bode far better. As the trend of the modern world continues away from marriage-for-life and towards serial monogamy, Proust's words about the succession of loves suddenly make sense to a great many people. It is not surprising to learn that there are huge Proust revivals going on in France, Germany and Russia (and here in San Francisco); Proust's evisceration of humanity speaks with relentless, if occasionally unsavory, directness about how things really are in the world of human emotion, and we have arrived at the time when we'd better figure that out, or else.

But now it's not necessary to read through all those volumes in order to glean the most stirring and insightful gems of Proust. You can read this zine instead.

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

Written, edited and published by P, with the tremendous assistance of Dean Gustafson, whose cover portrait of Proust, madeleine illustrations and other contributions have added much, Joe Fenton, who was able to explain the Baroque plot of the Dreyfus Affair for our readers, and Stuart Mangrum, Paul Lord and Lance for their invaluable help in showing me how to do it.



# The Marcel Proust Support Group

I live in a grand, crumbling Edwardian in the geographical center of San Francisco, in a two-story, 14-room flat with six friends and an endless succession of delightful houseguests. The inmates are, without exception, arty in one way or another; we have lived together and creatively fermented side by side for years. We are family, dysfunctional but nonetheless mutually supportive.

As the birthday of one roommate rolled around, I asked him what he would like for a present. He thought about it for a few days, and then he said, "What I would really like for my birthday is for you to read Proust with me. I've tried to get through Remembrance of Things Past three times now, and I just don't think I can do it without a support group."

I myself had tried to read Proust twice that many times. "Okay," I answered feebly, "anything for you."

"Don't look so miserable," he said, "we only have to read ten pages a day. It would only take about eleven months, and maybe we could get some other people to do it with us. It'll be fun."



I asked myself where we could find a bunch of people who would subject themselves to eleven months of purple prose, and then the obvious response suggested itself: The San Francisco Cacophony Society. Cacophony is a group that devotes itself entirely to the creation of outrageous entertainments of all sorts; some have an element of danger, others whimsy, many have a literary bent and all of them require participation. So I sent the following notice to the Cacophony newsletter:

"We have tried on innumerable occasions to read through to the very last pages of Marcel Proust's magnum opus, Remembrance of Things Past, some among us reaching well into the third volume of this prodigious work of literature, but succumbed to that inevitable, narcoleptic, helpless block which prevents the much-valued completion of this classic of introspective cultural history, and so we have

profoundly wished to share this epic endeavor with others of like debility, gathering together in a solemn pledge, not untouched with a tinge of good-humored irony, to plough together through these three volumes at the sensible pace of ten pages a day, agreeing in advance to use the Vintage Books, 1982 edition, so we might proceed at an identical pace, and therefore, at our bimonthly meetings, be able to share the delights of the literary bliss within at an equal rate of discovery; blah blah blah."

Eight hardy literature buffs showed for the first meeting, scheduled for my roommate's birthday. We drank Pernod and ate madeleines, got acquainted with the previously unknown persons and spoke of our anxieties about this shared venture. Curious spectators came by to examine the specimens who were voluntarily committing to a 3000 plus-page read and to help dispose of the refreshments. One of them became the designated outside observer, charged with noting the behavioral changes of the support group members over the long haul.

The read began on the very next day. Four of the committed ones were members of our household, and before long, as we staggered out for morning (this term must not be taken literally) coffee, we were bearing our Remembrances so we might regale each other with favorite quotes. Then that wasn't enough, and we began inscribing the most deathless lines on an obscure wall over the cat food. When the going got rough, like the fortnight when a particular dinner party had been going on for 140 pages, we had each other, as we had often been, co-conspirators forced to attend a dull party.

Then we found ourselves speculating. "What is Legrandin's trip, anyway?" or "was Odette really in bed with de Forcheville when Swann came over?" We were very hooked.

In our zeal, we announced our second meeting in the Cacophony newsletter. This time, forty people showed up, but we figured that was because we had included, in our long-winded announcement, the news that we would be showing a movie as part of the evening's entertainment, "Swann in Love",

which is one of the books of Remembrance, and a short subject, Monty Python's hilarious skit, "The Marcel Proust Summarization Contest." The crowd included numerous persons who were trying to read Proust, thinking about trying, had been forced to read Proust, or had read it in French. People read aloud (in English and French), munched a lot of madeleines and drank a copious quantity of Pernod.

Our outside observer, and anyone else who knows me, soon realized that of all of us, I had been the most altered. The existence of this publication is testimony enough, but in the earlier stages, the warning signs were clearly visible. I had dumped the generic answering machine message and replaced it with a weekly Proust quote, a tradition I have maintained without deviation for about three years, and without having to repeat myself once. In the beginning of this manifestation, I got a lot of hang-up calls, probably clients who were sure I'd finally gone round the bend. Other people began calling on a very regular basis, just to hear the quote.

My callers, too, found themselves altered. Serendipitous quotes rang too many bells in their ears; their resolve not to read Proust melted away. Even the people who had been laughing at my obsession were secretly buying Volume I and indulging.

The months sped by. We were leading double lives, ours and Marcel's ("Are you still having dinner with the Swanns?" "Have you left for Balbec yet?") Our capacity to speak in simple sentences diminished. Some readers, unable to bear it any longer, dropped out, while others joined in.

We held our meetings in fin-du-siecle venues and amassed a library of Proustiana. Nine months after we had begun, an impending sense of loss began setting in. Only eight hundred pages left... five hundred pages left... two hundred... oh, no. We had long since stopped greeting each other with inquiries as to states of well-being. The first question we asked upon encountering another of our kind was invariably "what page are you on?"

It was a blustery, rainy January when the end was near for the three survivors of the original group, all of whom lived in our household. A certain rivalry ensued as to which of the three of us would finish first. John, who started the whole thing, announced

that he was sure he would finish first. We soon discovered why; he had found our copies and torn out the last page.

John was, of course, correct about being the first of us to finish. He was also right about the fact that reading Proust had been fun, as shared horrors always seem in retrospect. But that wasn't the only reason.

For me, one of the great thrills of the read was the effect it had on my attitude towards books in general. They had always been some kind of sacred cows, that should not be marked or mutilated in any way, but treated with utmost respect. But as I read, it became painfully clear that discrete microdots of fine leaded pencil would not suffice to flag the gems I came across on every page. As I made my way through the first few hundred pages, I got over my bourgeois reservations about the printed page, and the margins became flooded with squiggles and exclamation marks, the text itself riddled with underlining, highlighting, brackets and colored paper markers.

My middle-class veneration of books toppled even further as the months wore on and I, worn out, would fall asleep frequently with the book in my hands, unable to put it down, only to be startled back into consciousness as it fell, with a resounding thunk, on the bedside floor. Within a short time, the binding was so distressed that Volume I broke into multiple sections. When some of my coreaders were off on vacation, I was able to lend them chunks of text to take along, sparing them the weight of an entire volume. In these two notable deviations from my former behavior, marking and breaking great books, I felt the lightness of heart that comes with the shedding of restrictive conventions.

There was fun to be had in absorbing the cynical and all-too-true observations Proust made on the subject of human nature, particularly in the realm of love. It lent a sense of foreboding to every interpersonal encounter, the anticipatory irrepressible laughter I felt as a child when I knew that the jig was up and I was about to be busted. With the belief that I now possess some kind of code to the human heart, I can face all possibilities without fear, and with laughter.



