

*CONTRE GENETTE:*

A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE *MOI CREATEUR*

—THE EFFORT OF ANATOLE FRANCE, MAURICE BARRES, AND MARCEL PROUST—

by

Robert Olsen

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## APPROVAL

Name: Robert Olsen

Degree: M.A. English

Title of thesis: Contre Genette: A Reconstruction of the Moi Createur  
-- the Effort of Anatold France, Maurice Barres, and  
Marcel Proust.

Examining Committee: Chair: Dr. Kathy Mezei

---

Dr. J. Zaslove  
Senior Supervisor  
Associate Professor of English

---

Dr. Jacqueline Viswanathan  
Associate Professor, Languages

---

Dr. Valerie Raoul  
External Examiner  
Associate Professor  
French Dept., U.B.C.

Date Approved: August 3, 1988

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Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay

Contre Genette: A Reconstruction of the moi createur--The Effort of

Anatole France, Maurice Barres, and Marcel Proust--

Author:

  
(signature)

Robert Olsen

(name)

August 16, 1988

(date)

## ABSTRACT

In *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, Marcel Proust develops a notion of an artistic self, a *moi créateur*, which appears only in an artist's work and which alone provides a truthful portrait of the artist. This "moi véritable du poète," a concept of the self, which, as Proust indicates, undermines Sainte-Beuve's overemphasis on the writer's social persona, represents a consistency-building process, one which perceives the artist's effort to develop an identifiable style (monoglossia) within his/her work as a part of an additional effort to aestheticize the self, to re-create it as an artistic subject. The thesis argues that this attempt to view a work in the context of a reconstructed artistic self is in opposition to Gérard Genette's effort to articulate a scientific method for the analysis of narrative discourse. Despite this difference, Genette forges *A la recherche du temps perdu* into his essay on critical method as a means of validating this method. His approach has, as one of its consequences, the analysis of the *je* of the *Recherche* as a series of textual particles, without any regard for how these particles might participate in the formation of Proust's *moi créateur*. Because Genette is not concerned with the qualities of the individual work, but with the work's use of discursive elements in relation to some hypothetical norms of narrative discourse, his reading of the *Recherche* forsakes any inquiry into the depth behind the textual *I*'s which might relate them to Proust's notion of the creative self. Like Sainte-Beuve, Genette emphasizes the superficial instances of the writer's self and dismisses any concerns about the creative self as irrelevant to his study.

In order to enrich Genette's criticism of the *Recherche*, this thesis relates Proust's work not to any discursive norm, but to two of his *maîtres*, Anatole France and Maurice Barrès. These two writers also have concerns about their deeper artistic selves which manifest themselves in France's *Le Livre de mon ami* and Barrès' *Le Culte du moi*. An examination of how France and Barrès look to find an artistic self in these fictionalized texts of their own personal histories indicates that these writers, while engaging the discourse of the

fin-de-siècle, create fictions about the artist which help themselves develop as writers and which resemble Proust's search for a *moi créateur*. A final discussion of the *Recherche* shows that Proust moves away from the influences of such *maîtres*, a move that is represented by Marcel's break with Bergotte in Proust's novel. This evolution enables Proust to perceive the depth beneath his narrative of a fictionalized self and to find, in a reconstruction of his past, a *moi créateur* which provides him with the form for his work.

The experience of a work of art is, as everyone seems willing to grant without pondering the implications, unique and untranslatable; to suggest that one has captured it in an analysis is, therefore, to falsify and mislead. The best criticism can hope to do is to set the work in as many illuminating contexts as possible: the context of the genre to which it belongs, of the whole body of work of its author, of the life of that author and of his times. In this sense, it becomes clear that the "text" is merely one of the contexts of a piece of literature, its lexical or verbal one, no more important than the sociological, psychological, historical, anthropological or generic. (Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* [1960; New York: Stein and Day, 1966] 10)

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## CHAPTER I

### PROJET DE PREFACE

Il peut...être indiqué d'opposer, à l'étude diachronique visant délibérément à comparer différents états successifs du même objet d'étude, une synchronie dynamique où l'attention se concentre, certes, sur un seul et même état, mais sans qu'on renonce jamais à y relever des variations et y évaluer le caractère progressif ou récessif de chaque trait. Une telle synchronie ne ressemble guère à la coupe transversale qui a servi à Saussure pour illustrer sa conception d'une présentation synchronique.<sup>1</sup>

I begin this thesis with a quote from André Martinet, the founder of functional linguistics, because, in this passage, Martinet revises the opposition between diachrony and synchrony in a way which seems to acknowledge that one cannot really stop time nor isolate a completely homogenous language. The dynamic synchronic includes both progressive and recessive elements in any language, as well as other elements which may never come to hold a dominant position in any *état*. To ignore these features is to impose an artificial regularity on language usage and to mold diachrony into linear history of normalized, systematic, homogenous states formed into a continuity by accounting for all deviation as either individual incompetence or individual variation of performance. Martinet's dynamic synchronic begins to question the firm constitutive nature of coexisting language use such that the coexistence of alternatives is not only tolerated, but they are also viewed as necessary dynamic elements of a language's development.

In this way, Martinet's view of language is close to M.M. Bakhtin's notions of mono-, poly-, and heteroglossia. Bakhtin categorizes the stability of languages by distinguishing between a relatively stable unitary language (monoglossia) and a language in a state of change as a result of contact with other languages (polyglossia) or as a result of a decentralizing tendency in the language itself (heteroglossia). Recognizing the relative nature of

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<sup>1</sup>André Martinet, *Evolution des langues et reconstruction* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975) 9.



his own terms, Bakhtin writes:

It must not be forgotten that monoglossia is always in essence relative. After all, one's own language is never a single language: in it there are always survivals of the past and a potential for other-languagedness that is more or less sharply perceived by the working literary and language consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

Even during an era of monoglossia, language acts contain historical elements, memories of the past which survive in the present, and they also contain a potential openness or otherness which keeps them dynamic. In other words, a linguistic organization in the process of forming is simultaneously in the process of dispersing, and the resulting contention is reflected in literary compositions.

These contending elements are especially present in a novel like *A la recherche du temps perdu* where a phenomenon similar to poly-/heteroglossia is created by the incorporation of various voices, speech acts (including those of the past self), genres, and languages.<sup>3</sup> To become aware of this dynamism in Proust's work, one only has to consider Marcel's careful citations of family conversation, of Françoise's speeches, of the discussions in the various salons which he attends, or of his own remembered reflections in moments like the morning which the narrator describes in *La Prisonnière*, when lying in bed, he hears "des thèmes populaires finement écrits pour des instruments variés" as they enter his room through an open window. Marcel aestheticizes this chance experience into a symphony of pleasure as part of the effect which Albertine has on his life:

L'ouïe, ce sens délicieux, nous apporte la compagnie de la rue dont elle nous retrace toutes les lignes, dessine toutes les formes qui y passent, nous en montrant la couleur. Des "rideaux" de fer du boulanger, du crémier, lesquels s'étaient hier soir abaissés sur toutes les possibilités de bonheur féminin, se

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<sup>2</sup>M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) 66.

<sup>3</sup>I am aware of the awkwardness of compounding Bakhtin's terms, but in effect, Proust's notion of memory's coexistence with present experience blurs the distinction between past and present language, between the *je* in the past and the *je* of the present. This point is perhaps the central one in this thesis, and I will return to a discussion of it a several points in the following chapters.

levaient maintenant, comme les légères poulies d'un navire qui appareille et va filer, traversant la mer transparente, sur un rêve de jeunes employées. Ce bruit du rideau de fer qu'on lève eût peut-être été mon seul plaisir dans un quartier différent. Dans celui-ci cent autres faisaient ma joie, desquels je n'aurais pas voulu perdre un seul en restant trop tard endormi. C'est l'enchantement des vieux quartiers aristocratiques d'être, à côté de cela, populaires, Comme parfois les cathédrales en eurent non loin de leur portail...divers petits métiers, mais ambulants, passaient devant le noble hôtel de Guermantes, et faisaient penser par moments à la France ecclésiastique d'autrefois.<sup>4</sup>

The sounds of the folk penetrate into the sanctity of the artistic conscious and into the literary object where they are aestheticized and transformed into a shared experience. Among this music, the vendors' voices are given a special status and are subjected by Marcel to a further metamorphosis. At first, he renders them into liturgies, ritual chants, and thematic variants by a kind of metaphoric transformation. Second, when he hears them again while Albertine is in the room, her presence transforms them into food, or at least a series of tastes. For Marcel, Albertine has the effect of a synesthetic sorceress; she is able to give him the power to translate one sensory sign system into another. In this way, not only are voices allowed to enter the novel but they indicate how contexts affect similar percepts and transform them into different aesthetic experiences.

But this aestheticization of chance sensory experience is not the only type of "heteroglossia" in the *Recherche*; parallel to Marcel's cultivation of memory is Proust's own growth as a writer, traces of which are quite visible in *A la recherche du temps perdu*. These traces establish the connections between Proust and his predecessors, and they also record the path which he takes in order to personalize his creation. The presence of stylistic imitation as especially exemplified by the *pastiche des Goncourt*, of allusions and references to other novels, of Marcel's critical reflection, of discussions about art, and of the narrator's own aesthetic theorizing demonstrate the intertextuality of Proust's work. It invokes and engages a wide range of literary works including Proust's own early writings which are written into the novel or written over by it. The process is so prevalent in the *Recherche*

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<sup>4</sup>Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1954) 3:116.

that Gérard Genette is able to label the work a "palimpseste."<sup>5</sup> The appropriateness of this label is made clear by Genette's definition of this term which he gives on the backcover of his *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*:

Un palimpseste est, littéralement, un parchemin dont on a gratté la première inscription pour lui en substituer une autre, mais où cette opération n'a pas irrémédiablement effacé le texte primitif, en sorte qu'on peut y lire l'ancien sous le nouveau, comme par transparence. Cet état de choses montre, au figuré, qu'un texte peut toujours en cacher un autre, et qu'il se prête le plus souvent à une double lecture...<sup>6</sup>

As sustenance for its composition, Proust's novel incorporates other discourse, or in Genette's words "sa structure dévore sa substance," in a way that renders the substance both integral to the work's totality, simultaneously resistant to this assimilation, and therefore perceptible to the reader. Genette perceives this tension even in the celebrated Proustian metaphors which relate the present and the past in a way that suggests an extratemporal essence. The distinct temporal positions both fuse into the metaphoric experience and separate themselves from it so that they have a kind of double existence where they are part of and independent of their context in the novel. Persistent change, spatial and temporal differentiation, work against the constructed metaphors, including the temporal metaphor at the center of the novel, and this tension produces paradoxically a style which Genette sees as essentially Proustian:

Ce palimpseste du temps et de l'espace, ces vues discordantes sans cesse contrariées et sans cesse rapprochées par un inlassable mouvement de dissociation douloureuse et de synthèse impossible, c'est sans doute cela, la vision proustienne.<sup>7</sup>

For Bakhtin, such tensions are characteristic of the language of the novel, and they also reflect "the struggle between two tendencies in the languages of European peoples: one a centralizing (unifying) tendency, the other a decentralizing tendency (that is, one that

<sup>5</sup>Gérard Genette, "Proust Palimpseste," *Figures I* (Paris: Seuil, 1966) 67.

<sup>6</sup>Gérard Genette, cover note, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982).

<sup>7</sup>Genette, "Proust Palimpseste" 51.

stratifies languages)."<sup>8</sup> The novel mediates between "the completed dominant language and the extraliterary languages that know heteroglossia" in such a way that this "dialogism" between these two languages serves to promote either one or the other. In other words, Bakhtin views linguistic organization in terms of moving centers around which language groups may consolidate and from which they may also disintegrate. These centers are in effect relativized frames of reference, usually based on political organization, in which language usage is becoming either more homologous or more heterogenous. This linguistic process is paralleled by a similar dynamism which Bakhtin describes as occurring within a literary work between its totality as a completed work and its disintegration into a multitude of instances, levels, details, voices and languages.<sup>9</sup> Bakhtin's novel is an orchestration of a multiplicity of stratified elements within it which would build into an "artistically organized" diversity. The novel incorporates language in two contexts, the past context of the fictional world and the present context of the novelistic communication; it is therefore "double-visioned" and "dialogized" in a manner which leads to a complex relationship between the two sides of this doubleness, at times harmonious and at other times disharmonious.

Given that this complex discourse also provides a reflection of its subject (its speaker), this tension is perhaps especially manifest in the conception of the *I* in a self-centred work such as *A la recherche du temps perdu*. This *I* functions as accessor to the fictional world, as subject of the discourse, and as agent for the narrated action. At the same time, these instances all fuse with the perception of the Proustian style to create a notion of the forming and practicing artistic self. However, in "Discours du récit," Gérard Genette focuses only on the multiple functioning *I*, as he stratifies the it into a hierarchy of multiple narrative instances over which dominates an implied authorial "I." By isolating several functions of the *I* both as the authorial ordering agent and as various discursive instances (e.g. implied author, narrator, focalizer, actor), this receptive strategy assumes that the insular

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<sup>8</sup>Bakhtin 67.

<sup>9</sup>Bakhtin 262.

analysis of the *I*s in narrative discourse provides valid insights into works, a method similar to Sainte-Beuve's isolated studies of various writers' social *I*s which Proust denounces in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, Genette's method assumes, in effect, the existence of models of the artistic self or of discourse which are distinctive and available for analysis, an assumption which seems to contradict the testimonies of Proust and of many currently active writers who strongly assert that, for them, writing and living are fused. This assumption also goes against the grain of my thinking which took a particular detour when I left the study of biology for the study of literature ten years ago. Since that time, I have had a natural inclination to resist purely typo-logical approaches, because they study concepts and relationships in isolation and assume that these isolated objects model parts of specific, complex (con)texts.

The *I* of the *Recherche* need not be considered only in such a textually limited way. In addition to its textual functions, the *I* also acts to establish a new order, a solipsistic, aesthetic order which implies a modification of all these functional instances so that they fuse into what Proust calls in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*: "un moi profond qu'on ne retrouve qu'en faisant l'abstraction des autres et du moi qui connaît les autres, le moi qui a attendu pendant qu'on était avec les autres, qu'on sent bien le seul réel, et pour lequel seul les artistes finissent par vivre, comme un dieu qu'ils quittent de moins en moins et à qui ils ont sacrifié une vie qui ne sert qu'à l'honorer."<sup>11</sup> Because of his belief in the existence of this *moi*, Proust is critical of Sainte-Beuve for refusing to distinguish between the writer and his work. But he also makes this criticism because he notes that Sainte-Beuve's evaluation of the man in a social context proves to be an inaccurate measure of the works that the man may produce.<sup>12</sup> In other words, Proust finds Sainte-Beuve's method to be superficial because

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<sup>10</sup>Marcel Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* précédé de *Pastiches et mélanges* et suivi de *Essais et articles*, ed. Pierre Clara and Yves Sandre, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1971) 221.

<sup>11</sup>Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* 224.

<sup>12</sup>Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* 222.

it takes one of the writer's "instances," one of his persona, and accepts it as a good indication of the entire man, including his qualities as a writer. Proust insists that a deeper self, a *moi créateur*, transcends the social persona, the subject of conversational discourse, and really lives only in artistic creations. The real self, the deep creative self, appears only in the artist's work and comes to be a recognizable trait in the work of a mature artist.

It is the *moi créateur* visible in Rembrandt's work which Proust discovers in his essay on this painter. Proust not only sees the painter's self in his works, but he also identifies this self with the painter's style, his manner of ordering and of representing his vision. It is a self which forms as the painter practices his vocation and which comes to individualize the artist's work. Proust describes this development:

D'abord, les oeuvres d'un homme peuvent ressembler plus à la nature qu'à lui-même. Mais plus tard, cette essence de lui-même que chaque contact génial avec la nature a excité [sic] davantage, les imprègne plus complètement. Et vers la fin, il est visible que ce n'est plus que cela qui est pour lui la réalité, et qu'il lutte de plus en plus pour la donner tout entière.<sup>13</sup>

Through the continual practice of the artist's vocation, his own essence comes to be the subject of his work, and this new subject comes to replace previous imitations of other artists or of nature. This artistic quality, the artist's essence, colours every encounter with nature and is present in each particular work, but it nevertheless goes beyond the particular works to forge an identity amongst the artist's entire work.

Michel Raimond notes a similar quality in Proust's own novel, and he claims that it reflects Proust's nostalgia for unity.<sup>14</sup> The narrator searches for a unity across all the multiplicity of his novel and, in fact, believes himself to have found it at the end of *Le Temps retrouvé*. However, the fact that the multiplicity also remains attests to the paradox of Proust's final position which, because Marcel finds himself to be the integrating quality which

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<sup>13</sup>Marcel Proust, "Rembrandt," *Contre Sainte-Beuve* 660.

<sup>14</sup>Michel Raimond, *Proust Romancier* (Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1984) 302.

infiltrates the texture of events in his life, establishes a rather pragmatic, empirical order. Everything which touches Marcel's life and which he remembers becomes a part of his development as a writer who comes to make the history of this development the subject of his writing.

Raimond perceives a Proustian, artistic order and in a sense, he perceives Proust's "monoglossia," but this perception does not necessarily exclude heteroglossic elements from an artistic work. As Proust's comments on Balzac suggest, a writer's artistic order may not be a simple, homogenous one. Proust admires Balzac because Balzac does not have a "real" style which marks the transformation of reality into writing and, consequently, of natural order into an artistic order. In the roughness of Balzac's undeveloped and perhaps immature style, Proust finds "non digérés, non encore transformés tous les éléments d'un style à venir, qui n'existent pas."<sup>15</sup> For Proust, *La Comédie humaine* is a kind of draft work which is developing its own style but never arrives at a state of complete maturity nor of total harmony. Balzac has rather "un style inorganisé" which forces the reader to deal with incomplete characters, qualities and details which are given depth when characters reappear in other novels and when the details of one novel are played against the details of another. Because of such effects, "Un rayon détaché du fond de l'oeuvre, passant sur toute une vie, peut venir toucher de lueur mélancolique et trouble [une] gentilhommière de Dordogne et [un] arrêt de deux voyageurs."<sup>16</sup> For Proust, elements from other texts resurface in his reading of a particular Balzac novel, and this occurrence probes the depths of the *moi créateur* which brings a sense of unity to the work.

In detecting an artistic order in *La Comédie humaine*'s state of incompleteness, Proust's reading of Balzac builds this work into a unity in ways which comply with Wolfgang Iser's general description of the reading act. In *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic*

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<sup>15</sup>Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* 269.

<sup>16</sup>Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* 274.

*Response*, Iser argues that the individual reader's attempt to build a consistent interpretation of his reading is "the essential basis for all acts of comprehension, and this in its turn is dependent upon processes of selection."<sup>17</sup> Proust's vision of the *moi créateur* or of "un rayon détaché du fond de l'oeuvre" represents the "gestalt" or product of a selective perception based on his interaction with the work that he is perceiving. Iser labels such an interaction "the consistency-building process."<sup>18</sup> One can interpret Proust's perception of *le moi créateur* of Rembrandt and of Balzac to be as much constructs of Proust's perception of their works as of the works themselves. Viewed in this way, these creative selves do not correspond to Wayne Booth's notion of a textually determined implied author which Genette adopts in his study of narrative discourse. It is rather the apprehension of an artist's vision or style, a formulation of a gestalt which groups the various experiences of an artist's work. These varied experiences represent what Iser calls the "wandering viewpoint," the reader's experience of the present aesthetic object (work or page of text) which unfolds the multiplicity of the entire work.<sup>19</sup> According to Iser, the reader approaches a text with an already formulated conception (gestalt) of it which each present experience of the wandering viewpoint brings into question. The reader is forced to reassess his preconceptions, a process which leads to revisions and reformulations of his gestalt and which Iser equates with a more general learning experience:

The new experience [of the text] emerges from the restructuring of the one we have stored, and this restructuring is what gives the new experience its form. But what actually happens during this process can again only be experienced when past feelings, views, and values have been evoked and then made to merge with the new experience. The old conditions the form of the new, and the new selectively restructures the old. The reader's reception of the text is not based on identifying two different experiences (old versus new), but on the interaction between the two.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 125.

<sup>18</sup>Iser 123.

<sup>19</sup>Iser 118.

<sup>20</sup>Iser 132.