# Proustian Potboiler Skewers Scholars And Bludgeons Egos

## Is French Murder Mystery A Character Assassination Of Proud Literary Society?

By PETER GUMBLE

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
ILLIERS, France — Strange things can happen to people who plow through all 3,500 pages of Marcel Proust's 20th-century masterpiece "A la Recherche du Temps perdu," known in English as "Remembrance of Things Past." Being bludgeoned to death with a garden statue isn't usually one of them.

Then again, it's not every reader who goes on an annual May pilgrimage to Illiers — called Combray in the novel — to recite Proustian passages amid the flowering hawthorn bushes described by the book's narrator, and to sample the madeleines he dunked in his tea to bring back childhood memories.

The Society of Friends of Marcel Proust and Friends of Combray does just that. But these days, murder rather than manners is on its mind. That helps explain why some of the society's 500 members — normally a scholarly and cosmopolitan lot — are behaving with all the gentility of mud wrestlers.

The trouble started two months ago, when the editor of the society's annual bulletin published a new work that has become a bestseller. The first surprise was that Elyane Dezon-Jones didn't write yet another scholarly treatise on Proust and Japan, or Proust and nervous disorders — two subjects dealt with at length in recent issues of the bulletin. Rather, using a nom de plume she penned an Agatha Christie-style thriller titled "Murder at Aunt Leonie's," set in the Illiers cottage where Proust stayed as a child.

That alone was enough to raise some highbrow eyebrows. But worse lay between the covers: The novel turned out to be a withering parody of Proust scholarship and the venerable Proust society itself.

In the book, one elderly university specialist has no qualms about plagiarizing his students' work. An up-and-coming American professor, whose reputation is



Marcel Proust

based on an incomprehensible thesis called "A Criticism of the Criticism of New Criticism: a Transatlantic View," turns out to be more interested in sex and fame than literature. A famous French intellectual suffers an existential crisis when his boyfriend leaves him.

### Killer Nymph

Most biting of all is the depiction of the murder victim, secretary of the thinly disguised "Proust Association." She is portrayed as a shallow and unscrupulous social-climber who almost deserves her fate: a mortal blow to the head in Aunt Leonie's house with a statue of a naked nymph taken from the garden.

All this has some hard-core society members choking on their madeleines. The rancor eclipses the society's perennial debate over whether the long and winding structure of Proust's sentences reflected the rhythm of his asthmatic breathing.

Nobody has reacted more furiously than Anne Borrel, real-life secretary-general of the Proust Society and, according to people who know her, an obvious model for the doomed secretary. Among the undisputed similarities: They share the same initials and have both written coffee-table books about Proust. Ms. Borrel's is called "Dining With Proust," a cookbook with Proustian delicacies like pineapple and truffle salad and calves kidneys simmered in cognac. In the murder mystery, Adeline Bertrand-Verdon's is a "Guide to the Perfect Proustian," described as "everything-you-always-wanted-to-make-people-believe-you-knew-about-Proust-without-ever-having-read-it."

Scholarship and style divide Mrs. Dezon-Jones and Ms. Borrel, both Frenchwomen in their late 40s. The studious Mrs. Dezon-Jones has long been a devoted Proust scholar and editor, going so far as to scour the original manuscripts written in his messy scrawl to come up with what she hopes are definitive versions of the text. Though also an academic, the bubbly and more explosive Ms. Borrel wasn't a Proust specialist when she took over the administrative job running the society.

### Proust and Poland

Ms. Borrel says she has made herself unpopular by trying to inject new life into the society, which was formed in 1947 to transform Aunt Leonie's house from a ramshackle encampment for the occupying German forces into a Proust museum. The few shaky steps toward commercialization that the society has sanctioned since she assumed the helm in 1987 — including a Proust watch, and a perfume named Catleya for the orchid that appears in Proust's steamy passages — may not have helped.

Mrs. Dezon-Jones's novel "is a clumsy way of doing her own psychoanalysis," Ms. Borrel says on her way to a seminar on Proust and Poland ("Poland and Poles are not completely absent from 'A la Recher-

che du Temps perdu,'" lecturer Bernard Raffalli says at the seminar, pulling up the few references in the book to Chopin and Warsaw that he can find). "It would be a pity if people read that and not Proust, because it's not the same quality," she says of Mrs. Dezon-Jones's work.

But Proust would have loved it. The writer, who died in 1922 while still working on his mammoth novel, often loosely based his characters on acquaintances — and rarely spared their feelings. That Proust himself sometimes skewered friends, however, is of little consolation to society members who have been horrified to find themselves depicted unflatteringly.

### Book Boycott

Mrs. Dezon-Jones insists she wasn't out to settle scores with her fellow Proustians. She says she wrote the novel "for my own amusement," while laid up with back trouble for four months at her home in St. Louis, where she heads the graduate studies program in Romance languages at Washington University. "I can't stop people believing they recognize themselves in the text," she says. "It's getting ridiculous. People are even doing anagrams of the names."

Not just Proustians are joining in the fray. Alain Robbe-Grillet, one of France's best-known writers, speculated during a recent TV appearance that the U.S. literary theorist in the mystery is based on Michael Riffaterre, a Proust specialist and former head of the French department at Columbia University who now teaches literary theory there. Prof. Riffaterre says he knows Mrs. Dezon-Jones but hasn't yet read her novel. "I've appeared in other novels," he adds, generously. "I'm a picturesque character."

Ms. Borrel has told friends and her staff in Illiers not to buy or read the book. That, of course, hasn't stopped them: The town bookstore has sold about 100 to date, and the owner had to travel the 80 miles to Paris to beg for more this month because copies are scarce while the thriller goes through its third printing.

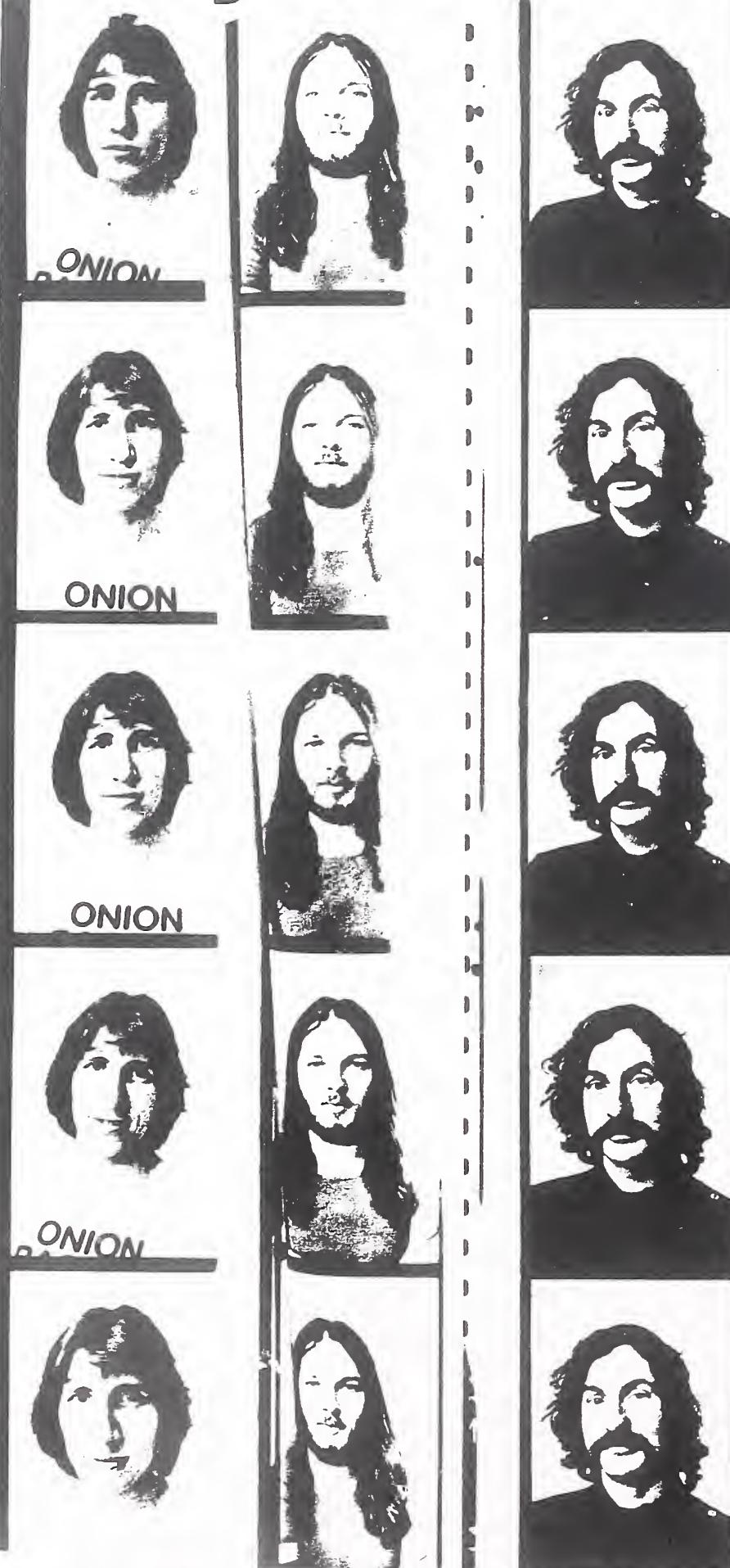
One local Proust fan whom Ms. Borrel told not to read the work gleefully pulls a copy out of her handbag and shows off the dedication on the flyleaf from Mrs. Dezon-Jones. It reads: "To someone who knows all the secrets."

Ms. Borrel and Mrs. Dezon-Jones have met several times on Proust society business since the novel was published, but have avoided discussing it. Other Proustians have been watching the chilly encounters with fascination.

While fuming privately, Ms. Borrel insists publicly that she doesn't recognize herself in the novel. "Above all, I recognize her," she snaps, suggesting that Mrs. Dezon-Jones's murder victim may be autobiographical. "It's almost as if she commits suicide in it."

But Mrs. Dezon-Jones maintains that, "I am not in the book. Adeline is not me." With a chuckle, she adds: "I'd rather be the murderer than the victim."

# Floyd Does Proust



In November of 1972, the French choreographer Roland Petit met with the members of Pink Floyd to discuss collaborating on a new ballet based on Remembrance of Things Past. Rudolph Nureyev was to star in the production.

"Ballet is a little like a film, actually," Nick Mason said in an interview the following February. "The more information you have to start with, the easier it becomes to write." With this in mind, Pink Floyd went out and bought Remembrance, from which to gather their impressions.

Unfortunately, as Mason continued, "nobody read anything. David (Gilmour) did the worst, he only read the first 18 pages."

"I read the second volume of "Swann's Way," Roger Waters said, "and when I got to the end of it I thought, 'fuck this, I'm not reading any more. I can't handle it.' It just went too slowly for me."

The band got lucky; there was a change in plans. In their next interview, Mason announced "Proust has been kicked in the head. Roland Petit has decided instead to choreograph A Thousand and One Nights."

(From Pink Floyd. A Visual Documentary by Miles. Omnibus Press, London, 1980)



# In Defense of Nocturnalism

I come from a family that didn't sleep much; there was always too much to do. We might have slept more, but everyone in the family really liked the late night. Although I was sent to bed at some "reasonable" hour, I also loved the late night, reading under the covers with a flashlight.

Until I left home, I shared a room with my grandmother, a tiny, ancient woman who spoke only Sicilian, and who was virtually a total recluse. She left the house only for weddings and funerals; privacy was scarce. And because she rarely got any exercise, Nona was subject to dreadful fits of nocturnal cramps in her legs. At four AM or five, or maybe even six, she would suddenly begin to gasp and scream in pain. "I'm dying!" she would scream (in Sicilian) and suddenly I, collapsed over my book and flashlight, got that adrenaline awakening. My job was to wake up my mother, who would run with hot packs and liniment to her mother's side.

From the time I was a small child I was accustomed to quaking in the face of imminent demise on a regular basis. I stayed awake long, long hours, afraid Nona would die. I was the only child in the second grade with chronic dark shadows under my eyes.

Staying awake until the wee-est hours is a childhood habit that stuck. Once I left home, I immediately discovered the flip side of the late night from bunking with Nona, its pleasures and allure. All

night coffee shops, conversations, collaborations, adventures. No traffic, empty tables, silent streets, opportunities to do what one might not, if anyone else was watching—which includes, of course, love.

The phone stops ringing; the visitors are few and far between, and the friends who are willing to see you in those hours, kindred night spirits like yourself, are welcome. There are long, uninterrupted hours for creative projects, reading in bed, writing letters, staring at the computer.

Coming from a family of night people, I didn't see any problem with staying up all night until I wandered into the real world, where few employers, other than all-night cafe proprietors, had any sympathy for the naturally nocturnal. By the time I was 21, my destiny was clear: self-employment.

All the decisions I made in my life hinged upon a single consideration: would they permit me the right to keep my own hours (with the exceptional odd obligation) or wouldn't they? Inevitably I opted for the night.

The "real" world does not like my choice. Health-conscious people tell me that sleeping during the day depletes something or other and not getting enough sunlight gives me vitamin deficiencies. But being on a day schedule makes me miserable,

and I get sick because I don't like what I'm doing, but staying up most of the night makes me happy, and when I'm happy I never get sick. So what is the healthy choice, I ask?

The nocturnal are an unrepresented minority, especially in this coun-

**"...When later on I took to staying up all night and spending all day in bed, though I did not see the light of day I felt its proximity with an appetite for light and living all the sharper because it could not be gratified."**

*-Contre Sainte-Beuve*

**"I was... often an extremely heavy sleeper... especially when I only fell asleep in the morning. As this kind of sleep is—on the average—four times as refreshing, it seems to the awakened sleeper to have lasted four times as long, when it has really been four times as short."**

*- The Captive*

try with puritanism and health-fetishism on the march. Nocturnalism carries with it no end of nasty social stigmas, implying the presence of other "unhealthy" inclinations, like drinking, smoking, drug



# Proust On Drugs

abuse, crime, dissipation, deviance, obsession and meat-eating, and there is no doubt a correlation. People make fun of it, refuse to respect it, are consumed with gnawing envy because they can't do it, or lecture you interminably about it, but to what purpose? Nocturnalism must be carried in the genes, linked to astrological occurrences, bred in the bone. It's like being blue-eyed or bald or gay or susceptible to poison oak.