In *Le Temps retrouvé*, Proust's narrator draws attention to this process of re-membering, revision, reformulation, and self-reconstruction which constitutes the reading act. The narrator warns writers not to be offended if a reader "inverti" masculinizes the heroines in a novel, and he argues that such transformations are sometimes necessary in order for a reader to feel the appropriate emotion. He further states:

En réalité, chaque lecteur est, quand il lit, le propre lecteur de soi-même. L'ouvrage de l'écrivain n'est qu'une espèce d'instrument optique qu'il offre au lecteur afin de lui permettre de discerner ce que, sans ce livre, il n'eût peut-être pas vu en soi-même. La reconnaissance en soi-même, par le lecteur, de ce que dit le livre, est la preuve de la vérité de celui-ci, et *vice versa*, au moins dans une certaine mesure, la différence entre les deux textes pouvant être souvent imputée non à l'auteur mais au lecteur. De plus, le livre peut être trop savant, trop obscur pour le lecteur naïf, et ne lui présenter ainsi qu'un verre trouble avec lequel il ne pourra pas lire. Mais d'autres particularités (comme l'inversion) peuvent faire que le lecteur a besoin de lire d'une certaine façon pour bien lire; l'auteur n'a pas à s'en offenser, mais au contraire à laisser la plus grande liberté au lecteur en lui disant: "Regardez vous-même si vous voyez mieux avec ce verre-ci, avec celui-là, avec cet autre."<sup>21</sup>

Proust's writer surrenders the work to the reader who is at liberty to use it as a means of self-revelation by which the reader also comes to know the truthfulness of the work. This way of reading permits marked deviation from the writer's conception to the extent that failings of the work may be attributable to the reader's recreated version of it. The narrator sees the work as an optical aid through which the reader can examine both his/her reality and him-/herself, and this optical device may be inappropriate for a given reader ("trop savant, trop obscur"). It follows that a reader's reality or self involved in the reading may vary so significantly that each reading discovers a different work. The optic-text engages the reader's evolving self, socio-linguistic context, image-making capacities, consistency-building processes in ways which can propel the writing towards the possibility of new readings. In Bakhtin's words, "every literary work faces outward from itself, toward the

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<sup>21</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 3:911.

listener-reader, and to a certain extent thus anticipates possible reactions to itself."<sup>22</sup>

Representing an opposite pole to this view of reading as constant renovation of a literary work is Marcel's recognition that a work invokes both the physical context of the reader's original encounter with it and the intellectual-emotional complex of the reader during the original reading. Reflecting on this power of books or, for that matter, of any object to recall past encounters, Marcel states:

...Si je reprends, même par la pensée, dans la bibliothèque, *François le Champi*, immédiatement en moi un enfant se lève qui prend ma place, qui seul a le droit de lire ce titre : *François le Champi*, et qui le lit comme il le lut alors, avec la même impression du temps qu'il faisait dans le jardin, les mêmes rêves qu'il formait alors sur les pays et sur la vie, la même angoisse du lendemain. Que je revoie une chose d'un autre temps, c'est un jeune homme qui se lèvera. Et ma personne d'aujourd'hui n'est qu'une carrière abandonnée, qui croit que tout ce qu'elle contient est pareil et monotone, mais d'où chaque souvenir, comme un sculpteur de Grèce, tire des statues innombrables.<sup>23</sup>

For Marcel, a book or object not only offers a new experience, but it also has the power of the Proustian metaphor to recall the past, to link the present with the past, and to create a new and different work of art. However, the book acts not just as a metaphor but also as a metonym for the historical moment which it represents and of which it presents fragments. *François le Champi* in the Guermantes' library resembles the novel which Marcel read at Combray; the unread and therefore dead volume recalls both Marcel's reading and the situation of that reading. But the book additionally reproduces a part of the childhood experience. The text is the same in both settings, and this identity, of part of the present and part of the past, invokes the past, childhood experience so that this childhood appears through the surface of the present in ways which remind us of Genette's analogy of the palimpsest and of Bakhtin's notions of poly-/heteroglossia.

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<sup>22</sup>Bakhtin 257.

<sup>23</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 3:885.

We can also think about the relationship of past and present readings in terms of Stephen Pepper's contextualist world hypothesis. In fact, Marcel's experience of *François le Champi*, coupled with the narrator's liberation of the reader, suggests that Marcel has a notion of the literary work similar to the contextualist conception of the aesthetic object which Stephen Pepper develops in *Aesthetic Quality: A Contextualist Theory of Beauty*. In this treatise, Pepper describes the complex perception of a work of art after multiple experiences of it in ways which account for the power of later readings of a text both to revise and to conserve previous ones. In his chapter entitled "Aesthetic Quality," Pepper outlines a range of cognitive attitudes which perceivers of a work of art may hold. In a sense, he graphs the ways in which individuals may receive a work between the two poles of extreme rational analysis and extreme qualitative intuition.<sup>24</sup> Analysis uncovers the strands or the individual events involved in perception and their texture or ways in which various strands relate to each other. Qualitative intuition or aesthetic experience reveals the quality of the total work, its "realization." Pepper can therefore distinguish artistic and scientific ways of perception on the basis of the extent to which they are concerned with the "realization" of the total work:

Art is...fully as cognitive, fully as knowing as science, so that contextualists are fond of calling the intuition of quality a *realization*. If scientific, analytical knowledge has scope, it nevertheless lacks intimacy and realization. The artist like the scientist is a man whose function it is to lead us to a better knowledge of nature—not, however, by showing us how to control her, but how to realize her.<sup>25</sup>

According to this distinction, concerns with the reception of a work aim at an artistic means of knowing a work of art. Pepper talks about a work's "quality," a term which seems somewhat similar to Iser's use of the term "gestalt." The difference between these terms reflects the degrees in which Iser and Pepper find the gestalt or quality to be implicit in

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<sup>24</sup>Stephen C. Pepper, *Aesthetic Quality: A Contextualist Theory of Beauty* (1937, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970) 26.

<sup>25</sup>Pepper, *Aesthetic Quality* 31.

the art object. For Iser, the gestalt of a work is much more indetermined and is largely left for the reader to construct, while Pepper's quality is a more readily verifiable concept based on the structural corroboration of repeated, converging perceptions of one or a number of individuals. For Pepper, every event, every experience of a work or of a part of a work has its own quality. In addition, successive events or perceptions of a work or of its parts also have a degree of quality which he labels "relationship quality" and which he defines as the similarity or individuality of multiple events.<sup>26</sup> "Relationship quality" establishes both the integrity or "fusion" of parts into the total work and a sense of continuity between repeated perceptions of a work. In a discussion of a print from Hiroshige's Tokaido series, Pepper calls this process of qualitative accumulation "funding":

We are...able to talk about the character or quality of the print, meaning not any one perception of it, but the cumulative continuity or train of perceptions of it. For earlier perceptions have effects upon later ones, and the event quality of each perception becomes gradually enriched. This is called *funding*. The later more richly funded event qualities are recognized as presenting ever more and more truly the full individual quality or character of the print.<sup>27</sup>

The quality of a work of art arises out of the situation which the reader/spectator "funds" through the relationship of the present situation with previous ones. The aesthetic object is the cumulative succession of intermittent perceptions built into the fullest possible realization of the work. This process involves the renovation of the work as a result of its relationship to each succeeding situation, the retrieval of remembered situations in the manner which Proust describes in the above cited passage, the interventions of other people's experiences, as one individual's realization will likely supplement others. This intersubjective potential of the aesthetic object can produce a tradition of valuation and lead to the establishment of cultural artifacts, objects which are aestheticized from generation to generation.

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<sup>26</sup>Pepper, *Aesthetic Quality* 40.

<sup>27</sup>Pepper *Aesthetic Quality* 43.

It is easy to see why Pepper thinks that this contextualist conception of the work of art is the "soundest and most fruitful to appear."<sup>28</sup> It satisfies the criteria of structural corroboration which Pepper outlines in *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence*.<sup>29</sup> However, when adapted to the reading process, Pepper's contextualism implies that a reader is able to develop continuously fuller readings without acknowledging that both forgetting and loss of interest may intervene. In effect, Pepper considers the experience of a work of art to be something that occurs all at once, in one synchronic formulation. Pepper's reader would be able to alter this formulation only by expanding it or increasing its aesthetic quality. This pattern of thinking about the aesthetic object in terms of a formulation of its total experience reflects the fact that Pepper is, himself, trapped in a literary mode of thought which conceives of thought only in its completed, rhetorical formulation typified by the dissertation. The growing fullness of the aesthetic experience must always be integrated into a comprehensive, communicable structure and this structure, if corroborated by satisfying the criteria of adequacy and scope, validates its constitutive elements. It seems that Pepper bases his notion of structural corroboration on an organicist world hypothesis which also demands integration, a criterion which, as every composition student learns, is also an important one in essay writing. However, in the case of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, it is such notions of integration which are, in fact, in question. Proust's *Recherche* may uncover some findings in *Le temps retrouvé*, but the verification of these findings is left up to the reader. The issue of the *je-proustien* consists of a similar integration-disintegration conflict, one which may also reflect the reader's efforts to comprehend an identity inscribed in such an extended piece of writing.

In order to understand the struggles that Bakhtin, Iser and Pepper attempt to accommodate in their theories, to see how these struggles may operate in the reading of

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<sup>28</sup>Stephen C. Pepper, *The Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1945) 72.

<sup>29</sup>Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961) 74-83.

Proust's complex work, and to become aware of this strife as it exists in the palimpsest of my own reading of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, this thesis will, at first, study the impoverished nature of an approach that limits itself to an analysis of the work's texture; the thesis will then enrich this approach by a comparison of Proust's work with Anatole France's *Le Livre de mon ami* and Maurice Barrès' *Le Culte du moi*, two works by writers who influenced Proust. In a discussion of Genette's "Discours du récit," the critical text which initiated my first encounter with Proust's novel, I will discuss the limitations of this initiation by arguing that Genette's critical approach promotes an overemphasis on the *Recherche's* textu(r)al elements. The approach constructs an assembly of layers, functions, instances and relationships that permit extensive elaboration both on a theoretical level, as the narrative is confronted by various specific texts, and on the practical level where Genette attempts to establish a critical paradigm for the study of Proust's novel. Genette's methodology works to contain discussion on the text in a particular pattern of knowing which assumes that the interpretive act has no effect on the work itself. More precisely, Genette's approach defines its own object of study (i.e. narrative), asserts its existence independent of any critical act or of any particular text, and promotes the construction of a critical methodology which Thomas Kuhn would call a paradigm. Genette uses this paradigm as a kind of optical instrument through which he views Proust's text or, potentially, any possible narrative text. The optical distortions of this instrument bring about a surrender to form that ignores the poly-/heteroglossia of Proustian discourse, a quality which not only confronts the formal and discursive elements in Proust's work, but also demonstrates Proust's connection with an intellectual movement of his time that the critical approach which Genette adopts must categorically reject on an ideological basis. Proust follows Anatole France and Maurice Barrès, two writers who adopt a solipsistic creative practice which values intuition as well as intelligence, a complex position that Genette's formalist methodology must ultimately ignore. Genette neglects the contextual dynamism in Proust's work, an intra- and intertextual dynamic that Genette's narrative discourse cannot account for because it focuses on the work's

organization but overlooks how the composition builds towards its project, the discovery of a creative self in its own writing. There is a narrative of creation in *A la recherche du temps perdu*, a tension between the self-reflexive, narrative, and discursive levels of this novel, as well as a relationship of these dynamic features with similar ones in other novels which may have served as models for Proust's work. The *I* that grapples with the resulting conflicts cannot just be studied as a type or a trope in a typical example of narrative discourse, but rather it should also be regarded as the fusion of the various instances into the *moi créateur* which lives and articulates a work which, in turn, reconstructs the *moi créateur*.

This thesis will, therefore, attempt to reconstruct the resulting complex conception of the *Recherche*, its "heteroglossia" or polyvalence as it is manifested in the organization of the *I* in the novel around a *moi créateur*. The study of this dynamic quality of Proust's work will act as a counterweight to Genette's more textu(r)al approach. It will deepen the apparently stratified *I*s embedded in the texture of the novel by juxtaposing Proust's effort to develop a creative self and the identifiable influences of two precursors, Anatole France and Maurice Barrès, who undertook similar efforts and whose influence appears in the *Recherche* as traces of the early stages of both Proust's and Marcel's development. The presence of other voices, styles, and languages indicates a resistance to a complete, organic absorption of constituents into the novel's totality, and creates an opposition of the pre-formative elements to the mature, creative self. Additionally, the reader of *A la recherche du temps perdu* is constantly made to question the *I*s seen from the "wandering viewpoint" of a lengthy reading, the formulations of an intruding narrator, and the perceptions of Proust's *moi créateur* until, at the end of the novel and despite the aesthetic affirmations of the narrator, the reader is lead to an open question about the hypostatization of self in a (hi)story which records the changing relationship of the *I* that makes this (hi)story and the *I* that is made by it.

## CHAPTER II

### GENETTE'S METHOD

Or, en art il n'y a pas (au moins dans le sens scientifique) d'initiateur, de précurseur. Tout [est] dans l'individu, chaque individu recommence, pour son compte, la tentative artistique ou littéraire; et les oeuvres de ses prédécesseurs ne constituent pas, comme dans la science, une vérité acquise dont profite celui qui suit. Un écrivain de génie aujourd'hui a tout à faire. Il n'est pas beaucoup plus avancé qu'Homère.<sup>1</sup>

In the above passage, which is often cited as an indication that Proust tried to separate himself from his predecessors, Proust distinguishes between art and science on the basis that an artist or writer has always to reinvent the wheel, or rather to find a new wheel appropriate to the writer's individual work. In Proust's eyes, artistic knowledge is a non-accumulative way of knowing where a writer-artist, a kind of *sauvage-barbare* in the beginning, cannot just be indoctrinated into a methodology in the way that an apprentice scientist learns to practice science. The writer-artist must work as if he were in a new world, although he may be affected by some models and influences, not "dans le sens scientifique," but in ways represented by Bergotte's influence on Marcel, a writer in whom Marcel sees shared artistic interests. Proust goes on to chide "les philosophes qui n'ont pas su trouver ce qu'il y a de réel et d'indépendant de toute science dans l'art" and to criticize specifically Sainte-Beuve's critical method which tries to discover how a work of art can grow out of the life and ways of the artist, a method which Proust calls "une sorte de botanique littéraire."<sup>2</sup>

Almost at the opposite pole of the critical spectrum from Sainte-Beuve, Gérard Genette conceives the work of literature not in relation to a writer's life, but as a component of "la littérature...un ensemble cohérent, un espace homogène à l'intérieur duquel

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<sup>1</sup>Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* 220.

<sup>2</sup>Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* 221.



les oeuvres se touchent et se pénètrent les unes les autres."<sup>3</sup> Genette sees literature also as a subsystem (*une langue*) of the larger structure of "culture" and therefore proposes a study of literature that researches the operations of this system and its interaction with the larger cultural structure in a way which resembles how one might study the operations of some mechanism. The operations of this machine are considered in terms of their function in the overall operation, or if afunctional, as interesting anomalies. Genette justifies his point of view:

...la "production" littéraire est une *parole*, au sens saussurien, une série d'actes individuels partiellement autonomes et imprévisibles; mais la "consommation" de la littérature par la société est une *langue*, c'est-à-dire un ensemble dont les éléments, quels que soient leur nombre et leur nature, tendent à s'ordonner en un système cohérent.<sup>4</sup>

Although literature is the product of individuals, the consumption of literature, according to Genette, is "une langue," a social phenomenon which incorporates the individual work into a normalizing (Proust might say shallowing) relationship with the literary system. In other words, a work is consumed as a part of a systematic, abstract library or canon which—broken into departments, genres, styles, periods—orients a reader who uses these reference categories when approaching an individual work in order to establish a relationship between it, other works, and his own abstracted conception of works in the category. It is as a part of such a system, a general concept which Genette objectifies by asserting that it represents a civilization's library, that the work becomes a part of the literary *langue* and is regarded by Genette as a component of a necessarily complete system of letters:

...qu'elle contienne un livre, deux livres ou plusieurs milliers, la bibliothèque d'une civilisation est toujours complète, parce que dans l'esprit des hommes elle fait toujours corps et système."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Gérard Genette, "Structuralisme et critique littéraire," *Figures* (Paris: Seuil, 1966) 165.

<sup>4</sup>Genette, "Structuralisme" 165.

<sup>5</sup>Genette, "Structuralisme" 166.

In other words, Genette's view of a civilization's library, the ensemble of writing that is collected in various repositories, finds always a structure which renders this library into a coherent, complete, and closed system of written discourse. This system, because it can be studied in a controlled manner as if it were a self-contained record of writing similar to the writing of a dead language, allows the theorist to attempt a confident description of the general laws which govern language acts within this system. In fact, the analogy of Genette's above-stated view of language to an anthropologist's view of an extinct language is a good one because any past language synchrony, including that one which just ended a second ago, can be considered as if it were dead, a concluded state in which all the relationships between signifier and signified are fixed.

As a result of the defined state of this past language system which an approach like Genette's must assume, any particular work must participate somehow within the synchronic mechanism of linguistic or discursive functions implicit in the closed structure. All books reflect the systematic organization of the language state of which they are a component, a critical position which is exemplified by Genette's use of *A la recherche du temps perdu* in his influential, systematic study of narrative, "Discours du récit: essai de méthode."<sup>6</sup> In this essay, Genette uses an analysis of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, complemented by what Genette retrospectively describes in *Nouveau Discours du récit* as the "débris erratiques d'une mémoire littéraire déjà passablement sinistrée," in order to offer an extensive general theory of narrative discourse based on a specific interpretation of Proustian narrative.<sup>7</sup> It is this taxonomic endeavor which makes his essay particularly noteworthy and which causes him to be mentioned as a significant contributor to narrative theory in several textbooks which attempt to define the field.<sup>8</sup> However, as will be made clear in this chapter, Genette's

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<sup>6</sup>Genette, "Discours du récit: essai de méthode," *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972) 66-279.

<sup>7</sup>Genette, *Nouveau Discours du récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1983) 9.

<sup>8</sup>Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986) 26. J.M. Adam, *Le Texte Narratif* (Nathan, 1985) 173n. Jap Linvelt, *Essai de typologie*

critical method, with its focus on written discourse, implies a way of reading which provides only a limited view of *A la recherche du temps perdu* and which is in opposition to Proust's reading act, as he describes it in "Journées de lecture":

consistant pour chacun de nous à recevoir communication d'une autre pensée, mais tout en restant seul, c'est-à-dire en continuant à jouir de la puissance intellectuelle qu'on a dans la solitude et que la conversation dissipe immédiatement, en continuant à pouvoir être inspiré, à rester en plein travail fécond de l'esprit sur lui-même.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the incompatibility of Genette's method (i.e. his lexicentrism) with Proust's subordination of the written to the intellectual activity of reading (his Logos-centrism), "Discours du récit" has nevertheless been enthusiastically received not only as a seminal work on narrative theory but also as an influential piece of Proustian criticism. In a survey of narratology, J. Dudley Andrew states that Genette's study of narrative taxonomy and permutation dominates the field which studies the narrative act in ways which try to relate the "teller to his tale":

Genette has minutely examined that most complex of narrators, the one created by Marcel Proust, to derive a general rhetoric of narration. Genette retraces the "figures" by which Proust organized his tale, figures of time, mode, aspect, and voice. This justly influential study is related to earlier work on topics in these categories, work carried out not in France so much as in Russia, England, and America.<sup>10</sup>

Andrew sees Genette's work as important because it dares to derive its "rhetoric of narration" not from the narratives of simple narrators, but from an examination of Proust's "most complex of narrators." The complexity of its exemplar seems to enhance, in Andrew's

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<sup>8</sup>(cont'd) *narrative* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1981) 29-31. Also, Seymour Chatman includes extensive references to an earlier version of Genette's discussion of order, duration, and frequency in *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978) 63-65.

<sup>9</sup>Proust, "Journées de lecture," *Contre Sainte-Beuve* 174.

<sup>10</sup>J. Dudley Andrew, "The Structuralist Study of Narrative: Its History, Use, and Limits," in Paul Hernadi(ed.), *The Horizon of Literature* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982) 110.

eyes, the validity of the derived rhetoric because he sees Genette's work as an attempt to show that a rhetorical analysis can handle complexity and provide both a synthesis of earlier theoretical statements and a sound piece of criticism.

Jonathan Culler also praises "Discours du récit" both on a critical and theoretical basis. He calls it "one of the central achievements of what was called 'structuralism'" and "the centrepiece of the study of narrative."<sup>11</sup> He goes on to discuss Genette's essay as "a remarkable study of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*," but also a study which emphasizes the anomalous character of Proust's work. Culler states that "under each of the main categories—tense, voice, and mood—something typically Proustian is rendered anomalous by the system of distinctions."<sup>12</sup> Culler accounts for this "odd conclusion" by basing Genette's description of narrative discourse on a model where "events necessarily take place both in a particular order and in a definable number of times," a model which narratives are free to violate. This insight underlines the normative nature of Genette's approach which, although it tolerates anomaly, establishes anomaly only by reference to implicit norms.

Finally, Shlomith Rimmon, after an attempt to schematize the field of narrative research, offers Genette's *Figures III* as a piece of "impressive evidence...of the benefit both poetics and criticism can derive from a refusal to choose among the various directions of study [in the field]...and from a skillful combination of all of them."<sup>13</sup> According to Rimmon, Genette's work studies both the "narrative *langue*" and a highly complex *parole*, Proust's novel. It is both a work of criticism and of poetics, or rather it studies their meeting place in the surface structure (texture) of Proust's text. However, Rimmon also notes that "whenever necessary Genette offers a quasi-abstract paradigmatic schema which he sees as

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<sup>11</sup>Jonathan Culler, foreword, in Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980) 8.

<sup>12</sup>Culler 12.

<sup>13</sup>Shlomith Rimmon, "A Comprehensive Theory of Narrative: Genette's *Figures III* and the Structuralist Study of Fiction," *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976): 37.

approaching the status of deep structures."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Rimmon states that Genette uses formulations of the work's *histoire* as a "degree zero against which the artistic manipulation can be profitably examined." This tactic, along with strategies which, according to Rimmon, attempt to deal with the *Recherche* as a totality by comparing it to a schematized frame, and as a stylistically specific entity by relating it to a "paraphrase-abstraction," underline what Rimmon perceives to be the "art of combination" in Genette's enterprise.

This all-encompassing critical ambition, as Genette confesses in *Nouveau Discours du récit*, also has a forerunner. Genette admits that his desire to construct a theory by consulting only one novel aside from those of which he held a few passages in memory was motivated by an "*imp(r)udente prétention--de rivaliser avec la manière, elle souveraine, dont Erich Auerbach, privé (ailleurs) de bibliothèque, écrivit un jour Mimesis.*"<sup>15</sup> This ambition neglects the fact that there is an enormous difference in the approaches of Genette and Auerbach to their literary studies (although both are reacting against a canonized view of literary history). Auerbach, when he explains his methodology in the final chapter of *Mimesis* and in its epilogue, personalizes his "study of the representation of reality" at the same time as he affirms a belief that this personal study or, for that matter, any random study of texts, necessarily displays "the basic motifs in the history" of this representation.<sup>16</sup> His position appears to be close to the one which Genette articulates in "Structuralisme et critique littéraire," but, whereas Genette hypothesizes a complete and closed language system, metaphorically represented by the library of a dead civilization, Auerbach posits a history of libraries, each of which can be represented by particular texts taken from the shelves of this history. Genette's position implies a finite accumulation of texts which form themselves into a closed system; Auerbach seems to propose an open-ended evolving library which can only

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<sup>14</sup>Rimmon 39.

<sup>15</sup>Gérard Genette, *Nouveau Discours* 9.

<sup>16</sup>Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Willard Task (tr.) (Princeton, New Jersey: Doubleday & Company, 1953) 548.

approximate a form in the manner that Martinet's dynamic synchronic can approximate a language state. Auerbach therefore argues for an empirical approach to textual studies in order to discover the representative qualities of individual texts and to avoid an unwanted narrowness in his own research.<sup>17</sup>

Auerbach also attempts to work in a way which reduces the personal bias imposed by the investment which he might make in an overall design of his critical study. He attempts to avoid the domination of a historical overview or of critical method so that he might uncover the individual characteristics of particular works which he also takes to be representative of epochs. In this way, he employs a method which resembles the manner in which Proust perceives "le geste le plus insignifiant" from his past life. Proust maintains a distance between the present and the past while, at the same time, he finds a correspondence between them. He gives his slightest memories their proper spatio-temporal location and encloses them in "mille vases clos, dont chacun serait rempli de choses d'une couleur, d'une odeur, d'une température absolument différentes; sans compter que ces vases, disposés sur toute la hauteur de nos années pendant lesquelles nous n'avons cessé de changer, fût-ce seulement de rêve et de pensée, sont situés à des altitudes bien diverses, et nous donnent la sensation d'atmosphères singulièrement variées."<sup>18</sup>

Genette works in quite a different manner. Examining previously existing terms and concepts, he discusses their weaknesses as instruments for analyzing texts and proposes modifications or refinements of the concepts.<sup>19</sup> The new concept is then applied to an

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<sup>17</sup>Auerbach 556.

<sup>18</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 3:870.

<sup>19</sup>For example, Genette's distinction of story, narrative, narration is derived from an initial dichotomy which Emile Benveniste makes between two "plans d'énonciation," *le récit historique* and *le discours* (Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* [Paris: Gallimard, 1966] 238). This distinction is based on the degree to which the speaker is implicated in his utterance. A speech act is *discours* when the speaker is perceptively implicated by the use of the first-person pronoun and the present tense, and it is a *récit historique* when the speaker is absent, as suggested by the use of the third-person pronoun and the past tense.

analysis of *A la recherche du temps perdu* and, in a sense, the validity of the critical concept is established by the merits of the criticism that it produces about this work. In other words, because a particular concept leads to interesting insights into Proust's novel, it is a valid method by which to generate criticism about novels and other types of narrative. The interest factor of the conclusions supposedly justifies the method. The reading, interpretive, and critical acts are justified in so far as they bring about the refinement of method used to read, to interpret, and to criticize. This practice has as its hidden agenda the desire to come to a consensus about method which would bring a stability to literary studies that would emulate the methodological stability of the sciences. Genette is, therefore, concerned with the elaboration of what Thomas Kuhn would call a paradigm for the study of narrative in general and with the necessary process of gaining acceptance for the new paradigm.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the fact that *A la recherche du temps perdu* may at times appear to be such a radical narrative anomaly and despite its obvious complexity, Genette's use of this novel, a securely-canonized literary work, also serves to enhance the merits of the method of analysis. When Genette uses Proust's work to validate his theory of narrative discourse, he is well aware that he is using a novel which has the status of an exemplary piece of writing. *A la recherche du temps perdu* is often cited as a transitional work, a novel which culminates the developments in the nineteenth-century French novel and which announces the twentieth century.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps because of this status, this novel has fostered several critical

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<sup>19</sup>(cont'd)

<sup>20</sup>Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1962) 10.

<sup>21</sup>Many critics include *A la recherche du temps perdu* in their canon. For example, Harry Levin discusses Proust's work in his study of French realism, although he does acknowledge that this novel includes certain "aberrations" as a result of "symbolist overtones" that Levin suggests are an "epilogue to the consistent and continuous tendency from romanticism through realism proper to naturalism" (Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn: The Study of Five French Realists* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1963] 81). In fact, Levin tends to portray the *Recherche* as the last example of a work that one can generally label a "nineteenth-century novel." He sees Proust's novel as a work inevitably caught up in that century despite what Levin acknowledges to be its experimental nature. This critical position causes him to view Proust's development in the novel as one which moves away from the influence of Bergson

works from which Genette abstracts many of his concepts, such as the separation of the *je*-narrator (*erzählendes Ich*) and the *je*-actor (*erlebendes Ich*) in a first-person novel,<sup>22</sup> the multiplicity of functions of the *je*,<sup>23</sup> the duality of perspective,<sup>24</sup> the complex temporality and especially the use of the imperfect.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the separation of all the *je*'s in a novel from that of the living author, especially where it relates to an authorial presence

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<sup>21</sup>(cont'd) to that of Balzac, a stylistic movement back in time which, in a sense, reinvents nineteenth-century realist narrative as well as the nineteenth century as an "age which is both presumed and subsumed by [Proust's] work" (446).

Also viewing this novel as a culmination of developments in nineteenth-century French prose, Robert Cohn describes it rather as a synthesis of the two primary directions of that century's French literature which he characterizes as "the imperialistic and visionary of Balzac [and] the equally ambitious poetry of Mallarmé." (Robert Greer Cohn, *The Writer's Way in France* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960] 185). This position places the *Recherche* at a point of convergence in the dialectic of poetry/prose, dæmonic/ordinary, vertical/horizontal, or any of the other pairings of abstract terms which Cohn uses to describe what he perceives to be a general, recurrent rhythm of separation and union in French literary works. His preoccupation with what he imagines to be an essential element of the "creative temperament" leads him to accept the authenticity of particular, literary portraits like that of Marcel on the basis of how they conform to this rhythmic pattern.

<sup>22</sup>Leo Spitzer, "Zum Stil Marcel Prousts," *Stilstudien*, 2 vols. (München: Max Hueber Verlag, 1961) 2:448.

<sup>23</sup>In fact, Marcel Muller fragments the *je* into various personae which operate on two levels, within the narration (the level of the protagonist) and outside of the narration. Within the narration, Muller discusses the relationship of two *je*'s, a *je* who is distinct from all the other characters, who is alone, who seeks solitude and a *je* who belongs to groups (family, parties in various salons), who is included as a part of the reference of the collective pronoun *nous*. Muller relates this dichotomy to what he feels to be one of the major themes of the *Recherche*, the "rapports entre l'individu et le groupe (Marcel Muller *Les Voix narratives dans la Recherche du temps perdu* [Genève: Librairie Droz, 1965] 30). The personae which operate outside of the narration are named the narrator, the writer, the novelist, and the *signataire* by Muller. None of these personae can be identified with the Marcel Proust known to his friends and acquaintances, the social Proust, but rather they belong to Proust's creative self, a self known only through Proust's writing. Muller does not, however, discuss how these voices actually participate in the formation of the creative self. He, in effect, describes the jobs of the various *je*'s as if he were assigning identity on the basis of function or profession (e.g. narrator=the *je* who narrates, writer=the *je* who discusses writing, novelist=the *je* who has a certain omniscience about the novel, *signataire*=the *je* who speaks of writing a book). The only exception to this fashion of discerning identity is perhaps the *je*'s which Muller labels as the protagonist because the *je*-protagonist is, in a certain sense, the object of the language act for which all the other *je*'s are the subject.

<sup>24</sup>B.G. Rogers, *Proust's Narrative Techniques* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1965) 103.

<sup>25</sup>J.P. Houston, "Temporal Patterns in *A la recherche du temps perdu*," *French Studies* 16 (1962): 38.



which Genette labels the *auteur impliqué*, is based on Genette's interpretation of Proust's distinction between *le moi créateur* and *le moi social*, made in *Contre Sainte Beuve*.<sup>26</sup>

Further justification of Genette's practice comes from the fact that his use of one work to exemplify his taxonomy is not unprecedented; Tzvetan Todorov exploits Bocaccio's *Decameron* in *Grammaire du Decameron*, the book in which Todorov coins the term "narratologie," and in which he attempts to elaborate a narrative grammar in the manner of Propp, Bremond, and Greimas. In this work, Todorov argues for the establishment of a new discipline of narratology, "la science du récit," as an initial attempt to define a homogenous field for the study of narrative. He sets up this new field according to a scientific model where the scientist first proposes then studies a theoretically defined object while employing an agreed-upon method. In desiring to make the study of literature more scientific, Todorov argues:

L'homogénéité de l'objet n'est pas empirique mais théorique. Si la botanique est une science, son objet n'est pas le monde végétal, mais les lois qui le gouvernent, la "végétalité". D'autres sciences peuvent aussi traiter des plantes, en y appliquant, par exemple, des lois physiques ou chimiques. De même, l'oeuvre littéraire ne peut pas, telle quelle, constituer l'objet d'une science; elle est, en puissance, l'objet de toutes les sciences humaines, mais sous des aspects différents. Il y a donc une tolérance mal placée lorsqu'on accueille toutes les méthodes à l'intérieur des études littéraires. On peut rester tolérant vis-à-vis des diverses méthodes (il faut tolérer tout sauf l'intolérance), mais c'est précisément l'utilisation d'une méthode qui définit telle ou telle science. L'unité de celle-ci se fait à partir d'un objet théorique, c'est-à-dire de sa méthode. C'est donc un non-sens que de parler de plusieurs méthodes à l'intérieur d'une science.<sup>27</sup>

Because Todorov wishes to establish narratology as a valid field of study, he sets out to rationalize both an abstract object and a method of study for this new field. His aim is to make the study of narrative and of literature in general into a more scientific practice. In "Méthodologies des théories de la littérature," Heidi Göttner claims that, in order for literary studies to emulate the sciences, it must produce a theory which complies with the practices

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<sup>26</sup>Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* 221-222.

<sup>27</sup>Tzvetan Todorov, *Grammaire du Décaméron* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1969) 9.

of empirical analysis. Göttner outlines the criteria that such a theory must satisfy:

...le premier concerne le caractère explicite de toutes les hypothèses et conséquences. Le second consiste dans l'emploi d'un langage théorique aussi précis que possible, afin d'éviter toute confusion dans les concepts. Enfin le troisième est celui de la vérifiabilité de toutes les affirmations.<sup>28</sup>

Göttner downplays the second of these criteria and chooses to emphasize the importance of the explicit organization and of empirical validity to a theory which wishes to attain a certain "scientificité." As we will see later on, Genette concentrates on the second of these criteria, as he attempts to articulate a precise terminological system.

Todorov, in *Grammaire du Décameron* seems worried about the unverified state of his research. He offers, in a sense, an initial draft of a narrative grammar which he extrapolates from one text, Boccaccio's *Decameron*. He was, of course, well aware of the risks that he was taking when he used this one work to establish the basis for a "science pilote" and entitled his study the *Grammaire du Décaméron* rather than the *Grammaire du récit*. As Peter de Meyer points out, this title is nonetheless deceptive, since Todorov's study concerns itself more with the development of a descriptive theory of narrative in general than with the particular description of Boccaccio's narrative.<sup>29</sup> Todorov demonstrates this bias when he writes about his desire to attain the "niveau d'abstraction le plus élevé" and to aim for "la structure du récit en général et non celle d'un livre."<sup>30</sup> He also demonstrates some discomfort about the fact that his abstractions may be invalid, in recognizing that in order to make them more secure, "il faudrait pour cela étudier, dans une perspective semblable, non pas tous les récits, mais beaucoup d'autres récits, d'époques, de pays, de genres, d'auteurs différents."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Heidi Göttner, "Méthodologies des théories de la littérature," in A. Kibedi Varga(ed.), *Théorie de la littérature* (Paris: Picard, 1981) 17.

<sup>29</sup>Peter de Meyer "L'analyse du récit," Varga 180.

<sup>30</sup>Todorov, *Grammaire* 10.

<sup>31</sup>Todorov, *Grammaire* 11.

Todorov claims nevertheless that the *Decameron* is an appropriate text for the study of narrative because of the number and variety of stories it contains, the dominance of action and intrigue in them, their plot simplicity, their connection with folklore and other sources. For Todorov, these qualities grant a representative status to the narratives in Boccaccio's work, a status which is complemented by the fact that Todorov sees these narratives as particularly good examples of narratology's general laws. He states, "[a]ucune histoire du recueil n'échappe aux lois narratives qui y règnent,"<sup>32</sup> a version of the central assumption which narratology makes about the subordinate status of any particular narrative.

Todorov extends the domain of linguistic laws even further in the introduction to this book where he has a vision of a "grammaire universelle," a world hypothesis modeled on a particular conception of language:

La grammaire universelle est alors la source de tous les universaux et elle nous donne la définition même de l'homme. Non seulement toutes les langues mais aussi tous les systèmes signifiants obéissent à la même grammaire. Elle est universelle non seulement parce qu'elle est repandue dans toutes les langues de l'univers, mais parce qu'elle coïncide avec la structure de l'univers lui-même.<sup>33</sup>

The notion of a "grammaire universelle" provides an appropriate creed for a devout man of letters who seeks to raise his grammatical vision to the level of a dogma with an implied world view that values the detection of grammatical structures over other observations.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Todorov, *Grammaire* 13.

<sup>33</sup>Todorov, *Grammaire* 15.

<sup>34</sup>Genette takes a similar position in "Structuralisme et critique littéraire," where he states:

A priori certes, le structuralisme comme méthode est fondé à étudier les structures partout où il en rencontre; mais tout d'abord, les structures ne sont pas, à beaucoup près, des objets de rencontre, ce sont des systèmes de relations latents conçus plutôt que perçus, que l'analyse construit à mesure qu'elle les dégage, et qu'elle risque parfois d'inventer en croyant les découvrir; et d'autre part, le structuralisme n'est pas seulement une méthode, il est aussi ce que Cassirer nomme une "tendance générale de pensée" d'autres diraient plus brutalement une idéologie, dont le parti pris est précisément de valoriser les structures aux dépens des substances, et qui peut donc surestimer leur

When Genette makes a similar leap of faith in as far as it concerns the *Recherche*, he expresses some discomfort about his approach. As he states in his preface, he does not want to subordinate the *Recherche* to a general model, yet he recognizes that the rather confused relationship between theory and exegesis implicit in his view of this specific work makes its subordination to the general an inescapable act. At the same time as Genette admits that Proust's three-volume work "n'illustre qu'elle-même," Genette writes:

Comme toute oeuvre, comme tout organisme, la *Recherche* est faite d'éléments universels, ou du moins transindividuels, qu'elle assemble en une synthèse spécifique, en une totalité singulière. L'analyser, c'est aller non du général au particulier, mais bien du particulier au général : de cet être incomparable qu'est la *Recherche* à ces éléments fort communs, figures et procédés d'utilité publique et de circulation courante que j'appelle anachronies, itératif, focalisations, paralepses et autres. Ce que je propose ici est essentiellement une méthode d'analyse : il me faut donc bien reconnaître qu'en cherchant le spécifique je trouve de l'universel, et qu'en voulant mettre la théorie au service de la critique je mets malgré moi la critique au service de la théorie. Ce paradoxe est celui de toute poétique, sans doute aussi de toute activité de connaissance, toujours écartelée entre ces deux lieux communs incontournables, qu'il n'est d'objets que singuliers, et de science que du général; toujours cependant réconfortée, et comme aimantée, par cette autre vérité un peu moins répandue, que le général est au coeur du singulier, et donc—contrairement au préjugé commun—le connaissable au coeur du mystère.<sup>35</sup>

Despite Genette's hesitancy about making generalizations, he adopts the position that *A la recherche du temps perdu*, like any particular work or *organisme* is made up of components which are, in themselves, non-specific elements belonging to a system which governs their application in a manner similar to what Todorov characterizes by the expression "grammaire universelle." In the case of Proust's novel, Genette detects a system of rhetorical figures through the work's particularity. Because Genette believes himself able to perceive these general elements in the text itself, he believes himself to be adopting a method which, in searching for specificity, finds generality and which demystifies the complex literary text that is the *Recherche*.

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<sup>34</sup>(cont'd) valeur explicative. (*Figures* 155)

<sup>35</sup>Gérard Genette, "Discours du récit" 68.

This practice raises, of course, questions about the influence of Genette's rhetorical predisposition on his powers of observation. Not that I would be critical of Genette because he fails to escape the influences of his critical predisposition and articulate a means of attaining an "ideal reading" of a text, but Genette's method, his criticism of *A la recherche du temps perdu* does imply a way of reading which sees Proust's text as a rhetorical enhancement of an otherwise simple narrative. In other words, or rather, in Genette's words:

Puisque tout récit—fût-il aussi étendu et aussi complexe que la *Recherche du temps perdu* est une production linguistique assumant la relation d'un ou plusieurs événement(s), il est peut-être légitime de le traiter comme le développement, aussi monstrueux qu'on voudra, donné à une forme *verbale*, au sens grammatical du terme : l'expansion d'un verbe. *Je marche, Pierre est venu*, sont pour moi des formes minimales de récit, et inversement *l'Odyssee* ou la *Recherche* ne font d'une certaine manière qu'amplifier (au sens rhétorique) des énoncés tels qu'*Ulysse rentre à Ithaque* ou *Marcel devient écrivain*.<sup>36</sup>

Since the *Recherche*, according to Genette, is a literary production which aspires to relate events, he views the multivolume novel as an elaboration of a simple straight-forward predication about Marcel's development as a writer, a degree zero of the *Recherche*. The entire basis for Genette's description of narrative discourse, his categories, subcategories, and various qualifications of the text, rest on this one fundamental assumption: one can talk about *A la recherche du temps perdu* in the same manner that one can talk about the predication of a verb. This assumption not only seems to contradict Benveniste's distinction between linguistics and discourse,<sup>37</sup> but it also seems to indicate that Genette confuses a metaphorical use of a linguistic model with a literal one. In adopting linguistic terms such as time, mood, and voice, Genette confuses a quasi-identity between the fields of linguistics and discourse analysis with an analogy between them, a kind of metaphorical confusion to which

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<sup>36</sup>Genette, "Discours" 75.