After years of being thought weird for my late-night obsession, I was immensely gratified to discover that Marcel Proust was an incorrigible night person, a habit which he claimed to require for purposes of his health. For the last twelve years of his life, in particular, he remained cooped up in his cork-lined bedroom, sleeping all day and working all night. His publishers, friends and other persons of business did not present themselves at Proust's house until 10PM, and even then they were frequently made to wait for some time until their host had consumed his leisurely coffee and prepared himself for visitors.

Proust's faithful housekeeper, Celeste, kept his hours as well, ready to attend upon him when needed. She was frequently dispatched in the late hours to summon to The Presence whatever he might need in the way of inspiration, a certain kind of person, a string quartet. Of course he could be eccentric as he wished; he was independently wealthy, generous and gracious, and he never had to hold down a day job. And true to stereotype, he wrote with sympathetic understanding on the subjects of drinking, smoking, drug abuse, deviance, obsession and dissipation; of all the evils of the night dwellers, he escaped only crime, unless you count the fact that he didn't write more.



One of Proust's peculiarities is that he frequently alludes to experiences he is familiar with, but declines to comment on them, except in the most obscure way. He may relentlessly relate every word uttered by every upper-class French twit at a dinner party, while dismissing a duel he fought with a dependent clause, or the twelve years spent in a sanitarium with a single paragraph. And so he tantalizes us with the drug experiences, undertaken, of course, for reasons of health, that he obviously enjoys tremendously...

*"Not far thence is the secret garden in which the different kinds of sleep, so different from one another, induced by datura, by Indian hemp, by the multiple extracts of ether—the sleep of belladonna, of opium, of valerian—grow like unknown flowers whose petals remain closed until the day when the predestined stranger comes to open them with a touch and to liberate for long hours the aroma of their peculiar dreams for the delectation of an amazed and spellbound being."*

*-The Guermantes Way*

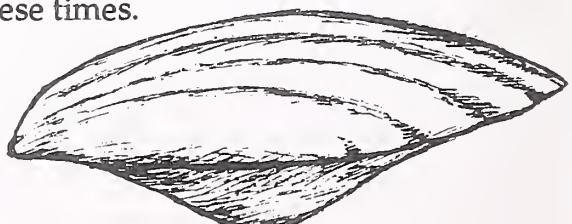
*"When one absorbs a new drug, entirely different in composition, it is always with a delicious expectancy of the unknown. One's heart beats as at a first assignation."*

*-The Captive*

*"It is easy to speak of the beauty of opium..."*

*-The Captive*

Given these random comments, it is not difficult to surmise what Proust might have found amusing had he lived in these times.



Predictably, Our First Food Feature:

# Madeleines

People who know anything at all about Proust probably know that he was obsessed with the flavor of the small, shell-shaped tea cakes known as madeleines. The madeleine eaten late in his life, dipped in a lime blossom tisane, recalled the madeleines of his youth, a sense memory to which he attributes the triggering of Remembrance. As this petit gateau was responsible for 3500-some pages of exquisite prose, I figured it was worth investing in a madeleine pan. Obviously, these were destined to be the mainstay of refreshment at all Marcel Proust Support Group functions.

Searching among my hundreds of cookbooks, I looked first to the sumptuous Dining With Proust by Jean-Bernard Naudin, Anne Borrel and Alain Senderens (Random House, 1992) and Shirley King's equally captivating Dining With Marcel Proust. A Practical Guide to the Cuisine of the Belle Epoque (Thomas and Hudson, London, 1979) for recipes. In the first source, the instructions called for refrigerating the batter for an hour, then bringing it back to room temperature for half an hour. As they did not mention the rationale for not simply refrigerating for half an hour, recipe #1 got disqualified. In the second, "practical" source, the recipe suggested using an electric mixer if desired; as it turned out, to suggest doing this without one was highly impractical.

The Gourmet Cookbook, Vol. I (Gourmet Books, 1972) had this recipe that began with rubbing a sugar cube on a citrus object until the cube was saturated with the oil; it went on to cook the batter in a saucepan. So far, all three recipes called for anal retentive buttering of the madeleine molds, and all the photographs were identical; that's where

the similarity ended—neither proportions, ingredient lists or methods of preparation matched up.

Sighing, I reached for the skudgewomp-encrusted, coverless 1967 Joy of Cooking, which had this perfectly comprehensible recipe.

## Madeleines

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Melt and allow to cool:

3/4 cup butter

Heat in a double boiler until lukewarm:

2 eggs

1 cup sugar

Stir constantly. Remove from heat and beat until thick but light and creamy, incorporating as much air as possible. When cool, sift and add gradually:

1 cup sifted cake flour

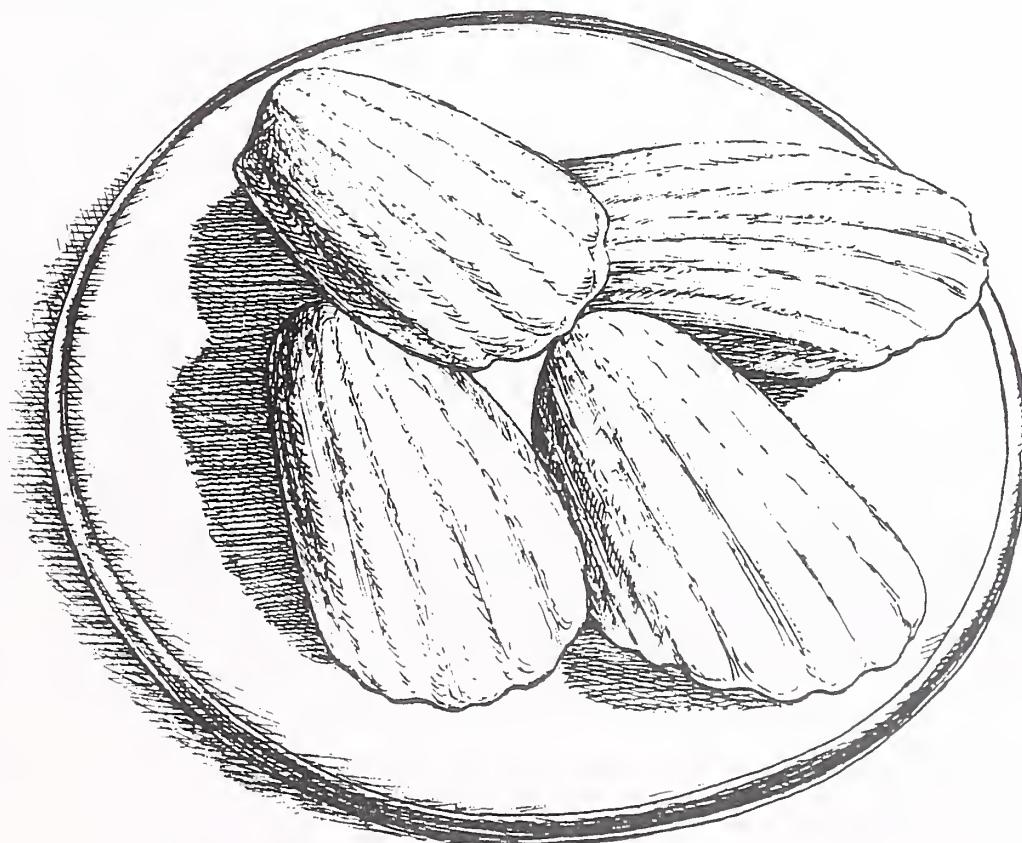
Add the cool, melted butter and:

1 Tbsp. rum

1 tsp. vanilla or lemon rind

Bake for about 15 minutes.