<sup>37</sup>"La phrase, création indéfinie, variété sans limite, est la vie même du langage en action. Nous en concluons qu'avec la phrase on quitte le domaine de la langue comme système de signes, et l'on entre dans un autre univers, celui de la langue comme instrument de communication, dont l'expression est le discours"(Benveniste 130).

he strongly objects in "La Rhétorique restreinte."<sup>38</sup>

As a result, Genette offers a criticism of *A la recherche du temps perdu* by way of an analysis of a narrative paraphrase of Proust's work, while he also acknowledges that "en traitant ici cette oeuvre comme un récit on ne prétend nullement la réduire à cet aspect."<sup>39</sup> This denial supposedly excuses a critical practice which pretends to be able to isolate the narrative of a complex work without discussing what it means to extract the narrative element from its context.<sup>40</sup> In studying the *Recherche's* narrative, Genette permits himself to manipulate a text in ways which would posit a normative version which has undergone a series of controlled changes in order to produce the actual work. The act of reading becomes a kind of experimental procedure which repeats the processes of organization by relating the hypothetic normative narrative with the apparently deviant narrative discourse (what Proust would describe as a writer's style). Genette examines this mediation by relating the complex work to hypothetic and more straightforwardly linear narratives in order to comprehend the anomaly of the text. One name which he gives to these straightforward, linear renditions of the text is first or primary narrative, a deep narrative structure which is similar to what he describes in *Palimpsestes* as the kind of hypotext that he calls a résumé.<sup>41</sup> Such reductions, which always imply an interpretive act, suggest that the reading of a narrative text requires the retrospective establishment of some kind of hierarchy in the text, based on the establishment of primary and secondary information. With the establishment of this hierarchy,

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<sup>38</sup>Genette, "La Rhétorique restreinte," *Figures III* 38.

<sup>39</sup>Genette, "Discours" 75n.

<sup>40</sup>At this point, my criticism of Genette echoes Bakhtin's assessment of any approach to the novel which treats one of its "aspects" in isolation. Bakhtin writes:

All these types of analysis are inadequate to the style not only of the novelistic whole but even of that element isolated as fundamental for a given novel—inasmuch as that element, removed from its interaction with others, changes its stylistic meaning and ceases to be that which it in fact had been in the novel (Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *Dialogic Imagination* 266).

<sup>41</sup>Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La Littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982) 280.

one can measure the functionality of particular passages, their place in the time frames implicit in both the action predicated and in the act of its articulation, and the relationships between the various subjects involved (of the language act, of the predication, of the implicit point of view, of the action). This practice resembles what John Dewey calls "experimental doing for the sake of knowing," when he describes the strategies which one uses to identify an unfamiliar object by manipulating it in several ways "with a view to establishing a new relationship to it."<sup>42</sup> Once this manipulation results in familiar reactions, the object is made familiar by being identified as similar to a known object. Similarly, Genette develops a series of manipulations to which he subjects the *Recherche* in order to identify it as a narrative. He develops a critical methodology which deals with the baffling textual properties of Proust's work which blind or mislead us, so that the narrativity of the work is made evident.

Examples of the consequences of this approach can be found throughout Genette's essay, but I will focus on one example taken from the chapter which Genette entitles "Mode." In this chapter, he discusses two general notions of narrative theory which he labels as *distance* and *perspective* and which he further divides into a number of subconcepts. In his discussion of *distance*, he studies the amount of detail and the immediacy of information which the narrator provides. He makes this study by attempting to characterize the conventional opposition between *mimésis* and *diégésis* in terms of differences in narrative speed, the amount of detail or information about the narrated event that is provided, and the presence or absence of language which draws attention to the narrative instance.<sup>43</sup> Genette schematizes the inverse correlation between these two types of language in narrative in a rather ironic formula:

information + informateur = C

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<sup>42</sup>John Dewey, *Intelligence in the Modern World: John Dewey's Philosophy*, ed. John Ratner (New York: Random House, 1939) 319.

<sup>43</sup>As Genette, himself, mentions, this distinction is similar to the Jamesian notions of "showing" and "telling." It is also similar to the distinction which separates the informative and expressive functions of a speech act.

Despite the playful simplicity of an equation, which Genette almost immediately retracts because it falsely correlates the categories of narrative speed and voice that are treated separately elsewhere, Genette seems to accept that a relationship normally exists between the quantity of information and the presence of the *informateur* that approximates an inverse correlation. His subsequent analysis of the *Recherche* as an anomaly in this respect implies a "norm" from which it deviates, for in Genette's view, Proust's novel includes an irresolvable paradox:

En effet, d'une part..., le récit proustien consiste presque exclusivement en "scènes"..., c'est-à-dire en une forme narrative qui est la plus riche en information, et donc le plus "mimétique": mais d'autre part..., la présence du narrateur y est constante, et d'une intensité tout à fait contraire à la règle "flaubertienne"....Proust serait donc en même temps...à l'extrême du *showing* et à l'extrême du *telling*..<sup>44</sup>

At first, this paradox seems to underline the affirmations of Dorrit Cohn, Jean Rousset, and others who insist on the ultimate distance between narrator and actor in Proust's work, between the present and the past *I*.<sup>45</sup> However, this observation in fact complicates the above straightforward statements because the events of the past are, in fact, made present by the use of "showing" strategies (mimesis) and made distant by the use of "telling" strategies (diegesis). To restate this problem in terms of the *je* of the novel, at times an intermediary *je* appears to dissociate itself from the action in the novel, and to fill the role of a

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<sup>44</sup>Genette, "Discours" 188.

<sup>45</sup>Rousset generalizes this quality of Proust's novel and claims that it represents the duality of the narcissistic *I* in any work where the narrator tells *son histoire* or tells the story of *sa vie*:

Il faut...remarquer, en anticipant un instant sur ce qui relève du statut temporel, que cette unité narcissique comporte une dualité, du moins dans les roman-mémoires du XVIIe et XVIIIe siècle: "je conte" est un présent, "mon histoire" ou "ma vie" sont du passé. Il faudra tenir compte de cette distance temporelle, la distinction entre narrateur et héros est indispensable à une interprétation correcte de ce type du récit autobiographique: qu'on pense entre autres à la *Recherche du temps perdu* (Jean Rousset, *Narcisse Romancier: Essai sur la première personne dans le roman* [Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1973] 17.



mediating narrator who makes choices about how he will narrate, interpret, or discuss the events of the novel. At other times, no intermediary is apparent, and the distinction between actor and narrator seems to serve no purpose, especially when the actor is acting only as an observer of the events and especially when the observed events are, in themselves, acts of language.

Genette illustrates the paradox by referring to the bedtime scene at Combray, where Marcel stays awake in order to meet his mother when she finally comes to bed.<sup>46</sup> Genette speaks of the intensity of this memory without really explaining what makes it intense. He does enumerate some of the melodramatic description of the approaching father as he climbs the stairs, but he also mentions the sentimental scene of the infant Marcel who sobs when he finds himself alone with his mother. This example seems to suggest that such melodrama and sentimentality create intensity, a suggestion which perhaps reveals something about how Genette reads the novel. At the same time, Genette writes that "rien n'est plus explicitement médiatisé, attesté comme souvenir, et souvenir à la fois très ancien et très récent, de nouveau perceptible autour d'un narrateur au seuil de la mort."<sup>47</sup> The interpolation of marks that indicate the presence of a remembering agent demonstrates mediation and, consequently, suggests the distance which exists between the present and the past. In other words, the presence of an aging, remembering agent underlines the time that has passed between the narrative present and the remembered past without diminishing the force with which the event is experienced by Genette. Struck by this "miracle du récit proustien," Genette elaborates on it:

...c'est que cette *distance temporelle* entre l'histoire et l'instance narrative n'entraîne aucune *distance modale* entre l'histoire et le récit : aucune déperdition, aucun affaiblissement de l'illusion mimétique. Extrême médiation et en même temps comble de l'immédiateté. De cela aussi, l'extase de la

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<sup>46</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 1:67.

<sup>47</sup>Genette, "Discours" 188.

réminiscence est peut-être un symbole.<sup>48</sup>

In attempts to deal with this difficulty in Genette, both Dorrit Cohn and Mieke Bal amend two different parts of Genette's chapter on *mode*. Bal is, for the most part, strongly appreciative of Genette's typology of narrative techniques. She especially appreciates what she calls the "système cohérent" of Genette's study on narrative time.<sup>49</sup> She is, however, somewhat critical of the Genettian categories of mood and voice. According to Bal, the distinction between  *récit de paroles* and  *récit d'événements* which Genette makes in his chapter on mood is essentially a non-distinction because, in her view, a  *récit de paroles* is not possible. A narrator either recounts a speech act as if it were an event or cedes his/her place to another character who narrates an event. For this reason, Genette's discussion of distance is nothing more than an examination of the detail in which a narrator tells his story. Since such a discussion duplicates a previous discussion of narrative speed, Bal dismisses the entire section of Genette's essay which deals with distance as superfluous.<sup>50</sup>

Bal further attacks the Genettian concept of *focalisation* on the basis of Genette's confusion of two orders of distinction. First, Genette distinguishes between focalized and unfocalized narratives, a graduant of restriction of the narrative vision from omniscient to limited perspectives. Secondly, Genette differentiates between two types of object on which the narrative may focus, those objects inside of and outside of a character. Bal suggests that one may indeed eliminate the confusion of these distinctions by discussing the focalizing function (*focalisateur*) as separate from the narrating function (*narrateur*).<sup>51</sup> One can then speak of a presence or absence of a *focalisateur* in the same way that one speaks of a narrator's

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<sup>48</sup>Genette, "Discours" 189.

<sup>49</sup>Mieke Bal, *Narratologie (Essais sur la signification dans quatre romans modernes)* (Paris: Kinksiek, 1977) 21.

<sup>50</sup>Bal 28.

<sup>51</sup>Bal 37.

presence or absence. One can also speak of the *focalisé*, the object of attention, regardless of the subjective or objective relationship that it has with a character. Bal, consequently, does not acknowledge any difference in the narration of events interior or exterior to any actor in the narrative, even if this actor is designated by the pronoun *je*.

On the other hand, Cohn, in *Transparent Minds*, claims that both Genette and structuralist approaches to narrative in general underrate the distinction between first- and third-person narratives, especially when the two types involve the narration of inner events (Genette's internal focalization). Whereas Cohn's three categories of third-person narrative resembles Genette's three types of *récit de paroles* (*discours raconté, transposé, rapporté*), in her discussion of first-person narrative, she maps out a spectrum between retrospective narrative and autonomous monologue which, although it parallels Genette's diegesis-mimesis distinction, reflects the importance that Cohn places on the illusion of memory in this kind of narrative. Cohn writes, "past thought must be...presented as *remembered* by the self as well as expressed by the self,"<sup>52</sup> a requirement that introduces into the discussion of the narrator in a first-person novel criteria which are not specifically textual.

Because Genette, in his response to Cohn's criticism, limits himself once again to formal, textual distinctions, he disregards this point and chooses rather to complain of the redundancies which result from Cohn's textually unfounded distinction between first- and third-person narratives.<sup>53</sup> The act of memory allows for the presentation of an identity at two different periods of time, a notion which seems to restate Spitzer's dichotomy of the *erzählendes* and the *erlebendes Ich*. The remembering self can either view this experience differently from the remembered self that is involved in the action, or the remembering self can limit itself to the perspective and interpretation of the remembered self. In any event, the need to make thought appear to be remembered limits the amount of detail in which

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<sup>52</sup>Dorrit Claire Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978) 15.

<sup>53</sup>Genette, *Nouveau Discours* 40.

memory can be presented because the illusion of a too-perfect memory would appear to Cohn to be as contrived in fiction "as it would be in a real autobiography."<sup>54</sup> In other words, Cohn feels that a first-person narrative must resemble an autobiography, that it must maintain the illusion of a retrospective act, and that this kind of narrative must therefore create a sense of distance between the narration and the narrated event. If first-person narrative does not maintain this distance, it tends to become a present-tense autonomous monologue where the mediating narrator in effect vanishes, a kind of discourse which Cohn confusingly describes both as a distinct narrative genre "constituted in its entirety by the silent self-communion of a fictional mind"<sup>55</sup> and as a discourse which has an "anti-narrative, anti-reportorial orientation."<sup>56</sup>

Reconsidering the passage about the bedtime scene at Combray, rather than reading this passage as an intense but mediated narrative one can read it as the interpolation of this anti-narrative discourse about a remembering narrator in his pursuit of time, of the context of the specific event, and of a deepening of the implicated sensations. This "self-communion of a fictional mind" is adjoined (by a metadiegetic chain) to the remembered narrative and represents a narrative of performance which recounts and considers the reception of memory, the articulation of particular points of view, the interpretation of events, the interaction of present and past *I*s, and the implication of the present performance in the past events.

This complexity can perhaps be best explained by referring once again to Benveniste and his famous observation about the nature of the *je* in an act of language. Benveniste notes that a *je* is defined only within the speech act and that it simply signifies the individual who speaks. It is also in opposition to a *tu* or the individual who is addressed.

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<sup>54</sup>Cohn 162.

<sup>55</sup>Cohn 15.

<sup>56</sup>Cohn 226. Rousset also agrees with this schematization of first-person narrative: "...on dirait qu'au récit rétrospectif qui disjoignait le héros et le narrateur, s'oppose un roman de l'actuel qui les rapproche et à la limite les confond"(25).

*Je* can therefore only be defined in terms of the present moment (the instance) of the speech act.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, according to Benveniste, *je* cannot really appear in a *récit historique* because this form of language implies the absence of the speaker, the presence of whom is, of course, asserted by the pronoun *je*. A narrator who uses the first-person pronoun to refer to one of the actors in his story invokes a kind of paradox where the absent actor of a *récit historique* is made present by the use of *je*. Genette, following several others, resolves this paradox by distinguishing a *je-narrant* from a *je-narré*, the latter of which he equates with the *il* of the *récit historique*. But this resolution denies the paradox and seems unaware of an alternate and rather opposing view. The *je* has the potential to make present the thoughts and perceptions of the individual to whom it refers, and this presenting is in equilibrium with the transformation of the *je* into an absence as a result of the past tense of the verb. The *je* interferes with the *récit historique* and grants it a presence. The resulting tension parallels Proust's perception of coexisting interior and exterior worlds as well as Genette's mimesis-diegesis paradox implicit in the notion of mediated intensity.

As I will discuss in the fifth chapter of this thesis, Marcel, the narrator-hero of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, detects a similar presence in Bergotte's work and in the two revelations of *mémoire involontaire* which disclose an unknown part of himself, a *moi créateur* in the form of the collection of memories that he can regain. On the basis of these experiences, Marcel establishes an aesthetic in which the remembered self acts as an exemplar for the aesthetically and ideologically transfixed self. The resulting reconstruction affirms the presence of a *moi créateur* that projects itself out from the text, out from the aestheticized version of Marcel's life that appears to the reader as an artifact of this self that the reader must, in the end, reconstruct.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Benveniste 252.

<sup>58</sup>Louis Martin-Chauffier describes the "resilient joy" that Marcel feels because he recognizes that this artistic part of himself still survives. In a discussion of this affirmative quality of Marcel-narrator's perception of himself, his "secret" which redeems him from a victimizing

However, Proust is, of course, not the only writer to exploit this tension of the *I* in narrative discourse. He detects it in the Bergotte's novels, and its presence can similarly be perceived in the work of Anatole France and Maurice Barrès, two writer's who may have served as models for Proust's Bergotte. As will be shown in the next two chapters, the narrators in Anatole France's *Le Livre de Pierre* and Maurice Barrès' *Le Culte du moi* both attempt to connect the present and the past, the narration and the action, the writer and his own personal (hi)story. On the one hand, France's narrator expresses a sense of the separateness that exists between his adult self and his child self, a separation that his love for his mother can, according to him, help to overcome. He also tries to link the adult mind and the child mind through the mimesis of what he perceives to be a more child-like form of discourse, the discourse of fairy tales and myths, in order to reconstruct a child-like version of himself which he believes to be an accurate, authentic portrayal. This portrait appears to the narrator in duplicate, as his daughter also seems to twin the remembered childhood of Pierre/Anatole. On the other hand, Barrès' narrator also separates himself from a hero who exists in the past and who is even grammatically marked to be separate from the narrator. But this separation seems to vanish at the beginning of *Un Homme libre*. In this volume, an attraction to the rural regions, which is, at first, not totally understood, leads the hero to formulate the existence of a racial spirit of which he is an instance in the actual world and in which his self is deeply rooted. This connection of self with race provides the hero, who is named Philippe in the concordance to the third volume, with a

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<sup>58</sup>(cont'd) pessimism, Chauffier writes, "[a]lthough he [Marcel] does not love life, he loves what transcends it, what gives a being its permanence through the carnage of egos so joyously slaughtered" (Louis Martin-Chauffier, "Proust and the Double "I" of Two Characters," Trans A. de B., *Partisan Review* 16 [1949]: 1017). In order to develop a richer understanding of how the Proustian *je* functions, the reader must find this permanence in Proust's work and, consequently, transgress the limitations of Genette's textual approach (his textucentrism). To demonstrate this point, I will examine Proust's envisioning of his literary self in the light of the similar undertakings of two of his *maîtres*. By discussing the way that Anatole France and Maurice Barrès see writing as an act which implicates a reconstruction of oneself, a birth of an artistic self, I will establish a notion of the process, a horizon of expectation for the processes of the self's reconstruction in a literary text. This discussion will prepare the ground for a return to an exploration of the complexity of the *je-proustien* which breaks the limitations of even this horizon.

source of motivation for political action which, in turn, becomes the material of a literary work.

### CHAPTER III

#### ANATOLE FRANCE'S *LE LIVRE DE MON AMÉ*: CHILDHOOD AS A REFUGE FROM NINETEENTH CENTURY SCIENCE

During a dinner conversation when Marcel's parents are entertaining the ambassador, M. de Norpois, Marcel turns the discussion away from "le sujet des Swann" by asking Norpois if Bergotte, a writer whom Marcel greatly admires, had attended a dinner at the Swanns' to which Norpois had been invited. Norpois responds by not only acknowledging that Bergotte was present at this dinner, but also by offering his opinion of Bergotte's writing:

Bergotte est ce que j'appelle un joueur de flûte; il faut reconnaître du reste qu'il en joue agréablement quoique avec bien du maniérisme, de l'afféterie. Mais enfin ce n'est que cela, et cela n'est pas grand'chose. Jamais on ne trouve dans ses ouvrages sans muscles ce qu'on pourrait nommer la charpente. Pas d'action—ou si peu—mais surtout pas de portée. Ses livres pèchent par la base ou plutôt il n'y a pas de base du tout. Dans un temps comme le nôtre où la complexité croissante de la vie laisse à peine le temps de lire, où la carte de l'Europe a subi des remaniements profonds et est à la veille d'en subir de plus grands encore peut-être, où tant de problèmes menaçants et nouveaux se posent partout, vous m'accorderez qu'on a le droit de demander à un écrivain d'être autre chose qu'un bel esprit qui nous fait oublier dans des discussions oiseuses et byzantines sur des mérites de pure forme, que nous pouvons être envahis d'un instant à l'autre par un double flot de Barbares, ceux du dehors et ceux du dedans.<sup>1</sup>

Norpois devalues Bergotte's work because he feels it to be superficial and affected, to lack depth, structure, and action, to be flowery preoccupations with *l'art pour l'art*. Norpois desires a more *viril*, a less *mîevre* and *mince* kind of writing which will strengthen France in complex and volatile times and which will address "les tâches plus urgentes que d'agencer des mots d'une façon harmonieuse." He also reacts against what he, at times, perceives to be Bergotte's boring literary pretentiousness and, at other times, regards as Bergotte's vulgar and cynical character, aspects of the writer's personality which, according to Norpois, undermine the overly moralizing nature of his work.

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<sup>1</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 1:473.



In this discussion of Bergotte, Norpois articulates much of the negative criticism which has been directed at Anatole France's work, the principle figure on whom, according to Jean Levaillant, Bergotte was modeled.<sup>2</sup> In the wake of this wave of negative opinion, Anatole France has become a mostly forgotten writer in the academic mainstream, despite what Marie Bancquart finds to be the persistent popularity of his books in *livre de poche* editions.<sup>3</sup> Bancquart attributes France's eclipse to successful campaigns both among the members of the French academy and the French avant garde to demote France to minor status for diverse reasons including his dilettantism, overworked and outdated classical style, lack of literary sensibility, immorality, or inconsistent politics.<sup>4</sup> In encapsulating the persistent critical attacks on France, Dushan Bresky sums up the views of five major critics (i.e. Barry Cerf, Walter Gottschalk, Haakon M. Chevalier, Victor Giraud, and Robert Blanck):

The sum of the opinions of these five critics is that France's Nobel Prize-winning prose has little to say, that it lacks revolutionary drive and pathos, that it avoids the vital issues of life, that France's irony is monotonous, and that whatever he has to say lacks structure, is unoriginal and told in a *Plauderstil*.<sup>5</sup>

It is not my aim to defend France against any of these charges, nor do I wish to initiate a campaign to resurrect him as a worthy subject for scholarly attention.<sup>6</sup> My interest in him stems from France's relationship with Proust which, in its beginning, is one in which a young aspiring artist admires an older master. This admiration is exemplified by the written response which a youthful Proust makes when, filling out a questionnaire, he must identify

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<sup>2</sup>Jean Levaillant, "Note sur le personnage de Bergotte," *Revue des sciences humaines*, Jan-Mar. 1952: 42.

<sup>3</sup>Marie Bancquart, *Anatole France: Un sceptique passionné* (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1984) 409.

<sup>4</sup>Bancquart 407.

<sup>5</sup>Dushan Bresky, *The Art of Anatole France* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1969) 13.

<sup>6</sup>Dushan Bresky attempts to answer all the critics who have denigrated France's literary talents and to indicate a possible recuperation of France's reputation in "Cinquante ans de la critique française," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 7(1979):245-257.

his "auteurs favoris en prose." He writes, "[a]ujourd'hui Anatole France et Pierre Loti."<sup>7</sup>

Later France writes the preface to Proust's first published book, *Les Plaisirs et les jours* and, according to Levaillant, is the main model for Bergotte in the *Recherche*.

This connection is even more interesting because several commentators have noted the influences of the elder France in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, although those critics who have noted similarities state that Proust quickly outgrew them in the composition of his long work. In a discussion of the importance of literary criticism in Proust's work, René de Chantal expresses the view that the influence which France had on Proust was limited to an early phase of Proust's career and involved France's early works which were "productions de littérature pure."<sup>8</sup> Chantal also suggests that Proust began to detach himself from France when he "ne retrouvait plus dans les dernières oeuvres cet idéal de beauté pure qu'il se plaisait à admirer dans ses premiers écrits." Walter Strauss limits France's influence also to an early "symbolist" stage of Proust's career, the stage when he was writing *Les Plaisirs et les jours* and *Jean Santeuil*.<sup>9</sup> Levaillant argues that Proust escapes France's influence and passes through this early stage of his life when he begins to read Ruskin, whose religion of beauty deepens France's epicureanism and consequently offers Proust a more profound artistic sensibility.<sup>10</sup>

Viewing *A la recherche du temps perdu* as a literary autobiography and using it as a source of biographical information, George Painter states that France influences both the themes and the style of Proust's writing in a way which parallels how Bergotte's apparent

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<sup>7</sup>Marcel Proust, "Essais et articles," *Contre Sainte Beuve* 335.

<sup>8</sup>René de Chantal, *Marcel Proust: Critique littéraire*, 2 vols. (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1967) 1:204.

<sup>9</sup>Walter Strauss, *Proust and Literature: The Novelist as Critic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957) 5.

<sup>10</sup>Levaillant 40.

influence on the narrator in the *Recherche*.<sup>11</sup> Painter enumerates the themes in France's work which are also to be found in Proust's novel, and he takes Marcel's admiration of Bergotte's style to be an indication of France's influence on Proust:

When the Narrator of *A la recherche* speaks of 'a book I began to write', and of finding 'the equivalent in Bergotte of certain of my own phrases whose quality was insufficient to determine me to continue it', Proust is thinking of his unfinished *Jean Santeuil*; though no doubt the process was really in the reverse direction, and he had already found in France's novels the passages which he unconsciously reproduced in *Jean Santeuil*.<sup>12</sup>

Although France's thematic influence seems to persist in Proust's writing and although Proust always seemed to respect France, Painter downplays France's importance for Proust because Marcel becomes less interested in Bergotte's work. Even if we accept the simple equations of Marcel and Proust, Bergotte and France (and even Painter does not make such straightforward equivalences), we do not need to take a writer's own assessment of influence as entirely accurate. There exist several affinities between *A la recherche du temps perdu* and France's Pierre Nozière books which suggest a strong intertextual relationship and which indicate that France's work may have provided Proust with the initial inspiration for the *Recherche*, the writer's search to find a potential writer in his own past which, in France's case, also involves a search for a part of himself that remains untainted by scientific thought. In fact, it is in France's work and, especially, in the early Pierre Nozière stories where France tries to portray a childhood dominated by sentiment rather than by scientific thought, that Proust may have first encountered the mixture of autobiographical and novelistic writing which would allow him to exploit fully his conception of *le moi créateur*.

As narratives about an only child's family life, many elements in the Pierre Nozière stories bear a strong resemblance to certain features of the childhood sequences of *A la recherche du temps perdu*. In addition to the similarities that Painter mentions, the character

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<sup>11</sup>George Painter, *Marcel Proust: A Biography*, 2 vols. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959, 1966) 1:69.

<sup>12</sup>Painter 1:69

configurations of Pierre's remembered childhood resemble the configurations of the infant Marcel's domestic environment. Like Marcel, Pierre is the only child of a doctor father whose emotional distance from his son is a partial reason for the strengthening of the maternal bond and for the development of a strong relationship with a female domestic. This maternal love becomes another key to the past which Marcel encapsulates in his memory of the withheld kiss. Pierre, an autobiographical characterization of France, feels an equally strong attraction to his mother which helps him to recover his past. In an interview recorded by Marcel Le Goff at France's mansion, *La Béchellerie*, and at a time when France was working on his last two Pierre books, France discusses the difficulty of writing about his childhood memories and reveals how his love for his mother allows him to overcome some of the distance between him and his childhood memory of her:

C'est une chose bien difficile que de raconter des souvenirs d'enfance. On a une tendance naturelle à les voir avec l'état d'esprit de l'âge auquel on les raconte et insensiblement sans même s'en apercevoir on les corrige et on les fausse. Ainsi perdent-ils toute spontanéité et toute fraîcheur. Si l'on retrouve par un effort les émotions de l'enfance, on risque de tomber dans la puérilité.

Il faut laisser s'écouler les souvenirs comme ils arrivent, ne pas les gâter par l'analyse et surtout se garder d'y ajouter quoi que ce soit destiné à les enjoliver. Quand je relis les récits des personnages de mon enfance, je ne suis pas certain moi-même de les reconnaître. Les souvenirs que je garde de ma mère sont extrêmement précieux, il m'arrive souvent de les évoquer, je les trouve embrouillés et assez confus. La figure s'estompe et les faits maternels se diluent. C'est dans le sentiment d'amour que je garde d'elle que je la retrouve le mieux, parce qu'il est toujours vivant et ne finira qu'avec moi.<sup>13</sup>

France finds the task of writing about his childhood memories to be a difficult one because he is aware of a desire to correct or to counterfeit them, to build them into a coherent artifice in order that the older writer might understand his younger self. At the same time, a too respectful reproduction of the remembered childhood mind might result in incomprehensible, infantile babble. As a solution, he accepts the unwilling recovery of remembered experiences and tries to collect them as they occur to him (an idea which

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<sup>13</sup>Marcel Le Goff, *Anatole France à la Béchellerie: Propos et souvenirs 1914-1924* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1947) 321-322.

seems rather close to Proust's involuntary memory).

This practice, along with France's general refusal to analyze his memories, demonstrates a mistrust of the adult's ability to understand the child, and it also contends with such rational approaches to self-analysis as Hippolyte Taine's proposed scientific, psychological method which he outlines in *De l'intelligence*. Taine seeks to unmask the illusion of the self in order to find the only real parts of this illusion, "la file de ses événements."<sup>14</sup> He dissolves "ce feu d'artifice, prodigieusement multiple et complexe [qui] monte et se renouvelle incessamment par des myriades de fusées" in order to show the ideas, images, sensations, and impulses which are, according to Taine, the reality of the self. In Pepper's terms, Taine ignores the quality of the self's experience to emphasize its texture. At the same time, Taine explains the illusion-building process which constructs a sense of self while all the time insisting on the illusory nature of this sense. He attempts to uncover the general laws which govern the series of translations and groupings of sensations into images, images into ideas which lead to the development of a false idea of the self's existence. In a broader sense, Taine's formulations about the self, consciousness, and materiality are an attempt to describe the mechanism of knowledge which constructs an illusory structure of intelligence out of sensations, the reality of experience, and, according to Taine, the only verifiable data in our experience of ourselves and of the world.

France has an uneasy relationship with such scientific attitudes. His fascination with Pierre's childhood centers on the child's sensibility and not on an understanding of the child's behavior. He wants to attempt to reproduce this sensibility by documenting "les souvenirs comme ils arrivent" without spoiling them by analysis and without prettifying them (this second criteria has more to do with the last two Pierre books, for in the early Pierre stories, much of the pain of childhood is not revealed). France also resists any temptation to analyze these memories on account of the opacity which the figures from his past actually

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<sup>14</sup>Hippolyte Taine, *De l'intelligence*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1870) 1:3.

have. In this way Pierre is similar to Marcel who, despite his efforts at analysis, too often discovers an opacity in the characters of his memory. However, both Marcel and Pierre are able to penetrate the opacity of their close friends and family members as a result of the love that they both have for their mothers. In Pierre's case, the importance of this love is especially significant because Raymond, the spokesman for Pierre and for France in "Dialogue sur les contes de fées," calls love "la plus belle [passion] de toutes" and "la plus déraisonnable de toutes."<sup>15</sup>

As narrators who invoke sentiment and especially maternal love in their narratives in order both to represent and to re-create an imagined/remembered universe, France's Pierre Nozière and Proust's Marcel share many common characteristics, although the presence of what Hans Robert Jauss calls *erinnerndes ich* in the beginning of the *Recherche* distinguishes it from France's work.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the narrators begin their narratives with accounts of how they recall their past in the solitude of night. On the one hand, Proust's narrator provides us with an ulterior, autodiegetic narrative about a time when he suffered from insomnia, became disoriented in his bedroom, and confused his present room, his present spatiotemporal location with past locations, experiences, rooms, and especially his bedroom at Combray where he habitually experienced a separation from his mother. This remembered disorientation becomes one of the keys to the past which unlocks the Combray section, if not Proust's entire novel, when Marcel recalls a moment when he remained together with his mother for an entire night. On the other hand, the narrator of *Le Livre de mon ami* begins to write his narrative in a moment of solitude at night. In this isolation, an isolation similar to that which Proust's narrator experiences as a result of his insomnia, Pierre feels the silence of night invite the sweetness of memory and this sweetness is felt in his accounts of childhood which begin with a memory of childhood, bedtime reveries. These

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<sup>15</sup>France, *Le Livre* 203.

<sup>16</sup>Hans Robert Jauss, *Zeit und Erinnerung in Marcel Prousts "A la recherche du temps perdu": Ein Beitrag zur Theorie des Romans* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1955) 54.

memories are additionally stimulated by a chance encounter with a book of engravings which awakens the nightmares of a child trying to sleep on nights which resemble somewhat the nights at Combray when Marcel's sleep was troubled by a disappointment which he experienced after having received his mother's goodnight kiss.

However, in spite of the apparent similarities which suggest that France's influence on Proust is still visible in the first part of the *Recherche*, the attitudes which the adult narrators of *Le Livre de mon ami* and *A la recherche du temps perdu* have toward their past selves is quite different. Reino Virtanen draws attention to this point:

...the "Combray" section of Marcel Proust's *Du Côté de chez Swann*...certainly owes part of its inspiration to France's book. An adored and adoring mother, a rather more remote yet respected father, and at least one devoted maid, all protecting an only child (we note that Proust's real brother was not admitted to this paradise): these features are common to both books. There is also the boy's addiction to reverie, indulged in especially after being put to bed. The theme of childhood as a lost paradise is, however, treated differently by the two writers. Thanks to Proust's gift of involuntary memory, Marcel is presented with much greater immediacy. The distance between Proust and the child of Combray is as exiguous as the thinnest film. It is a fact nevertheless. The distance between Pierre and Anatole France is the distance between the child and the man, who, *nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*, recalls his former self.<sup>17</sup>

Virtanen's use of the word "distance" to explain the difference between the relationship of the two narrators (*les je-narrants*) and their past selves (*les je-narrés*) is quite bothersome. If we adopt Bal's modification of Genette and realize that what Virtanen means by "distance" is in fact increased duration or length of narration as a consequence of more detailed accounts of events or more detailed description, then Virtanen's distinction becomes rather uninteresting. The *Recherche* is a longer, more detailed work than France's autobiographical writings. But Virtanen attributes the *Recherche's* "immediacy" not to a textual difference but to the importance of involuntary memory in Proust. In other words, he accepts Marcel's premise that involuntary memory is the sole means to recover the past, and consequently the presence of

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<sup>17</sup>Reino Virtanen, *Anatole France*, Twayne World Authors Series 63 (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1968) 15.

this phenomenon in the narrative about memory gives it an element of verisimilitude which enhances the power of the narrative to appear as authentic memoirs. However, Elizabeth R. Jackson astutely remarks that in the overall composition of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, involuntary memory actually plays a minor role.<sup>18</sup> This role is, nevertheless, an important one because the two principle scenes of involuntary memory, the tasting of the *madeleine* and Marcel's stumbling on the paving stones on the way to the Guermantes' *matinée*, provide a frame which grants the narrated events the air of uncorrupted memories and, according to Virtanen, a subsequent immediacy.

The absence in the frame of France's autobiographical work of anything comparable to the account of Marcel's exploration and deepening of memory, coupled with the fact that France includes less detail in the Pierre books, contributes to the narrator's sense of distance from the past. In "Le Livre de Pierre," an example of what Genette would also call ulterior, autodiegetic narrative, the narrator, Pierre, writes a few anecdotes about his childhood life from a point in time when he, middle-aged, feels an equal pull of the past and of the future, as if he, at mid-life, were at the midpoint of a neoclassical narrative and on the peak to which the earlier complications had built and from which the *dénouement* falls away towards death. The narrator's fear of the future and this fall is counteracted by a persistent and uneven power of memory which is "une faculté merveilleuse et...le don de faire apparaître le passé est aussi étonnant et meilleur que le don de voir l'avenir."<sup>19</sup>

In attributing to the narrator this astonishing faculty to make the past appear, France creates a rather idealized writer who earnestly attempts to undertake the task of a chronicler-poet. Since, in the preface to *La Vie en fleur*, France reveals to us that Pierre is actually France himself,<sup>20</sup> we can see Pierre as France's attempt to construct an idealized self

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<sup>18</sup>Elizabeth R. Jackson, *L'Évolution de la mémoire involontaire dans l'oeuvre de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Nizet, 1966) 15-16.

<sup>19</sup>France, *Le Livre* 11.

<sup>20</sup>Anatole France, *La Vie en fleur* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1922) 7.



by reconstructing his own history. In the postface to this volume, France indicates that, although not all of Pierre's anecdotes are strictly autobiographical, they convey nevertheless an accurate sense of France's childhood. France also suggests that the disguise allowed him to overcome a weak memory:

Ce déguisement me fut aussi très avantageux en ce qu'il m'a permis de dissimuler le défaut de ma mémoire qui est très mauvaise et de confondre les torts du souvenir avec les droits de l'imagination. J'ai pu combiner des circonstances pour remplacer celles qui m'échappaient. Mais ces combinaisons n'eurent jamais pour raison que l'envie de montrer la vérité d'un caractère; enfin, je crois que l'on n'a jamais menti d'une façon plus véridique.<sup>21</sup>

Through Pierre, France attempts to recall and to recreate himself in a way which will be more authentic than the purely autobiographical narrative which he could compose from memory alone. This disguise offers him the advantage "d'associer, si peu que ce soit, la fiction à la réalité" in order to clothe the truth in enough fiction to make it palatable, a practice which agrees with France's statement at the end of his postface that, despite the fact that humanity is in need of truth, it has a "plus grand besoin encore du mensonge, qui la flatte, la console, lui donne des espérances infinies. Sans le mensonge, elle périrait de désespoir et d'ennui." Humanity, including France, cannot face the dullness nor the severity of the truth, but must receive its truth in an imaginative, artistic dress.

This mixture of fiction and reality obscures the relationship which France establishes with his reader. A reader cannot be absolutely certain whether to read the Pierre stories as autobiographical or fictional. In *Le Pacte autobiographique*, Philippe Lejeune argues that one normally bases this decision on the basis of a pact which the writer makes with the reader and which he signals by including certain indications in the title or initial section, by naming the hero after the author, and by confusing as much as possible the identities of hero and author.<sup>22</sup> France calls the hero of his stories Pierre, not Anatole, and therefore Lejeune

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<sup>21</sup>France, *La Vie* 272.

<sup>22</sup>Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975) 27.

would say that the Pierre books are to be read as fiction. But Richard Coe disparages such rigorous categorizations.<sup>23</sup> Coe says that France does not distinguish Pierre from himself; he only gives him a different name in order not to offend anyone who might be alive when he first published the early Pierre stories. However, in the postface to *La Vie en fleur*, France confesses the autobiographical nature of the entire series of Pierre books in a way which admits deliberate inaccuracies but which also avows an underlying truthfulness. By creating a lie that also provides some deep truth, France has a double relationship with these pieces of writing that pretend to be autobiographical; he is paradoxically both the author and the subject of this work which records, in part, how the author evolved from the subject. However, in composing such a record, the author does not remain entirely true to his past but is also the imaginative source of a universe in which he places Pierre, a transformed *petit Anatole*, whose story recreates the writer of that story.

This transformed, idealized, but still autobiographically-based writer undertakes to write some of his memories down for what he believes to be good reasons. Pierre addresses the future both as a general reference to his future readers and as a reference to specific narratees, his family whose sleeping breath can be heard through the open bedroom door. When Pierre sits down to write his memoirs, he hears this breathing:

Seule une porte est entr'ouverte, là du côté où mes yeux se tournent par instinct. Il en sort une lueur d'opale: il en vient des souffles égaux et doux, dans lesquels je ne saurais distinguer moi-même celui de la mère de ceux des enfants.<sup>24</sup>

The use of the plural "des enfants" is a noteworthy discrepancy between the narrator's family and the single-child family of which France was the father. The dedication of the book "POUR VOUS TROIS" also suggests that the family includes two children. But at least two other possibilities exist. Pierre's attitude towards his reader is one which resembles a

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<sup>23</sup>Richard N. Coe, *When the Grass was Taller: Autobiography and the Experiences of Childhood* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984) 4.

<sup>24</sup>France, *Le Livre* 10.

father-child relationship, and consequently the reader's breath mingles with the sleeping family's breath as the reader is included in the narrator's family. Additionally, Pierre's attitude towards his own self as a child is similar to the way in which he regards his daughter. The division of the book into "Le livre de Pierre" and "Le livre de Suzanne" itself suggests that both Pierre and Suzanne appear to have some kind of equivalence as children of the narrator.

In addition to presenting himself as an idealized paternal, the narrator wears the mask of a remembering writer, a role for which Pierre feels especially suited, as he underlines his talent for reminiscence by stating that he has kept "de vifs souvenirs du temps où [il était] un très petit enfant,"<sup>25</sup> Pierre also marks himself as a special child by attributing to himself certain qualities which mark his almost innate literary orientation. The narrator's belief that he has strong memories of early childhood allows him also to believe in his own heightened sensitivity and consequently in his artistic nature. Although these memories are mostly fragmented "images isolées," he feels nonetheless that they "ne se détachent qu'avec plus d'éclat sur un fond obscur et mystérieux," and that they seem to come from "un passé infiniment profond." This feeling suggests to Pierre that his childhood took place in a magnificent new world, one which, except for the rational, scientific knowledge that he has acquired from books, would appear to be newly born. In trying to place his childhood into a moment in time, Pierre writes:

Si j'étais un sauvage, je croirais le monde aussi jeune, ou si vous voulez, aussi vieux que moi. Mais j'ai le malheur de n'être point un sauvage. J'ai lu beaucoup de livres sur l'antiquité de la terre et l'origine des espèces et je mesure avec mélancolie la courte durée des individus à la longue durée des races. Je sais donc qu'il n'y a pas très longtemps que j'avais mon lit à galerie dans une grande chambre d'un vieil hôtel fort déchu, qui a été démoli depuis pour faire place aux bâtiments neufs de l'École de Beaux-Arts.<sup>26</sup>

Memory does not conserve Pierre's childhood but it reminds him of childhood's absence, an

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<sup>25</sup>France, *Le Livre* 13.