A moment of horror followed, as I re-read the baking instructions once again. Incredibly, Joy



failed to mention buttering the pans at all, much less buttering with sheer compulsion. For years, *Joy* has been a veritable Bible; to catch the Rombauers in such a flagrant sin of omission shook my faith to its very roots. I cringed in retrospect, remembering the hundreds of times I had scanned *The Joy* as I ran out to a catering gig, to refresh my memory on the preparation of some infrequently used sauce. I had spent years staking my professional reputation on the utter reliability of this source. The Rombauers blew it.

Nonetheless, I used this version. The operative phrases in this recipe are "stir constantly" and "beat until thick, but light and creamy." Stirring something in a double boiler until it's lukewarm takes a while, especially when stirring constantly. Then, when your wrist is signaling it's breaktime, you are obliged to "beat until thick but light and creamy," a string of descriptors with a slightly oxymoronic sensibility.

If you, like me, can't accommodate another appliance on your kitchen counters, you probably don't have a mixer on a stand. My answer to planned-obsolescence hand mixers has been to possess one of those 1951 bomb-proof metal mixers, which began to resemble a weightlifting test of endurance halfway through thick-but -light-and-creamy.

My roommate Lance, who had been observing the experiment with amused detachment, relieved me of the mixer for the last seven or eight minutes of beating. We enthusiastically buttered the forms with one of those fan-shaped artist's brushes and put them in the oven.

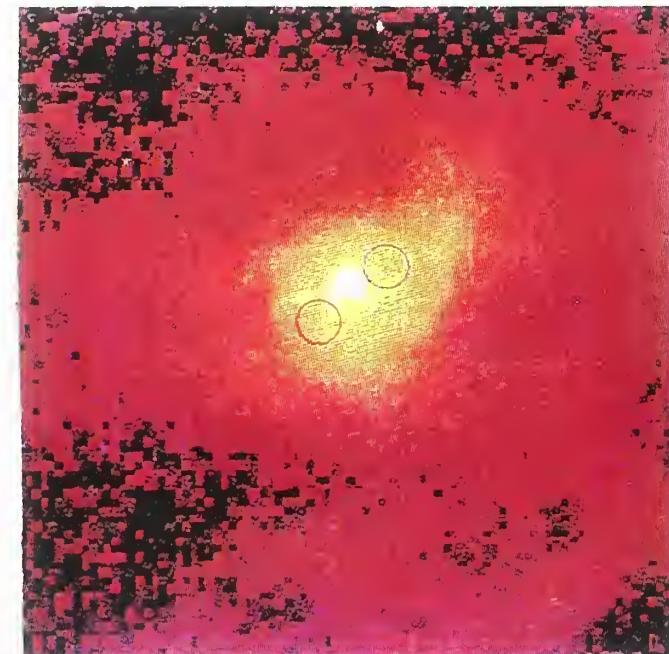
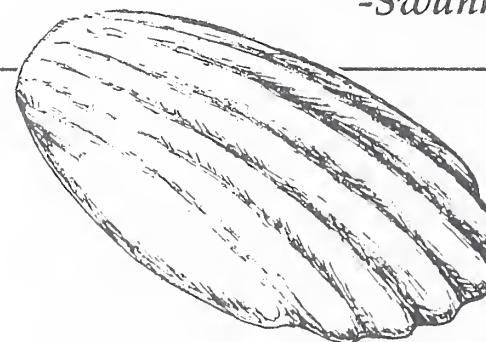
This deceptively easy recipe took about an hour to make and yielded 15 little cakes, consumed in under two minutes by the quality control assurance squad, led by the evocative odor of baking madeleines to gather around the kitchen table. In spite of this, we made several more batches, reassessing our former disregard for the more difficult-sounding recipes. The Rombauer madeleine is almost it; the outer edges are crispy, with the interior hinting at moist chewiness. In future issues we will report on other recipes, until the perfect one is found.

Further proof, by the way, that a Proust revival is underway: it used to be that you would go to a cafe,

and by the register you might find a jar of biscotti on the counter (biscotti being a rediscovered ethnic food staple that peaked as a foodie find around 1990.) Lately, if you'll notice, you are apt to find, beside the jar of biscotti... a jar of madeleines.

"And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings in Combray... my aunt Leonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane."

*-Swann's Way*



When asked what one might find at the bottom of a black hole, famed physicist Stephen Hawking replied, "The seven leather-bound volumes of Proust."

# The Dreyfus Affair Imbroglio

by Joe Fenton

Often in literature we can find events of the contemporary world of the author displayed in such an original context that we arrive at a clearer

understanding of the incidents themselves. One such case is that of Alfred Dreyfus, an encompassing undercurrent throughout the various salons and sceneries of Marcel Proust's work. To be or not to be a Dreyfussard denoted not merely a knowledge of the events of the time, not merely a sense of the depths of anti-Semitism, but further showed patriotic bias "in the name of France" or a Republican sentiment, which is displayed all the more potently for its appearance in the parlors of the waning royalty.

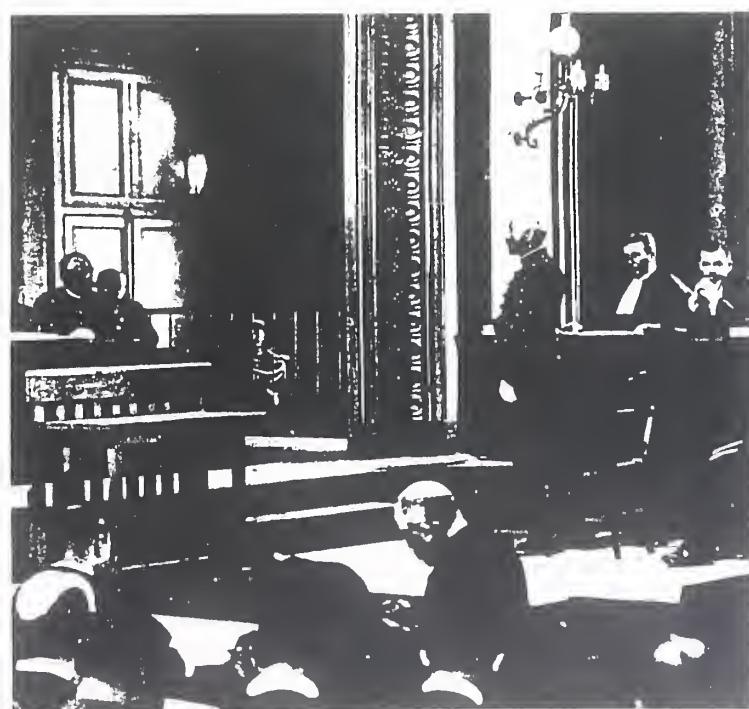
Dreyfusism divided France, not abstractly, but on a personal and individual level, with arguments, broken relationships, shunned greetings and moments of awkward silence, as seen in Proust. All this leaves us with a brilliant picture of the overall social tension, but does little to explain in any depth the actual cases of Dreyfus, Zola, Count Esterhazy, and Colonel Henry, whose names pop out at us in passing conversations and attitudes.