<sup>26</sup>France, *Le Livre* 13-14.

absence which has been, in part, created by modernization, urban renewal, his education, and the knowledge of stories which allows him to reinterpret remembered elements like the "jolie gravure en couleur qui représentait, comme je l'ai su depuis, Virginie traversant dans les bras de Paul le gué de la rivière Noire."<sup>27</sup>

However, as France has already suggested in the Le Goff interview, the love that he still has for his mother overpowers weaknesses of memory which prevent recognition of remembered figures and, consequently, helps him to reconstruct Pierre's absent childhood. France uses the motif of mother love to allow Pierre to penetrate the temporal distance held in memory and to remember his mother's gift of a rose printed on the wallpaper of the *petit salon* where she works.<sup>28</sup> The account of this particular event terminates a two-page chapter where Pierre describes the family apartment, its frightening decor made up of the various exotic articles which his father collects, and the habitual, iterative scene of his mother sitting at her worktable while the infant Pierre tries to get her attention. The gift marks one moment when he succeeds at interrupting his mother's work, and the rose which she marks on the wallpaper becomes a kind of token of her love, comparable to the night when Marcel's mother stays with her son, the memory of which Marcel is able to recall years later.

Perhaps as a consequence of such nostalgia for his mother's love, a sentimental reminiscence similar to Marcel's experience of the *Bois de Boulogne* at the end of *Du Côté de chez Swann*, or perhaps as a result of Pierre's book-learning, the anecdotes of "Le Livre de Pierre" have story elements which suggest the influence of fairy tale, or of the conventional stories which his mother reads him.<sup>29</sup> This quality reduces Pierre's life to a

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<sup>27</sup>France, *Le Livre* 14.

<sup>28</sup>France, *Le Livre* 27.

<sup>29</sup>Edward Dargan notes that "L'Ombre," the story of an ancestral ghost and of a noted smuggler is, in fact, lifted and adapted from a tale in Emile Souvestre's *Scènes de la Chouannerie* (Edward Preston Dargan, *Anatole France 1844-1896* [New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1937] 8).

childish, pre-scientific level of understanding which demonstrates a longing for lost innocence and lost simplicity that the narrator's sophisticated adult sensibility prevents him from completely recapturing. In *Le Livre de mon ami*, Pierre's childhood experiences are *douces* and pleasant ones, or they are made pleasant by the patronizing way in which the adult narrator tells us about his sweet childhood innocence. His naive, infantile love of *la dame en blanc* takes the shape of a triangle in which his impatient refusal to remain in the dining room becomes a kind of intervention on behalf of his beloved and against what appears to be the overly persistent suits of his rival.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Pierre's experience of the tale of *les enfants d'Edouard* and the subsequent fear which he experiences when he climbs the stairs of his imaginary tower demonstrate an imaginative force which brings old tales to life and which the mother sees as an indication that her child is "trop nerveux."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, his relationship with Alphonse, "l'enfant mal élevé," is interpreted by the narrator as a Cain-and-Abel story, an interpretation that reflects the simple moralizations which the narrator makes a part of the child's sensibility and which offer implicit criticisms of the adult world. Pierre takes such a lesson from his mother when she tells him that "Alphonse est mal élevé; ce n'est pas sa faute, c'est son malheur." The narrator reacts to the mother's words:

Vous fîtes bien, maman, de me parler ainsi; vous fîtes bien de me révéler dès l'âge le plus tendre l'innocence des misérables. Votre parole était bonne: c'était à moi à la garder présente dans la suite de ma vie.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps the most striking example of how Pierre actually interprets his life in literary terms occurs in the first chapter of *Pierre Nozière*. In this opening chapter, Pierre tells how a fascination with his "bible en estampes" caused him, as a five-year-old, to reconstruct his universe which was, for him, limited to the area of Paris where his family lived. Pierre was able to identify various biblical landmarks in this universe on the basis of their resemblance

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<sup>30</sup>France, *Le Livre* 22.

<sup>31</sup>France, *Le Livre* 30.

<sup>32</sup>France, *Le Livre* 37.

to the illustrations in his bible, and he consequently creates a kind of mythical landscape. For example, the young Pierre is certain that the *Jardin des Plantes* is nothing else than the garden of Eden "un peu vieilli mais, en somme, pas beaucoup changé."<sup>33</sup> Pierre also divides his world into two *côtés, du levant* and *de l'occident*, a division which perhaps prefigures the structure of Proust's novel (although Proust plays a great deal with biblical allusions in his titles).

In this context, Pierre's desire to communicate some of the memories of childhood is a rather playful effort to reverse Auguste Comte's positivist history and to return to the theological age, to give his family a central place in this age, and, in a light-hearted manner, to attempt to begin a family registry which will record the history of *la famille Nozière* as reconstructed by a sensibility that belongs to this age. Michel Penicaud notes France's opposition to Comte's notion of humanity's evolution towards a positivist age and attributes this divergence of thought between these two nineteenth-century men to France's "entraînement sentimental."<sup>34</sup> France's preoccupation with human emotion rather than human knowledge attracts him to the child's sense of the world, a way of seeing upon which Pierre looks back in preference to any forward-looking positivist attitude. In "Dialogue sur les contes de fées," Raymond, a character whom may be taken as the spokesman for the adult Pierre and France, expresses an opinion about poetry which reflects this separation of adult and child-like sensibility:

La poésie la plus pure est celle des peuples enfants. Les peuples sont comme le rossignol de la chanson : ils chantent bien qu'ils ont le coeur gai. En vieillissant, ils deviennent graves, savants, soucieux, et leurs meilleurs poètes ne sont plus que des rhéteurs magnifiques.<sup>35</sup>

This attitude suggests a kind of resigned pessimism on France's part to two evolutions of the

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<sup>33</sup>Anatole France, *Pierre Nozière*, Collection le Zodiaque (Paris: Calmann-Lévy) 11.

<sup>34</sup>Michel Penicaud, "Auguste Comte, Anatole France, et Marcel Proust," *Cahiers du Sud* 1944, 265:237.

<sup>35</sup>France, *Le Livre* 202.

human experience: on the individual level, the child into the adult and on the level of the species, Comte's evolution from the theological to the positivist age. For Raymond and for France, poetry and art are, in a sense, artifacts of the theological age which the modern day rhetorician-writer can only rediscover, collect, and include in a polished technique in a way that resembles the manner in which the adult Pierre can only nostalgically recall his childhood. The art itself appeals to something beyond the rhetoric in a way similar to how Pierre's anecdotes invoke the obscure depths of his childhood memories. As France suggests in a letter to André Cornélis:

L'art...est instinctif. C'est peu pour lui de connaître, il faut qu'il sente. La science ne peut être son moyen, puisque la vérité n'est pas son but. Le roman est une espèce de poème familier qui parle au sentiment et à l'imagination."<sup>36</sup>

France finds an instinctive source for his art, but at the same time, he seems to recognize that this instinct can, for him or for any adult, only be preserved when collected, polished, and crafted into an artistic work. For example, at the end of the first night of writing Pierre's memoirs, France has Pierre somewhat ironically suggest that his family history, an aggrandizement of everyday life, is connected with a larger project, Littré's bourgeois history, imitative of the way in which the history of aristocratic families was kept but containing "les principaux incidents de la vie domestique."<sup>37</sup> However, the narrator's bourgeois history places himself, as child, in the center of a world which reflects the bourgeois, idealized vision of childhood. It reinforces the middle-class adult view of the child as suggested by fairy tale, and the anecdotes are collected memories stylized according to such a sensibility.

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<sup>36</sup>Anatole France, "André Cornélis," *Temps*, February 6, 1887, cited in Dushan Bresky, *The Art of Anatole France* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1969) 17.

<sup>37</sup>France, *Le Livre* 48.

In effect, the child Pierre's sense of himself in the world and his primitive orientation as a half-serious, bourgeois historian of it is perhaps what attracts him to *le père Le Beau*, a figure whom Pierre compares to Henri Heine's Simon de Geldern as another example of the eccentric old man with literary aspirations. Pierre regards Le Beau as the individual who initiated Pierre's own literary interests and who represents a kind of model for the writer because of his "manie...de faire des catalogues."<sup>38</sup> Le Beau maintains a collection of diverse and often exotic objects for which, as Pierre recalls, he was always in the process of constructing a catalogue. This activity entralls the infant Pierre and arouses a desire to have, one day, "des épreuves à corriger." But it is not only this inclination for proof-reading that Le Beau awakens in Pierre, the old man cultivates more general interests in the child which the narrator views retrospectively as important for his craft:

Par le spectacle peu commun de son ameublement, il accoutuma mon esprit d'enfant aux formes anciennes et rares, le tourna vers le passé et lui donna des curiosités ingénieuses; par l'exemple d'un labeur intellectuel régulièrement accompli sans peine et sans inquiétude, il me donna dès l'enfance l'envie de travailler à m'instruire. C'est grâce à lui enfin que je suis devenu en mon particulier grand liseur, zélé glossateur de textes anciens et que je griffonne des mémoires qui ne seront point imprimés.<sup>39</sup>

Pierre's assessment of his own skill perhaps reflects France's (false?) modesty, but it also explains the kind of writing practice for which France has often been criticized and which is sometimes labeled his alexandrist or his plagiarist. Like Le Beau, Pierre sees himself as a collector and corrector of proofs, a practice which Norpois would criticize as one that is overly concerned with the conservation of classical tales and with style, rather than with the exploration of depths of the written word.<sup>40</sup> In fact, "Le Livre de Pierre" represents, in a

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<sup>38</sup>France, *Le Livre* 59.

<sup>39</sup>France, *Le Livre* 62.

<sup>40</sup>In a rather exotic passage, Dushan Bresky attempts to see France's collecting passion, which causes France to assemble a houseful of exotic artifacts, as an inherent quality of the man and his art:

At first sight one might be inclined to say that in his private life, unlike in



way, such a catalogue of personal anecdotes and remembered stories. Pierre, and France through the mask of this character, take an inventory of the amusing childish acts, the moral lessons, and the ennobling experiences which lead to his mature, adult self-contentment, a sense of his own well-being, and an awareness of the special nature of his family which is given an almost aristocratic quality.

The stories which Pierre collects and narrates do not just revolve around him, but they sometimes center on other figures in the way that *Un Amour de Swann* centers on Swann. In such stories, Pierre experiences a world outside of the domestic environment. For example, through his grandmother he connects himself with the grand historical events of the French revolution and with an ancestor capable of heroic action on behalf of the *ancien régime*. His bourgeois family, already ennobled by the fact that his father is a doctor, is given further value by this ancestor who contains an aristocratic spirit if not any actual aristocratic blood. She offers to Pierre a history, which, after her death, becomes even more remarkable than it was when she was alive, on account of Pierre's power to imagine her as a brave, heroic, and independent figure:

Je me représentais avec une force incroyable tout ce que je lui avais vu faire ou entendu dire autrefois, et mon père faisait d'elle tous les jours des récits qui nous la rendaient vivante, si bien que parfois, le soir, à table, après le repas, il nous semblait presque l'avoir vue rompre notre pain.<sup>41</sup>

As a result of the stories told about her, Pierre imagines his grandmother caught up in the

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<sup>40</sup>(cont'd) his art, his grand collecting passion defeated his love of classical simplicity.

But, giving a second thought to this seeming contradiction, one realizes a striking similarity between these harmoniously overdecorated interiors, where each item must stimulate the aesthetic sense of the refined inhabitant or guest, and his prose libertine anecdotes, lyrical intermezzoes, unexpected contrasts, aphorisms or paradoxes, sparkling like brilliant crystal chandeliers or subdued like the dull sheen of old bronze. Indeed like the mansion, La Béchellerie, his prose is a literary museum of all sorts of *objets d'art* and bizarre decorations: in one word, a monumental *contaminatio*. (Dushan Bresky, *The Art of Anatole France* [The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1969] 23)

<sup>41</sup>France, *Le Livre* 66.

great events of the French Revolution, and this image brings meaning to her in ways which were not visible to the child when she was alive or even when he saw his grandmother's feeble-looking corpse. The transformation of grandmother into heroine parallels similar transformations of the child-self and his family experience as a result of Pierre's recreation.

This transformation and disarming of how Pierre experiences his grandmother's death is typical of the way that *Le Livre de mon ami* creates a sense of childhood, domestic paradise. The domestic bliss of the noble *famille Nozière* is also reflected in the way that Pierre, the narrator, regards the two children for which he composes his memoirs. He views them both rather sentimentally as innocent, loving, idealized children who have a natural artistic orientation, an innate attraction to beauty. The narrator tells of Pierre's emotional outpouring in sympathy for *la pauvre Jeanne*, a beautiful maiden in the romantic verse of Pierre's teacher, Mlle Lefort, who dies before she can marry. Mlle Lefort mistakenly thinks that her pupil cries at the beauty of her verse rather than over the story of a death which Pierre imagines so strongly that he believes it to be have really happened.<sup>42</sup> Pierre later interprets Suzanne's pawing of a painted rooster as desire to possess beauty, much to the amused disbelief of his wife:

...elle prend une illusion pour une réalité. Et les artistes sont bien un peu responsables de sa méprise. Voilà bien longtemps qu'ils cherchent à imiter, par des lignes et des couleurs, la forme des choses. Depuis combien de milliers d'années est mort ce brave homme des cavernes qui grava d'après nature une mammoth sur une lame d'ivoire! La belle merveille qu'après tant et de si longs efforts dans les arts d'imitation ils soient parvenus à séduire une petite créature de trois mois et vingt jours! Les apparences! Qui ne séduisent-elles pas?<sup>43</sup>

The narrator sees the consequences of a primitive human urge to imitate nature surface in his daughter's response to a painted image. At the same time, he finds his own notions about the power of art and of his own artistic nature to be reinforced by the infant

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<sup>42</sup>France, *Le Livre* 91.

<sup>43</sup>France, *Le Livre* 151.

Suzanne's reaction. Richard Coe suggests that France (Coe equates him with Pierre) recalls his past self indirectly through the minute, detailed observation of his daughter.<sup>44</sup> In other words, Pierre (Anatole) interprets his daughter's behavior in ways which reflect how he believes that he, himself, as a child, acted. His interpretation demonstrates a rather comic overeagerness on his part to see early signs of artistic talent in both himself, as a child, and in his infant daughter, indications which he readily perceives because he views Suzanne's and *petit Pierre's* behavior with a patronizing and condescending affection which Reino Virtanen calls that of a doting father.<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps because of this sentimentality, Pierre is able to harmonize his perceptions of himself and of his daughter without consolidating them in a completely unified composition. In fact, the writings included in "Le Livre de Suzanne" seem merely to repeat many of the motifs developed in "Le Livre de Pierre." In the first of these books, the narrator gives us anecdotes about his life as a child. The second book, "Le Livre de Suzanne," is a collection of several writings which includes episodes of the narrator's experience of his own daughter, tales about children which parallel or give variations of Pierre's childhood experiences, and a discussion on fairytales in which Raymond, the counterpart to France and Pierre, dominates. This repetition of motifs also exemplifies France's tendency of reiteration which Dargan characterizes by saying that "probably no other writer ever repeated himself so frequently and so nonchalantly."<sup>46</sup> The recurring motif also implies strong parallels or perhaps even the effects of the genetic connection between Pierre and Suzanne, since Pierre, a phantom from the narrator's childhood past, has an existence as one of the members of the narrator's family, one of his offspring, and it prepares us to accept another parallel between these and another of the writer's offspring, the reader.

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<sup>44</sup>Coe 276.

<sup>45</sup>Virtanen 15.

<sup>46</sup>Dargan xviii.

In addition, France's repetitions support Raymond's position on the subordinate nature of the imagination which Raymond articulates in "Dialogues sur les contes de Fées."

According to Raymond, no one can possibly imagine novelty. He claims:

L'homme est absolument incapable d'imaginer ce qu'il n'a ni vu, ni entendu, ni senti, ni goûté. Je ne me mets pas à la mode et m'en tiens à mon vieux Condillac. Toutes les idées nous viennent par les sens, et l'imagination consiste, non pas à créer, mais à assembler les idées.<sup>47</sup>

Because he finds sensory perception at the base of all imagining, and because he prohibits any kind of novelty, Raymond's position represents a modern adult sensibility, a kind of positivism which agrees with Taine's psychology, tries to explain rationally myths and fairy tales, and attempts to reduce even them to sensory observation. In addition, myths provide a record of ancient human perception which Raymond finds to be also the types of experience expressed in fairy tales, a literary form which Raymond feels to be a decadent form of myth. In other words, Raymond exploits his belief about the lack of novelty in the world to find an ancient basis for fairy tales, by suggesting that these tales share a common parentage with the ancient myths of "l'enfance de l'humanité."<sup>48</sup> This notion seems to suggest that underlying any tale or any imagining, there is a verifiable observation (i.e. a sensation), and that the sensibility implicit in mythical observation can be equated with the child-like sensibility implicit in fairy tale. According to Raymond, these two systems of tales are connected by the underlying natural cycles which give them their structure, a structure of which Raymond is able to find a trace in stories such as "Bluebeard" and "Little Red Riding Hood." For him, Bluebeard and Little Red Riding Hood, like all gods and fairies, are figures based on transformations and combinations of observations of the natural world.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>France, *Le Livre* 204.

<sup>48</sup>France, *Le Livre* 206.

<sup>49</sup>France, *Le Livre* 205.

In fact, the existence of such a long record of repeated observation of natural or domestic phenomena is what gives the world its age, for a new earth would have no previous experiences to resemble and no tales to repeat. A *sauvage* would have to invent these experiences and tales which later ages only transform. In general, Raymond summarizes this evolution:

Les premières langues étaient tout en images et animaient tout ce qu'elles nommaient. Elles dotaient de sentiments humains les astres, l'aurore. De la parole imagée, vivante, animée, le mythe jaillit et le conte sortit du mythe. Le conte se transforma sans cesse: car le changement est la première nécessité de l'existence. Il fut pris au mot et à la lettre et ne rencontra pas, par bonheur, des gens d'esprit pour le réduire en allégorie et le tuer du coup.<sup>50</sup>

This remark suggests that immanent structures connect past tales with present ones and, consequently, reveals France's classical attitude about literature. This attitude has its parallel in the relationship between the narrative present and the remembered, anecdotal past in "Le Livre de Pierre." As a particular narrative is both inspired by the myth or fable which it realizes and the realization which brings new life to the myth, Pierre is both the child who develops into the adult narrator somewhere outside the narrative, and who is given life by this narrator within the diegetic universe of the narrator's anecdotes. In both these cases a paradoxical relationship exists between the present and the past, between the present telling and the past myth, between the present teller and his past childhood, between a literary work which invents a fictional universe which in turn includes the development of the writer as child toward the point in time where he writes the very work that we read. In this complex, cyclical relationship, both past and present seem to create each other in a process which tries to imagine a pre-scientific state of existence but can only do so by recalling primitively intellectualized, sentimental anecdotes.

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<sup>50</sup>France, *Le Livre* 218.

## CHAPTER IV

### MAURICE BARRÈS' *LE CULTE DU MOI*: THE PERMANENCE OF THE ROOTED SELF

As I suggested in the previous chapter, Norpois criticizes Bergotte's literary works because they lack the virility and the patriotic fervor that Norpois' literary ideal requires. However, René de Chantal mentions that one writer who "semble répondre à l'idéal littéraire que propose les Norpois-Brichot, ...c'est [Maurice] Barrès."<sup>1</sup> Chantal speaks of the later Barrès when he makes this suggestion, the Barrès who was devoted to the cultivation of "l'énergie nationale." But Chantal also notes that there existed an early Barrès who was much closer and much more sympathetic to Bergotte's aesthetic:

A ses débuts pourtant, Barrès ressemblait plutôt à Bergotte et à ces "joueurs de flûte" que méprisaient tellement Norpois et Brichot. Dans la série des trois volumes qu'il a appelée *le Culte du moi*—le titre de l'un, *Sous l'œil des barbares*, n'est pas sans rappeler, il est vrai, les "barbares" que dénonçait Norpois—Barrès se fait, en effet, l'apôtre d'un égotisme et d'un dilettantisme de dandy qui, exprimé dans un style aux capiteuses délices, contribuait à accroître l'esprit de décadence qui soufflait sur les lettres, en amollissant et en énervant la jeunesse au lieu de la viriliser.<sup>2</sup>

In this passage, Chantal notes that the popular notion of Barrès' early writing connects it with decadence, dandyism, or dilettantism in the fin-de-siècle French literary scene. In Norpois' eyes, this view of Barrès would make him one of the *barbares* which assault literary culture and which threaten the virility of French letters. Barrès, in later life, would seem to agree with Norpois as retrospective views of his early work as writing which belonged to an unfortunate period in his life and in the history of French literature: "Ce fut une triste époque où nous acceptions d'être les représentants de la décadence."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chantal 1:180.

<sup>2</sup>Chantal 1:181.

<sup>3</sup>Chantal 1:181.

At the time, when Barrès makes this remark, he is fully committed to political engagement as a French nationalist. During the war he promotes propagandistic literature, a position that Proust has Marcel denounce in the *Recherche*.<sup>4</sup> However, Chantal also states that, in spite of Barrès' political activity, his nationalism, and his antidreyfusism, Proust always maintains an admiration for Barrès' work, an admiration which indicates that, despite Barrès' political activity, Proust could still find an artistic quality in Barrès' writing which had affinities with his own aesthetics and which allowed him to perceive a Barrès-créateur underneath the political activist.

Germaine Brée has long ago noted such affinities, especially between the young Proust and the early Barrès. Brée summarizes the extent of the thematic, procedural, and methodological connections between these two writers which she demonstrates by enumerating the Proustian qualities of Barrès' *Culte du Moi*:

La recherche passionnée d'une réalité à travers le moi, transcrite par ce "je" qui nous parle dans la première trilogie de Barrès; cette recherche qui est celle du permanent à travers une succession d'instant; l'analyse de l'amour, son caractère profondément subjectif, ses fluctuations; et surtout l'association paysage, femme, saison; ces "paysages d'âme" barrésiens, où s'associent sentiments, souvenirs, sensations présentes, et qui sur une carte de l'âme posent une Aiguesmortes, une Venise, une Lorraine qui ont chacune leur climat, et présentent une véritable "géographie," à la fois sentimentale et spirituelle; le va-et-vient perpétuel de l'oeuvre d'art à la nature, de la Venise de Tiepolo, par exemple, à la Venise douloureuse issue de l'âme barrésienne: autant de thèmes familiers au lecteur proustien.<sup>5</sup>

The search for a reality by way of a transcribed self, for a permanence by way of a succession of instances, the interest in love, the female, and her association with a sentimental, spiritual landscape are, according to Brée, all characteristics which could easily be attributed to Proust's novel. All also play a role in the intellectual formation of the *je* in Barrès' trilogy as it develops from the cult of the self to a culture of the self, from the defensive egoism of the *je* in the first volume to the self-assertive, political engagement of

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<sup>4</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 3:888.

<sup>5</sup>Germaine Brée, "Marcel Proust et Maurice Barrès," *Romanic Review*, 40 (1949): 100.

However, Brée is not alone in this recognition of the similarity between *Le Culte du moi* and *la Recherche*. Augmenting Brée's observations, several critics who write on the symbolist period have more recently noted a more general, symbolist influence on Proust's work. Gordon Shenton states that a similarity exists between Barrès, Gide and Proust because all three of these writers are intellectuals and all three "in their different ways assert the primacy of sensation and immediacy."<sup>6</sup> Daniel Moutote suggests that Proust is connected with Barrès, Gide, and Valéry, whom he groups as literary egotists.<sup>7</sup> Moutote describes these writers as egotists because they emphasize the particularity of the individual and his existential solitude, and because they place their own individual ego at the center of an effort to remake the world. Although Moutote admits that Proust's vision is a textually bound one and therefore different from that of Barrès and Gide, who were engaging the extratextual, Moutote's Proust centers the universe of the *Recherche* on the self-exploration of the narrator. Moutote also finds in Barrès' *Un Homme libre* an association of emotion with material objects which anticipates the Proustian metaphor, but he especially notes that the first volume of the trilogy, *Sous l'oeil des Barbares*, is a "journal d'une formation à travers une création littéraire qui est une expérience récupératrice pour le moi, à l'usage du créateur qui compose sa compétence et découvre sa vocation en les pratiquant, comme fera Proust."<sup>8</sup>

Despite these numerous passing references to Proust's connection with the symbolist movements and to the fin-de-siècle novel, no extensive study of Proust's connection with Barrès has been made since the Brée article. In this chapter, I will lay the ground work for such a study by discussing the concept of the self which Barrès develops in *Le Culte du*

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<sup>6</sup>Gordon Shenton, *The Fictions of the Self: The Early Works of Maurice Barrès*, (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, U.N.C. Department of Romance Languages, 1979) 82.

<sup>7</sup>Daniel Moutote, *Egotisme français moderne: Stendhal--Barrès--Valéry--Gide* (Paris: Edition Sedes réunis, 1980) 9.

<sup>8</sup>Moutote 101.



*moi*. Not only does Barrès see a reconstruction and exploration of the self to be an inherent part of the novel, but Barrès' symbolist preoccupations with the self and its permanence forces us to look beyond the textual *je* for a glimpse of a more expansive *moi*, a self rooted in its racial heritage, a *moi profond* similar to the *moi créateur* which Proust was able to perceive in the works of other artists.

In *The Fictions of the Self: The Concept of the Self in the Early Works of Maurice Barrès*, Gordon Shenton states that Barrès viewed the novel not just as a narrative form, but as "an articulation of his sense of himself at the deepest level where intellectual reflexion merges with the shifting certainties and uncertainties of the self."<sup>9</sup> Such a notion of the self's place in a literary work seems to be very close to Proust's *moi créateur*, or to what the narrator of the *Recherche* describes as the *vrai moi*. In other words, Barrès and Proust discern a truthfulness in the selves that they can only perceive through their writing or that, in a sense, provide them with the original drafts for their work, drafts which are completed by further revision or further writing-living. As Barrès suggests in *Les Taches d'encre*, life itself is poetry, "poésie qui s'envole aux heures de loisir et par tous les sens, selon qu'ils sont exercés."<sup>10</sup>

Later, in his *Cahiers*, he suggests that not only is his life a literary work, but that it is an open work which will not ever be complete and of which his written memoirs can only provide a limited and imperfect view:

Vue imparfaite. Je vis pour construire mon poème de la vie, une vue chaque jour plus complète, plus riche de l'univers. Et c'est vrai que je regrette qu'elle meure avec moi, je regrette qu'elle ne continue pas de se développer, qu'elle ne devienne pas la vérité totale.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Shenton 14

<sup>10</sup>Barrès, "Les Taches d'encre," *L'Oeuvre de Maurice Barrès*, 20 vols. (1921: Paris: Club de l'Honnête Homme, 1965) 1:395.

<sup>11</sup>Barrès, *Mes Cahiers*, *Oeuvre* 16:336.

Barrès reads his life as a poem that is in the process of completing itself, of developing towards a total truth which it will be unable to achieve because his death will intervene. With his death his poem also dies, a realization which indicates that this poem is not just that which is written in his *Cahiers*,<sup>12</sup> but that the *Cahiers* represent a much inferior version of this poem. It is an attempt to transform life into writing, a transposition which, according to Barrès, has the effect of making the transcribed life seem much shallower than the life that remains outside of the text.

A few pages later in his *Cahiers*, Barrès demonstrates an awareness of the reduction which his writing makes of his "poème de la vie":

Si j'essaye d'écrire quelqu'une de ces visions, je ne pourrai construire, je m'en doute bien, qu'une sorte de récit très gauche où ceux qui me lisent ne retrouveront à peu près rien, il y manquera les arrière-plans, la profondeur, la sonorité, les lointains retentissements.<sup>13</sup>

Trying to write about some of his visions, Barrès finds that he can only produce a vulgar narrative which will not convey the depths of his poem. Such an idea reiterates the symbolist concept of the poem that is not on the page, but it also echoes France's confession about the difficulty which he had with the writing of childhood experiences, and furthermore, it parallels the problems of memory which Proust's narrator thinks he can circumvent by way of the *mémoire involontaire*.

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<sup>12</sup>However, incompleteness seems for Barrès to be an admirable quality in a written work. In speaking of the literary group which was much influenced by Baudelaire (and which includes Verlaine, Mallarmé, Rollinat, des Esseintes), Barrès states:

...c'est leur effort, la chose à faire plutôt que la chose faite, que nous admirons. Tout un monde renouvelé sourd parfois en nous; des liens secrets nous rattachent aux grands mystiques; la *Vita Nuova*, les Primitifs, sont plus voisins de nous que les deux siècles derniers. Nous avons des minutes d'un spiritualisme intense que seuls satisfont à peu près les maîtres catholiques ou encore, parmi les modernes, Puvis de Chavannes, Gustave Moreau, le préraphaélites anglais, peintres et poètes. Et Baudelaire est notre maître pour avoir réagi contre le matérialisme de Gautier, qui est le réalisme d'aujourd'hui, et contre tout le superficiel du romantisme. (Barrès, *Taches* 441)

<sup>13</sup>Barrès, *Mes Cahiers, Oeuvre* 344.

But the limitations of discourse are not only dissatisfactory for the writer, they also affect the reader's ability to understand, especially when that reader has no shared context with the writer. In the *Examen de trois romans idéologiques*, an introduction written after all three volumes of *Le Culte du moi* were published, Barrès writes that the experiences, emotions, and exceptional characteristics of a young literate Parisian, "orgueilleux, raffiné, et désarmé, jeté à vingt ans dans la rude concurrence parisienne" are probably unintelligible to someone who has not been or who is not familiar with such a figure.<sup>14</sup> This assertion of the reading public's probable misunderstanding of the hero anticipates their lack of sympathy for the somewhat iconoclastic figure, an expected public reaction which Barrès also addresses in the introduction to *Sous l'oeil des Barbares*. In this introduction, Barrès asks his reader to be sympathetic with the author because the author's attempt to idolize his own soul reflects a common practice with which even the reader should be familiar:

Ceux qui feuilletent ce bréviaire d'égotisme y trouveront moins à railler la sensibilité de l'auteur s'ils veulent bien réfléchir sur eux-mêmes. Car chacun de nous, quel qu'il soit, se fait sa légende. Nous servons notre âme comme notre idole; les idées assimilées, les hommes pénétrés, toutes nos expériences nous servent à l'embellir et à nous tromper. C'est en écoutant les légendes des autres que nous commençons à limiter notre âme; nous soupçonnons qu'elle n'occupe pas la place que nous croyons dans l'univers.<sup>15</sup>

The hero of *Le Culte du moi* is not totally alienated from the reader. The egoism implicit in the novel does not distinguish the hero from everyone else, it is a symptom typical of a young man in Paris which Barrès will again exploit in *Les Déracinés*. In effect, Barrès sees this trait as a quality of humanity. We all invent our own legends, worship ourselves as idols until we encounter the legends of others that make us begin to suspect that we do not have the importance that we first believe.

Barrès outlines this development even more explicitly in the *Examen des trois romans idéologiques*. Arguing that the "conservation des corps organisés tient à l'égoïsme" and that,

<sup>14</sup>Barrès, *Culte Le Culte du moi* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1986) 16.

<sup>15</sup>Barrès, 35-36.

given the egoistic nature of man, the best imaginable situation is one where "l'intérêt particulier et l'intérêt général soient dans une commune direction," Barrès sees a natural progression in both man and in the individual from an extreme individualism based on personal egoism to a more harmonious existence:

Et de même que la première génération de l'humanité est celle où il y eut le plus d'égoïsme personnel, puisque les individus ne combinaient pas leurs intérêts, de même des jeunes gens sincères, ne trouvant pas, à leur entrée dans la vie, un maître, "*axiome, religion ou prince des hommes*", qui s'impose à eux, doivent tout d'abord servir les besoins de leur *moi*. Le premier point c'est d'exister. Quand ils se sentiront assez forts et possesseurs de leur âme, qu'ils regardent alors l'humanité et cherchent une voie commune où s'harmoniser.<sup>16</sup>

Beginning by assuring their own existence and unable or unwilling to accept a master or a dogma, Barrès' individuals become disciples of themselves. They serve the needs of their selves until they have secured a means to gratify self-interest, and the desire for this security leads them to an existence in a community of self-interest. This pragmatic coexistence forces one to harmonize with all surrounding selves, to live *Sous l'oeil des Barbares*.

The hero of *Le Culte du moi* undergoes such a development as he passes through the three volumes of Barrès' trilogy, developmental stages in each of which a different manifestation of the self is dominant. We encounter, in the first volume of Barrès' trilogy, the hero's efforts to ensure his own existence, to compose a legend with himself at the center, and to undertake a self-preoccupied project which makes the self into an object of religious worship. In *Sous l'oeil des Barbares*, the *il* defines himself in terms of his revolt against the onslaught of the *Barbares*. This onslaught is portrayed in what Moutote calls "un petit drame symboliste en deux actes et sept tableaux,"<sup>17</sup> a series of seven thematically bound chapters which appear at first to be mythological or allegorical but which become

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<sup>16</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 19.

<sup>17</sup>Moutote 98.

progressively more realistic.<sup>18</sup> Barrès defends his work, his "courte monographe réaliste," against similar accusations of incoherence on the basis that such a fragmentary vision accurately portrays the inner state of his hero:

Je décris un être jeune et sensible dont la vision de l'univers se transforme fréquemment et qui garde une mémoire fort nette de six ou sept réalités différentes. Tout en soignant la liaison des idées et l'agrément du vocabulaire, je me suis surtout appliqué à copier exactement les tableaux de l'univers que je retrouvais superposés dans une conscience.<sup>19</sup>

Barrès states that he will describe a non-specific, young and sensitive being. This object of description has an unstable sense of himself in a frequently transforming world, or at least, his vision of the world transforms as he passes from tableau to tableau. It is also interesting to note that the *je*-narrator of this part of the novel can refer to this *être* as an *il*, a fact that marks the relationship of absolute non-identity which exists between narrator and hero at this point. One might even say that the narrator attempts to manifest that he is divorced from the *il* in these seven tableaux, an opposite practice to that of France's narrator, who attempts to overcome the consequences of the temporal distance between his adult sensibility and his childhood self.

The disassociation of the narrator from his fictional universe is a consequence of a heterodiegetic narrative technique, to use Genette's terminology. An extradiegetic narrator seems to report the actions of intradiegetic characters in a symbolic dream-play. This separation of the actors, the intradiegetic *je*'s, and especially the hero, from the narrator, restates, on another level, the hero's revolt against external constraints, against all Barbarians, and especially against the other *je*'s of this drama: his schoolmaster, a female companion, a M.

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<sup>18</sup>Shenton calls this first volume a "patchwork of unrelated fragments" which were originally published independently and which Barrès compiled in an effort to construct a thematically coherent book about a young man's "desire for a higher form of spiritual fulfillment" (25). Therefore, in the way that the volume is composed, it resembles *Le Livre de mon ami*.

<sup>19</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 33.

X, a pessimistic man of letters, and the social context of the young man's unattached life in Paris. Parallel to the constraints that these Characters attempt to impose on the hero, the narrator constrains the hero, entrapping the hero in various narratives, situating him in exotic settings in what Shenton calls "a symbolist dream landscape."<sup>20</sup> The hero appears to exist by resistance to his context, as each setting contends with the his interior landscape, which is both a *mise en abyme* and a refutation of the fictional universe in which the hero finds himself.

A tension exists between this interior and the hero's external reality, and often a confusion of them occurs, as it does in "Tendresse." In this chapter, an opposition between the woman and the hero's soul, between the reality of desire and the ideal as symbolized by the "temple de la sagesse éternelle," is left unresolved. The hero, accompanied by the woman, approaches the temple, but before he enters it, he rebuffs all her offers and sexual advances. Addressing her as his *âme*, he explains his rather puerile recalcitrance:

Comprends donc mon effroi. Je ne crains pas que tu me domines : obéir, c'est encore la paix; mais peut-être fausseras-tu, à me donner trop de bonheur, le délicat appareil de mon rêve? Ta beauté est charmante et robuste, épargne mes contemplations. Que j'aie sur tes jeunes seins un tendre oreiller à mes lassitudes, un doux sentiment jamais défleuri, pareil à ces affections déjà anciennes qui sont plus indulgentes peut-être que le miel des débuts et dont la paisible fadeur est touchante comme ces deux fleurs fanées en tes cheveux. Et l'un près de l'autre, souriant à la tristesse, et souriant de notre bonheur même, fugitifs parmi toutes ces choses fugitives, nous saurions nous complaire, sans vulgaire abandon ni raideur, à contempler la théorie des idées qui passent, froides et blanches, et peut-être illusoire aussi, dans le ciel mort de nos désirs; et parmi elles serait l'amour; et si tu veux, mon âme, nous aurons un culte plus spécial et des formules familières pour évoquer les illustres amours, celles de l'histoire et celles, plus douces encore, qu'on imagine; en sorte qu'aimant l'un et l'autre les plus parfaits des impossibles amants, nous croirons nous aimer nous-mêmes.<sup>21</sup>

The hero fears this woman not because of the fact that she might dominate him but because her offer of happiness might not comply with his dreams of love. The reality may

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<sup>20</sup>Shenton 117.

<sup>21</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 55.

corrupt the dream, and consequently the reality, in terms of this dream, is barbaric. The reality of the woman, her beauty, nevertheless attracts him to the point that he can confuse her with his own soul. But he fears that this attraction is only temporary, that it will fade, develop a "paisible fadeur," resolve into the contemplation of past ideas ("peut-être illusoire") in the dead heaven of their desires. In this state, love becomes "un culte plus spécial" with familiar formulae (clichés) to evoke illustrious historical or imaginary loves, ideal loves which belong to each individual self and which idealize the love object to the point that it comes to resemble the lover. And it is such a love object, a clone of himself or rather of his own soul, for which the hero longs when, "balançant ses bras dans la nuit, sans but, il rêve de la douceur d'être deux."<sup>22</sup>

It is the duplicity of the woman, who actually represents both the world outside of the self, *le non-moi*, and therefore the *Barbares* as well as the hero's *moi*, his soul, that makes her such a complex figure, one which perplexes the hero and confuses many of the critics who write about Barrès' novel. Anthony Greaves, who attempts to enumerate the qualities of existence for which the woman is a symbol (e.g. wisdom which comes from within oneself, integration with the universe, intuition), states that at this stage she represents "a sort of animal instinct," the "natural, therefore abominable."<sup>23</sup> Davanture does not view her so severely, but he still equates her with life or, rather, with the limitation of mortality, with the self-realization which life forces on the hero's unrealized youth:

Elle représente donc une des voix que tout homme entend dans son for intérieur. Elle est un des multiples appels, à l'invitation desquels il convient de céder ou de surseoir : une invitation à la vie toute simple, sans complication d'aucune sorte, mais aussi sans effort de dépassement de soi-même. Le héros trouvera cette invitation insuffisante.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 56

<sup>23</sup>Anthony A. Greaves, *Maurice Barrès*, Twayne World Authors Series 454 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978) 36.

<sup>24</sup>Maurice Davanture, *La Jeunesse de Maurice Barrès (1862-1888)*, 2 vols. (Lille: Atelier reproduction des thèses, Université Lille III, 1975) 699.

According to Davanture, the woman is that passive part of the hero's self which represents a simple acquiescence to what life has to offer. This view only focuses on the woman as an aspect of barbarism which the hero must resist in order to preserve his self. But her status even in this passage is much more ambiguous. Since she is not only another but also a copy of his own ideal self, a physical manifestation of his own soul, the hero's refutation of her entreaties is also a disguised limitation of his *moi*. The hero, in effect, inhibits the cultivation of this *moi* because he isolates himself without even really being aware of his own act.

The narrator does recognize the source of the hero's isolation, and the *je-narrant* intervenes in the narrative for the first time in order to make this awareness evident:

Et je ne sais s'il s'aperçut qu'il gravissait vers le temple de la Sagesse  
éternelle.<sup>25</sup>

The hero, perhaps unknowingly, gravitates towards the temple of eternal knowledge in which he tries to purge himself of infidelity to his dreamed beauty, to escape all contingencies, and to enter the Absolute. This devotion to his own dream, to the beauty of his own soul, obliges him to detach himself from memory, to resist any future realization of his dreamed self, and to defy the imperfect copy of his dream which he sees in the woman. He repudiates her, as he repulses the image of beauty who infiltrates the temple. Their retreat leaves him amidst the sterile chants of the hymn of worldly renunciation, an emptiness similar to the death that Marcel experiences after Gilberte begins to indicate that she no longer loves him.

Following this tale of love's temptation, there is also a tale which, according to Davanture, resembles a kind of scholastic dream. This return to the antique past, common in the literature of the fin-de-siècle, tells of the death of the goddess Athena, who is destroyed along with her temple and her worshippers when barbarians sack the city. In a sense, this

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<sup>25</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 57.



tale tells of a revolt against divinity. The cult of Athena falls when it can no longer defend itself against the barbarians, in this case Christian fanatics, whose destructive act also announces the birth of a new culture. This death of a cult and of a culture models the relationship of the hero and the barbarians to the extent that Davanture calls this section "la clef du livre." He also says that "Athéné symbolise un équilibre sans cesse détruit par les autres, équilibre que le jeune philosophe des deux premiers chapitres recherche dans la sagesse antique."<sup>26</sup> This observation seems to ignore the fact that, although resistance against the barbarians is unsuccessful, it is, however, this resistance which appears as the definitive element of the self, a resistance that must be more than just the dandy's desire to display an attitude of defiance in order to "établir sa réputation sur le pur néant."<sup>27</sup>

In fact, the defeat of the cult of Athena suggests that the hero begins to feel himself to be more constrained by the barbarians and unable to hold out against them. One consequence of his limitation is that, after "Désintéressement," the setting seems to become progressively more realistic. The hero appears as if he exists in a real place, although the Paris of the final chapters of *Sous l'oeil des Barbares* is often given a symbolic significance. In addition, the use of the third-person pronoun, which distances this figure from us, gives us an external view of him, and suggests that he is an alien in a setting with which we are familiar, begins to give way. In a sense, the *il* represents a pose or a *masque* which the hero adopts in order to survive *Sous l'oeil des Barbares* which he drops once he attains the sanctity of his room. This pronominal dichotomy parallels Marcel's dual existence in- and outside of his bedroom, a doubleness in *A la recherche du temps perdu* which coincides with its narrator/actor double vision. But this use of the third-person pronoun is also a mark which allows the hero to exist as a separate entity under the eye of the reader. It is a divorce of writer, hero, and reader which is abandoned once the hero no longer defines himself through his resistance to the barbarians.