Alfred Dreyfus was a career army officer from a good Jewish family of the Alsace region of France/Germany. This area, full of industry and commerce, was a source of constant sedition between the two countries and was, when Alfred was a child, taken by the Germans in the



war of 1870. Although the Dreyfus family holdings were left intact, Alfred Dreyfus was asked to leave the now-German region because of his desire to be a French officer.

In Paris, Dreyfus attended the Ecole Polytechnique where he did quite well for himself, even buffeting the waves of anti-Jewish sentiment that rippled through France in the early days of the Third Republic. In these years, many of the French Officer Corp were Royalists, having been in the army, and saw themselves as separate from the changes in government and the debacle of early Third Republic politics. Dreyfus was certainly an officer of this character, but not in the sense of being a Royalist, only in the sense of being devoted to his life as a soldier and his honor as an officer.



Back from Devil's Island in 1899, Dreyfus was again tried before a French Army court-martial, this time at Rennes. Two of his lawyers are at right.

At the same time, France was at a crossroads of military technology and at a new level of paranoia. New weapons were being invented and new systems of deployment and procedure were being tested. A librarian at the Church of Saint Thomas Aquinas was arrested for passing secrets to the Germans and a clerk at the French Admiralty was caught and convicted as a spy. An explosives technician was also caught stealing a new explosive before the French government had a chance to test it. The Second Bureau, the military's intelligence group, headed by Major Herbert Henry (later Colonel), had the task of combating these losses. The French, of course, were not beyond their own spying tricks, and retained within the staff of the German Embassy in Paris a maid, Mme. Bastain, who routinely gleaned the wastebasket of Colonel von Schwarzkoppen, the Embassy head. Two pieces of evidence were eventually found in this wastebasket, both wholly inconclusive, but they nevertheless continued the uncertainty in the Dreyfus Affair.

The first piece of evidence was a note Colonel von Schwarzkoppen had written to a fellow officer asking him to deal with a traitor who was bringing a set of fortification maps for sale. The second was a notation made of "the scoundrel D\_\_\_\_", which the Second Bureau maintained for over six years meant Dreyfus. The second piece of evidence also pointed to a traitor on the French General Staff, and this could not be overlooked or forgotten. Someone must be caught and convicted, and under this pressure the Second Bureau went to the trouble of stealing another piece of paper from the German Ambassador's desk. This was the famous secret evidence, *Le Bordereau*, a small piece of paper

usually used for bookkeeper's notes. Listed on the bordereau were the contents of a package delivered to the Ambassador by a spy, including many of the newest facts and procedures which the French most feared losing. The General Staff arrested the first "D" name from the list of junior officers (most likely to be mistrusted) and were relieved to find he was a Jew.

The typical pleasantries of incarceration were of course followed; the hapless Dreyfus was conned into a false sense of security, arrested and offered the chance to commit

suicide. Dreyfus yelled and cursed long into the night of his arrest, refusing to believe what was happening, decrying his innocence and demanding to face his accusers. He was summarily convicted, in a proper military court, on the testimony of a bevy of hired handwriting experts and the three pieces of evidence. After the trial, Dreyfus did try to commit suicide by ramming his head into the stone walls of his cell, but was unsuccessful, and he was shipped off to spend the rest of his life on Devil's Island. He was publicly defrocked and the cause of great commotion wherever his transport was discovered.

The press has a major part in the story of Dreyfus. Newspapers were the only source



of news, and they were avidly read; they figured prominently in the formation of public opinion. The most widely read publication was a daily, *Le Matin*, which maintained a largely ambiguous following of the case. Another, *La Libre Parole*, was vehemently anti-Semitic, and run, incidentally, by a friend of

the actual guilty spy. Various presses spoke for their side's belief in the Dreyfus case; a study of France at that time shows the great proliferation of these groups and their papers.

All this time, of course, the real spy was at large within the General Staff, and apparently still not over his money difficulties, as the filching of secrets continued. A new head came to the Second Bureau, a Colonel Piquart, and soon thereafter new evidence was found, a note written to the actual traitor by the wife of Colonel von Schwarzkoppen on the standard French postcard called *le petit bleu*.

This piece of evidence caused Piquart to look into a special file of the Dreyfus case, left in the safe of his office when he took command. Within this envelope he found the original pieces of evidence, including the *bordereau* believed to be in Dreyfus's handwriting. Col. Piquart had



Col. Max von Schwarzkoppen



Col. Joseph Henry and wife

known Major-Count Ferdinand Walsin-Esterhazy before and knew him now as a member of the General Staff, and he recognized Esterhazy's writing on the *bordereau*. This was the first point where Dreyfus's innocence became known to anyone outside the original Second Bureau personnel, which included a

Major Paty du Clam and General Gonse. Piquart was not allowed to bring forth the evidence, and to the contrary, was sent off to die in Africa.

Luckily, Col. Piquart had friends who saved him

from the front lines. In the meanwhile, the original conspirators forged further documents to place in the file, noting that Dreyfus had purchased samples of Esterhazy's handwriting from Jewish moneylenders, to whom the poor count had to turn in a spate of financial misfortune. But Piquart was not a stupid man, and before leaving for his new assignment, he wrote down everything that he knew of Dreyfus's innocence and entrusted the matter to an attorney, "in case of death." The attorney was also allowed to disseminate the information to anyone who could use it outside of the actual camp of the Dreyfussards.

Soon further blows came to the Dreyfus camp, as the original head of the Second Bureau died and Col. Henry had opportunity to add more forgeries to the Dreyfus file. In a new twist, an "original" of the *bordereau* appeared, and the former was deemed a "copy. A copy of this document in a journal caused a stockbroker, a M. Castro, to report the name of Esterhazy to Mathieu Dreyfus, Alfred's brother and the leader of the continued effort for justice. Once Esterhazy's name hit the papers, a new rash of stories began circulating about the *bordereau* and its origins. At the same time, Esterhazy had the indiscretion to leave wanting an ex-mistress, who gave the Dreyfussards letters from the major, who did not stick to romance while writing.



Esterhazy

During these times, Emile Zola was the darling of Paris. Zola, a famous writer who was also the toast of society, challenged his readers not to think in terms of Dreyfus or anti-Dreyfus, but to consider what was happening in their society. He watched carefully as Esterhazy was brought to trial; the court conducting the preliminary hearing did not recommend a trial, but the General Staff pushed the court for one. The trial submerged in secrecy for reasons of national security, but a few days later a verdict of "not guilty" was announced and Piquart was arrested. Zola's opinions on these proceedings get his daily column removed from a prominent newspaper.

In a night and a day, Zola wrote an open letter to the President entitled "*J'Accuse*", which outlined the entire Dreyfus case, forgeries and players in a remarkably clear form. Zola knew that to do so was a felony, and it would leave him open to public scorn and possible financial loss in libel suits, but he was determined to speak out. The Zola trial was followed with rioting mobs and great suspense as the entire

General Staff announced they would resign if Zola was acquitted, but Zola and his publisher were found guilty, fined and sentenced to jail terms.

At this point, the French Cabinet voted 428 to 54 that the Dreyfus case should never be re-opened. Zola went on fighting his conviction with appeals, and, after losing a libel suit to the three government handwriting experts who claimed the *bordereau* was in Dreyfus's hand, fled to England. The Dreyfus case had taken on a distinctive nationalistic and Republican flavor; Dreyfus had cried to the crowds at his defrockment,

"I am innocent, Long live France!" and to pay attention to the case three years after the arrest was construed as an act of patriotism. Either one believed that Dreyfus was innocent, and a moral overhaul was needed in the government,



In an odd cartoon, Colonel Henry cuts throat with help from his accuser.

or Dreyfus was guilty, and the integrity and reputation of the army, courts and cabinet must be protected.

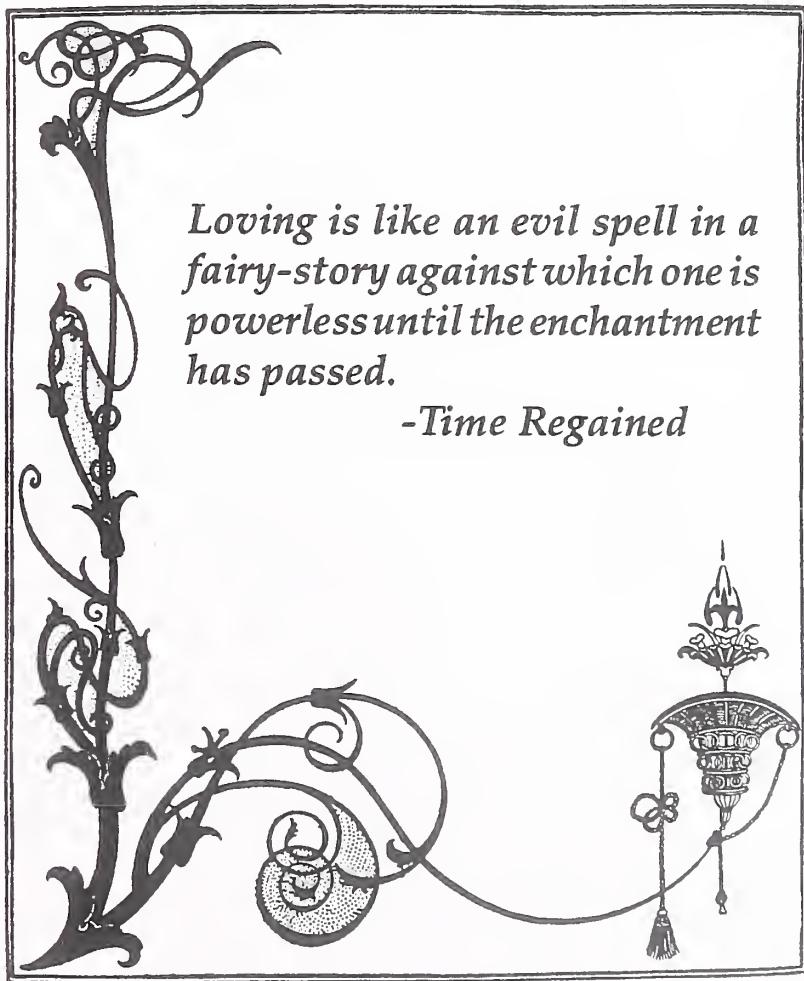
As for Piquart and Esterhazy, they were both brought to trial at the same time, separate trials, but a double bill for the Parisian audience. Col. Henry was arrested to testify at the trial of Piquart, accused of divulging secrets of state to

his attorney. Faced with the trap of the situation, Henry committed suicide, leaving behind the allegation that Piquart was an accomplice in the fabrication of the *petit bleu*. Esterhazy followed Zola's lead and fled to England. The time had come for the Dreyfus camp to act, and a new appeal was brought before the highest court of appeals. Ignoring the earlier cabinet vote on the non-rehabilitation of the Dreyfus case, the cabinet now voted to have the case heard by a panel of judges from various court systems so that the fairness of its verdict could not be questioned.

Esterhazy, the original traitor, and a bungling fool of a spy at that, could not stay quietly in exile in London. He was secretly blackmailing the General Staff, claiming he would return and name them all as accomplices. The papers roared with whatever news there was, even mentioning the inconsequential suit of a Duke Esterhazy, who sued Count-Major Esterhazy, demanding the inclusion of the middle surname "Walsin—" be used in the Count-Major's name, to acknowledge the impurity of the stock from the truly honored Esterhazys. In a fit of boasting, the bungler claims it was he, Esterhazy, and the general staff, who planned the writing of the *bordereau*, and he who wrote it. With this news, Zola could come home, for his case against Esterhazy, the one initially lost, would be overturned. Piquart was released, and Dreyfus was coming from Devil's Island.

The trial was much more open, yet just as hostile. Mobs and the press screamed for justice; witnesses who offered evidence for the acquittal were publicly booed and ridiculed. In the end, even with the lack of evidence and testimony to the contrary, Dreyfus was convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison. A pardon from the President came as no surprise, and against the advice of counsel, Dreyfus accepted. This action actually damned Piquart, who had been a staunch supporter of Dreyfus, although silently; seen within the pardon was an admission of guilt.

Piquart would be retried for violating France's rules of secrecy. Dreyfus went on to write his memoirs of Devil's Island and have them published. In 1900 the cabinet voted a complete amnesty for Dreyfus. Two years later, Zola died of apparent asphyxiation from an improperly tended coal heater, and so the Dreyfus case ended, leaving a new name for injustice, and a new martyr of anti-Semitism.



## LITERARY FOOTNOTE

(Proust)...frequently...  
had tantrums in which  
he...crushed his friends'  
hats...

William H. Gass,  
N.Y. Times Book Review



1) L'auteur  
aperçoit...

### DES EXEMPLES PRATIQUES 1905

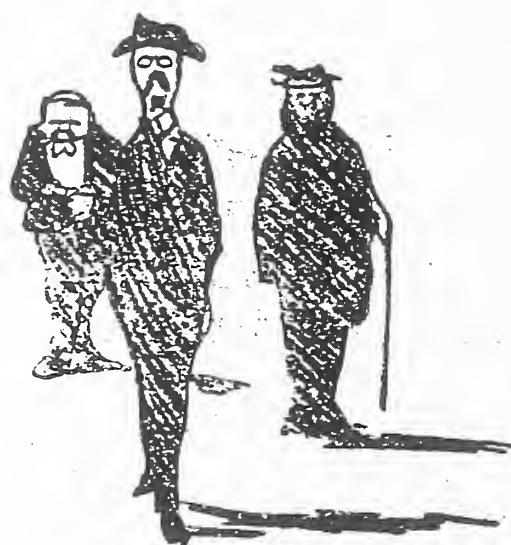
M. Jean-Louis Pleyte



Avant



Après



APRÈS LA GRANDE SOIREE, LES  
AMIS TRISTES RENTRENT  
CHEZ EUX.