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<sup>26</sup>Davanture 709.

<sup>27</sup>Davanture 710.

To underline this point, the *je* first begins to dominate the novel as an intrusion of indirect free discourse in a passage where the hero retreats from the *Barbares* in the form of Parisian society, and in the solitude of his room, reflects on the aims of his existence:

Je veux échapper encore à tous ces livres, à toutes ces solutions. Toute chose précise et définie, que ce soit une question ou une réponse, la première étape ou la limite de la connaissance, se réduit en dernière analyse à quelque dérisoire banalité. Ces chefs-d'œuvre tant vantés, comme aussi l'immense délayage des papiers nouveaux, ne laissent, après qu'on les a pressés mot par mot, que de maigres affirmations juxtaposées, cent fois discutées, insipides et sèches. Je n'y trouvai jamais qu'un prétexte à m'échauffer; quelques-uns marquent l'instant où telle image s'éveilla en moi.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike Marcel who sees himself and his past inextricably attached to the books in the Guermantes library, Barrès' hero longs to escape from these past solutions of the problems of the self's existence. These writings offer only a superficial comfort, and they remind the hero of the moments in his life when he adopted positions (masks?) which were images of the ideas contained in these books.

The imposition of indirect free discourse marks the lowering of such masks and the transition to first-person narrative which comes to be the dominant form for the remainder of the trilogy. Coinciding with the hero's self-liberation from the influences of his reading, the use of the *je* represents a rejection of the external point of view, the limits of the hero's self imposed from outside. Although the hero undergoes an "Affaïsement" where his resolve appears to lessen, "Extase" marks a transition in the novel. We will begin to experience only the hero's self-imposed limits, his desire to be "un maître ou rien," and to assume the complete responsibility for his own education. He proclaims his independence by imagining himself enclosed in a tower under the siege of the Barbarians, a sanctity which is somewhat illusory:

Il se penchait du haut d'une tour comme d'un temple sur la vie. Il y voyait grouiller les Barbares, il tremblait à l'idée de descendre parmi eux; ce lui était une répulsion et une timidité, avec une angoisse. En même temps il les

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<sup>28</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 105-106.

méprisait. Il reconnaissait quelques-uns d'entre eux; il distinguait leur large sourire blessant, cette vigueur et cette turbulence.<sup>29</sup>

In this passage, the opposition between the hero and the world which Shenton sees as Barrès' "movement of self-preservation" is clearly visible.<sup>30</sup> The hero separates himself from the barbaric mass by raising himself above them (an indication of the egoistic belief in his own elitism). From this perspective, he engages in a dialogue with *les Barbares*, those who belong to the *non-moi*, who first identify themselves as the convinced (rather than the skeptics), who have labelled everything, who know when to laugh and to be serious, who are dumb and noisy with pleasure, who have corrupted everything and every place, and who reward compliance and ridicule deviance. The *il*, recognizing his affiliation to this group with a singular world vision, wants to separate himself from them and their mediocrity, and he affirms his power to "redevenir un dieu," to reconstruct a cosmic order out of his imagination. His aspirations lead him through sleepless nights of research and inquiry which, as the Barbarians note, cause him physical suffering, but a suffering of the body which the young man willingly undergoes in order to try to cultivate his soul.

The hero's individualism seems strange to the Barbarians who eagerly accept the spiritual visions of others, the great artists and thinkers, some of whom the hero recognizes. However, he finds their representations of his self to be imperfect. In reflecting on the positions which the Barbarians want him to accept, the conservative education that they promote, and the tradition of artists and thinkers in which they would find an ancestry for the young hero, he rejects them outright:

Misères, tout cela! Fragments éparpillés du bon et du beau! Je sais que je vous apparais intelligent, trop jeune, obscur et pas vigoureux: en vérité, je ne suis pas cela, mais simplement j'y habite. J'existe, essence immuable et insaisissable, derrière ce corps, derrière ces pensées, derrière ces actes que vous

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<sup>29</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 108.

<sup>30</sup>Shenton 48.

me reprochez; je forme et déforme l'univers, et rien n'existe que je sois tenté d'adorer.<sup>31</sup>

The hero's momentary isolation does not last, and he soon finds himself resubmerged in Parisian society. In fact, the impression one has of the first volume is that all resistance is temporary, and consequently, the self's separate existence is ultimately defeated by an invasion from outside. Even the retreats of Athena and of the narrator in *Extase* into ivory towers can only offer a temporary refuge, but as Davanture suggests, these moments of refuge prefigure the tower of *Constance* in *Le Jardin de Bérenice* when the hero will learn a way to embrace that into which he descends and to remain detached from it.<sup>32</sup>

At this point, the hero has not yet reached this stage of development, but the change of perspective and of narrative voice from *il* to *je* does mark a transition in our relationship with him. Rather than being an opponent, we become allied with him and with his rebellion. Fellow rebel to the young man whom we identify as *je*, we share in the hero's plight at the end of *Sous l'oeil des Barbares*. The impression that the reader has of the *moi's* existence is similar to the one which Barrès provides in *Examen*, when he writes:

Notre *moi*, en effet, n'est pas immuable; il nous faut le défendre chaque jour et chaque jour le créer. Voilà la double vérité sur quoi sont bâtis ces ouvrages. Le culte du *moi* n'est pas de s'accepter tout entier. Cette éthique, où nous avons mis notre ardente et notre unique complaisance, réclame de ses servants un constant effort. C'est une culture qui se fait par élaguements et par accroissements : nous avons d'abord à épurer notre *moi* de toutes les parcelles étrangères que la vie continuellement y introduit, et puis à lui ajouter. Quoi donc? Tout ce qui lui est identique, assimilable: parlons net : tout ce qui se colle à lui quand il se livre sans réaction.<sup>33</sup>

Having purified our *moi*, *Un Homme libre* attempts to prolong its temporary existence to cultivate its sensibility, and to give it a permanence. In addition, *Un Homme libre* makes

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<sup>31</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 109–110.

<sup>32</sup>Davanture 715.

<sup>33</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 20–21.

another aspect of the self apparent. No longer a resisting agent, negatively defined in terms of that against which it resists, the self of *Un Homme libre* is distinguished both as it is reflected by its partner in hermitage, Simon, the hero's double and foil, and as a mechanism which tries to manipulate and to enhance its experience of the world. In this volume, the hero, who is now addressed by a *je*, makes an effort, and often a rather superficial one, to adopt a discipline in order to broaden his range of experience and to prolong his sensations of the world in ways unimpeded by the practical concerns of survival. The *je* attempts to create either imaginatively, through his reading of his intercessors, or through his travel experiences sensations which enlarges his self, which are subject to analysis during periods of meditation, and which are therefore possessed by his consciousness. This practice attempts to maximize the experience and its sensation, to deepen these by analysis, and to realize all the instances of the self in the context of specific experience, not just by attempting to be aware of himself in the instant of experience but also by imagining the experience and subjecting it to meditation.<sup>34</sup> However, the practice seems to be largely unfruitful, a failure which perhaps demonstrates the limitations of the hero at this point. In fact, Philip Ouston says that the hero's "inability to prolong the ecstasy of absolute subjectivity except by drawing sustenance for it from the world outside the Self" is an ironic element in the story

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<sup>34</sup>Barrès also seems to adopt this strategy, as suggested by a passage of *Examen* where he writes:

Prenez d'ailleurs le *moi* pour un terrain d'attente sur lequel vous devez vous tenir jusqu'à ce qu'une personne énergique vous ait reconstruit une religion. Sur ce terrain à bâtir, nous camperons, non pas tels qu'on puisse nous qualifier de religieux, car aucun doctrinaire n'a su nous proposer d'argument valable, sceptiques non plus, puisque nous avons conscience d'un problème sérieux, mais tout à la fois religieux et sceptiques.(Barrès, *Culte* 28-29)

Barrès advises us to take the self as a space to be filled by a religion which an energetic person reconstructs for us. If one takes "personne énergétique" to be one who acts or that part of ourselves which acts, the waiting area of the self, where one reflects on this action, reconstructs it after the fact. Such a doubleness of the self coincides with the relationship of narrator and actor in the novel. This double also parallels the activity of the reader who reconstructs the narrative through his reading. The *je* therefore has a resonance similar to what Karl Uitti describes as "the interpenetration of author, hero, and reader"(39). Uitti also refers to this same complex as "the author-hero-reader triple personality, the aesthetic self as it were" from which Barrès could compose an essentially monologic language that communicates between three subjects of the discourse (Uitti 43).

of a man who tries to be absolutely free,<sup>35</sup> and that the hero effectively entraps himself by falling into what Ouston calls "a finally uninhabitable void of subjectivity."<sup>36</sup>

The *je* only begins to escape this void on his excursions around *la Lorraine* when notions of the connections between the individual and "une race incapable de se réaliser" start to occur to him. The hero becomes aware of a possible continuity which transcends all the individual instances of himself, and even all the racial instances which individuals represent. This continuity is made explicitly known to him in *le soir d'Haroué*, when alone in his room, a vision of *la Lorraine* visits him and tells him:

Quand tu t'abaisse, je veux te vanter comme le favori de tes vieux parents, car tu es la conscience de notre race. C'est peut-être en ton âme que moi, Lorraine, je me serai connue le plus complètement. Jusqu'à toi, je traversais des formes que je créais, pour ainsi dire, les yeux fermés; j'ignorais la raison selon laquelle je me mouvais; je ne voyais pas mon mécanisme. La loi que j'étais en train de créer, je la déroulais sans rien connaître de cet univers dont je complétais l'harmonie. Mais à ce point de mon développement que tu représentes, je possède une conscience assez complète; j'entrevois quels possibles luttent en moi pour parvenir à l'existence. Soit! tu ne saurais aller plus vite que ta race; tu ne peux être aujourd'hui l'instant qu'elle eût été dans quelques générations; mais ce futur, qui est en elle à l'état de désir et qu'elle n'a plus l'énergie de réaliser, cultive-le, prends-en une idée claire. Pourquoi toujours te complaire dans tes humiliations? Pose devant toi ton pressentiment du meilleur, et que ce rêve te soit un univers, un refuge. Ces beautés qui sont encore imaginatives, tu peux les habiter. Tu seras ton *moi* embelli ;  
L'Esprit Triomphant, après avoir été si longtemps l'Esprit Militant.<sup>37</sup>

*La Lorraine*, the hero's native landscape, also exists in the hero as the present formulation (a phenotype so to speak) of a regional, racial substance (the genotype). In a sense, this notion of race seems to be one taken from Taine's tripartite psychology based on *race*, *milieu*, *moment*. In Barrès' novel, the distinction between these three terms collapses. Since place in Barrès is also given a history, the interaction between race and milieu across time becomes so intimate that the distinction is blurred. Race is connected to regionality. The

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<sup>35</sup>Ouston 21.

<sup>36</sup>Ouston 10.

<sup>37</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 197.

history of this interaction, the changes which *La Lorraine* undergoes, remains without any real purpose or without an understanding of how or why these transformations occur. She operates blindly, but in a way that the hero can make conscious by providing *la Lorraine* with a necessarily incomplete awareness of her future possibilities. *La Lorraine* inspires the hero to action, to a realization of his ideal, and she authenticates this ideal by making herself its source, a self of which the hero's self is a mere manifestation. The acceptance of her authority allows the hero to pass into the triumphal stage, to find continuity in the surrounding landscape and, consequently, in himself.

This capacity to detect continuity alters the hero's perceptions, so that he is made aware of the continuity as it is reflected in other landscapes. During a visit to Venice, the narrator learns that a permanence transcends all the instances of the Venetian civilization, all the assaults of the Barbarians who have sacked the city, and it survives through all the pasts and into the present. By analogy, he is also able to detect a sense of this continuing Venice through a reconstruction of his remembered perceptions of the city from which he creates an ideal Venice:

Mes souvenirs, rapidement déformés par mon instinct me présentent une Venise qui n'existe nulle part. Aux attraits que cette noble cité offre à tous les passants, je substituai machinalement une beauté plus sûre de me plaire, une beauté selon moi-même. Ses splendeurs tangibles, je les poussai jusqu'à l'impalpable beauté des idées, car les formes les plus parfaites ne sont que des symboles pour ma curiosité 'idéologue.'<sup>38</sup>

This Venice, like a utopia, exists nowhere. It is a transubstantiation of the city into a more assuredly pleasurable beauty, an act which resembles the transformation which the hero of *Sous l'oeil des Barbares* foresaw to be a consequence of love. The lover's image of his beloved comes to take the place of the love object in his perception, just as the beauty of the hero's ideas under the influence of his ideology replaces the city before him.

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<sup>38</sup>Barès, *Culte* 222.

By conducting a similar metamorphosis on himself, the hero is able to discover a continuity in himself, a *moi du dedans*, which he identifies both with the female and with what he has come to label as race. He distinguishes this deeper, continuous self from the more superficial ones:

De même, quand ma pensée se promène en moi, parmi mille banalités qui semblaient tout d'abord importantes, elle distingue jusqu'à en être frappée des traits à demi effacés; et bientôt une image demeure fixée dans mon imagination. Et cette image, c'est moi-même, mais moi plus noble que dans l'ordinaire; c'est l'essentiel de mon Etre, non pas de ce que je parais en 89, mais de tout ce développement à travers les générations dont je vis aujourd'hui un instant.<sup>39</sup>

Able to distinguish an image of himself, the hero finds an identity despite the confusion of the irrelevancies contained in his consciousness which represent another species of Barbarian. In the same way that Proust is able to detect Balzac's *moi créateur* within the complexity of his work, Barrès' hero is able to find within his complex memories, within the cumbersome historical text that he holds in memory, the essential parts of his being which instance a kind of racial spirit, a spirit of place that traverses generations.

With such a realization that self is rooted in race, the narrator's self-awareness achieves a state of permanence which allows him to be named. Dubbed Philippe (perhaps after Barrès' father), he enters *Le Jardin de Bérénice*, a volume where he can reconcile himself with the female, descend from the tower, and find his place amongst his race. Philippe can begin this reconciliation only after he overhears a discussion on Boulangism and, especially, Renan's opinion of the charismatic hero-leader and how he represents some inarticulate tradition of the common people. This notion of the charismatic Boulanger motivates Philippe to conduct an electoral campaign as a Boulangist in the district of Arles, where he re-encounters Bérénice, a woman whom Philippe had first met as a child dancer in Paris.

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<sup>39</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 223.



Ouston suggests that Bérénice, whom Philippe also calls Petite-Secousse, represents a "subtle amalgam of feminine psychology, the spirit of democracy, and the collective unconscious." These traits are reflected in "the 'images,' 'symbols,' and 'figures' of a small Provençal museum which is looked after by her parents, and where she spends many childhood hours of solitary fantasy."<sup>40</sup> In telling her history, Philippe makes a great deal of her exposure to ancient paintings, of their influence on her character, and of their role in her education:

La peinture, pour les êtres primitifs, est un enseignement. Ces panneaux ne sont pas l'expression d'un rêve particulier, mais la description de l'univers tel qu'il apparaissait aux meilleurs esprits du quinzième siècle. Ce sont, rassemblées dans le plus petit espace et infiniment simplifiées, toutes les connaissances qu'un esprit très orné de cette époque pouvait avoir plaisir à trouver sous ses yeux.<sup>41</sup>

The painting of these primitives reflects their worldview, or they reproduce simplifications of the fifteenth century world in ways similar to that in which Barrès' *monographie réaliste* reconstructs the world of a young Parisian. Bérénice absorbs the diverse universes which she pieces together in her own being. It is a similar relationship to that which she also has to her country of birth, where the diversity of the landscape is doubled in her character.

Philippe becomes aware of this connection of Bérénice to her country of birth while standing on the *tour de Constance*. From this vantage point, he is able to survey the surrounding landscape, an external landscape in which Philippe can perceive all those who have meditated over this view and all those who have suffered for this land. In what Dorrit Cohn would call an auto(psycho)narrative, Philippe reveals this rather sentimental reflection:

Dans cet angle étroit, je m'attarde, et je réfléchis que de ce long passé, des siècles qui font de cette tour la véritable mémoire du pays, rien ne se dégage pour moi que ceux qui méditèrent et ceux qui souffrirent...

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<sup>40</sup>Ouston 5-6.

<sup>41</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 272.

En réalité, ils ne diffèrent guère.

Nos méditations, comme nos souffrances, sont faites du désir de quelque chose qui nous compléterait. Un même besoin nous agite, les uns et les autres, défendre notre moi, puis l'élargir au point qu'il contienne tout.<sup>42</sup>

Philippe can discern the history of response to this country, a history of suffering and of meditation which are, in effect, indistinguishable. Both suffering and meditation are expressions of the desire for completion, a desire which is reflected in the self's need to defend and to enlarge itself. This need can only be satisfied momentarily, when Philippe feels a fusion between himself and the surrounding landscape, a kind of aesthetic union of the self with the world. The moment dissolves as Phillippe realizes all the former experiences, hypostases of self and place, which have occurred and dissipated.

This dissolution also occurs because Philippe recognizes another destructive force in the form of his "adversaire," Charles Martin. Charles, an engineer, positivist, and a progressively modern man, sees no value in meditation or in aestheticism. For him, the landscape surrounding the *tour de Constance* encodes interesting tidbits of information, strata of various geologic formations which attest to the past influence of physical forces. This attitude contrasts with Bérénice's relationship to the land:

Toute cette plaine, nous dit-il, aux époques préhistoriques était recouverte par les eaux mélangées du fleuve et de la mer.

Elle ne l'a pas oublié. La diversité de sa flore raconte les luttes de cette terre pour surgir de l'Océan : sur les bosses croissent des pins et des peupliers blancs qui trouvent ici encore imprégnés d'eau salée, des joncs, des sourdes, de ternes salicornes... N'est-ce pas de cette persistance dans le souvenir, de cette continuité dans la vie que naissent l'harmonie et la paix profonde de ces longs paysages?<sup>43</sup>

In recognizing that Bérénice belongs to this country, that she is harmonious with it, Philippe connects the deep recesses which he perceives in her with the historical, cultural, and racial

<sup>42</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 289.

<sup>43</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 292.

continuities that grant Bérénice a permanence. Because he feels himself to be lacking this sense of continuity, he is attracted to Bérénice and to the surrounding countryside. In fact, it is his perception of the fusion of this provincial girl and her region that offers him an escape from his sterile existence as an aimless esthete and that allows him to harmonize his political activism with his artistic ideals.

However, he perceives in Charles Martin another sense of harmony with the landscape. This harmony involves a homogenization of man's relationship with nature, a monoglossia of the story which man tells about his place in the world (a monoglossia which perhaps parallels the relationship of Genette to narratives). Philippe renounces such a position:

Foi naïve à la science! Il croit que la parfaite possession de la terre, c'est-à-dire l'harmonie de l'homme et de la nature, résultera de l'application à tout le continent des mêmes procédés de culture et de transport. Des routes, des récoltes, des digues, ne sont pas pour lui des moyens, mais de pleines satisfactions où il s'épanouit. Comme il sourit de ces "assises profondes, de cette puissance de fixité" que perçoivent quelques-uns dans l'ensemble d'un paysage, dans un peuple! Ce sont elles pourtant qui m'invitent à m'affermir, à creuser plus avant et à étudier dans mon moi ce qu'il contient d'immuable. Quoi qu'en pense Martin, pour entreprendre utilement la culture de notre âme ou celle du monde extérieur, rien ne peut nous dispenser de connaître le fonds où nous travaillons. Il faut pénétrer très avant, se mêler aux choses, par la science, soit! par l'amour surtout, pour saisir d'où naît l'harmonie qui fait la paix et la singulière intensité de cette contrée.<sup>44</sup>

A universal, or at least international, application of technological means to enhance the exploitation of the land is the kind of harmonization of the earth for which