le Comte Longet-Champon



Avant



Après

### LES SONS DE PARIS, 1898

Duc de Bonbaccarat



Avant



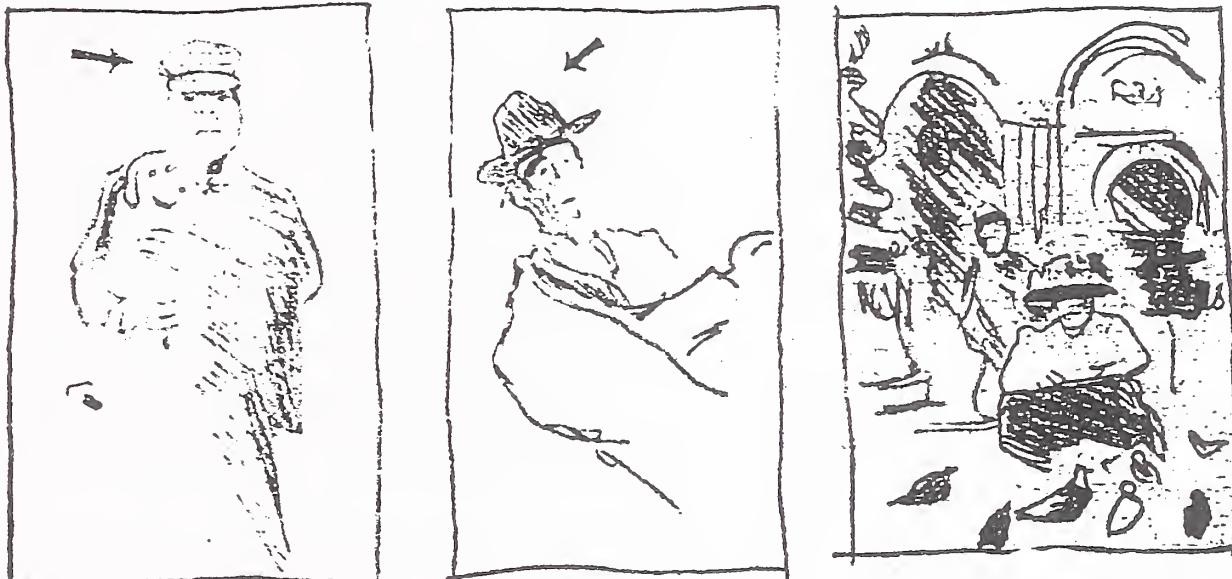
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(Après Pissarro)



## TRÉPIDATION DANS LE MONDE LITTÉRAIRE

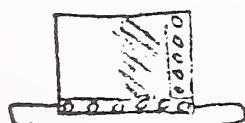


HENRY JAMES avec son dachshund Max, 1900  
(notez le chapeau de golf)

ANDRÉ GIDE 1909  
(chapeau de feutre)

GERTRUDE STEIN 1914  
(Elle est allée à Venise pour porter son chapeau nouveau)

NEVER AN APOLOGY.....



chapeau de fer  
porté par un ami  
sympathique.

Marcel - Pourquoi avez-vous écrasé mon chapeau la semaine dernière?

JE NE M'EN SOUVIENS PLUS...  
...JE NE SUIS PAS À LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU!

— JAMES STEVENSON



# In Memoriam

Deep sorrows often surface in times of greatest joy. In a year full of hope, promise and pleasures (not the least of which has been assembling this) I have lost two of the best friends one could ever hope to have, Richard Lerner, who died on June 26, and Cyndy Kolnick, who died on July 17.

I met Richard twelve years ago when he worked the night shift at the answering service charged with answering my phone. I would call in late at night for my messages. "This is 347," I'd say, and invariably spend an hour or so on the phone with Richard. For years afterwards, and even a few days before he died, he would occasionally call me "347." Richard, always quick to spot a nuance, was wildly intrigued by my friends, my business affairs and my lifestyle. He loved good food, good company and unbridled laughter; long before we ever met in the flesh, we were friends and allies.

When I announced, ten years ago that I was about to embark on a career in catering, Richard harrangued everyone he knew until they hired me for all their catering needs. Often he would come and work with me, lending his own epicurean touch and gracious presence to my staff. Almost invariably, in the last frantic moments before we left for the job site, Richard would yank open the silverware drawer too hard, and it would fall, scattering flatware for 36 all over the kitchen. Horror-stricken and speechless, he would look balefully at me and say, "Oh, P." Precious minutes were lost while I indulged in Italianate screaming; minutes later we were laughing once again.

Richard was a consummate host and partygiver, and in this he was perfectly complemented by his artist lover, Eric Feighner; their house radiates with color, warmth and whimsy and Eric's garden has a visual delight in every nook and cranny. I spent the 4th of July there whenever I could, celebrating our independence. Last year's invitation said, "This is a party about love and mutual respect"; Richard's last word was "hello."

A few weeks after Richard died, I spent an evening playing cards with some friends; at the end of the game, I found that three cards had fallen under my

chair at some point during the game. I picked them up and turned them over: three, four, seven. Richard was saying hello.

Cyndy was another person I knew for a long time before we actually met; our mutual friend Denise had told me for years that I must meet her, that I would love her. We met once briefly before Denise left San Francisco ten years ago, but only in passing. Then, a few years later, one of my housemates invited her to a party at our house. Our eyes met across the kitchen; "I know you," she said.

My housemate had met Cyndy through a professional organization she started to help fledgling tech writers get work. Unsentimental, and blessed with a cranky sense of humor, Cyndy was not given to verbal displays of affection. She showed her great heart and appreciation for life by helping people in significant ways. She taught me everything I know about computers; she taught me how to say "no." She had some kind of genius for practical problem-solving; it was a mental exercise she enjoyed, but never more than in the service of a friend. When I proposed that we build a wind sculpture for a festival in the Nevada desert, we spent months figuring out what to build, and it was she who inadvertently provided the answer when she showed me a book of poems she had written together with a friend: "Travels By Motorized Brass Bed."

We built a four-poster canopy bed on wheels, and Cyndy figured out how, with chicken wire, PVC pipe and cloth. It was Cyndy who drove our committee of four to the Black Rock, on the far side of nowhere, who had a primo tent for four, with air mattresses, lanterns, stoves and everything. When I needed to fly to Los Angeles to cater a party, Cyndy came with me, arranged the flights, filled her luggage with trays and pastry tubes and ice molds, and did the prep. When I said I wanted to go on a group expedition to tour the Oakland sewers in the dead of night in formal dress and rubber boots, Cyndy let me, in the scarier moments, cling in terror to her arm while she videotaped the event. I was never able to devise an adventure that daunted her, but even if it had, she would have done it for me.

In the days following Cyndy's death, I found a line in a letter Proust wrote to the society poet Anna de Noailles, which brought Cyndy and Richard forcibly to mind. Illness, he wrote, is "the sagging of the body under the weight of an excessively great soul."



*An hour is not merely an hour,  
it is a vase full of sounds and  
scents and projects and  
climates...*

*-Time Regained*



*In reality every reader is,  
while he is reading, the reader  
of his own self. The writer's  
work is merely a kind of  
optical instrument which he  
offers to the reader to enable  
to discern what ...he would  
perhaps never have perceived  
in himself.*

*-Time Regained*



*There is nothing like desire for  
preventing the things one says  
from bearing any resemblance  
to what one has in one's  
mind.*

*-The Guermantes Way*



*...Each of us contains many  
persons who do not all have  
the same moral value...*

*-The Fugitive*



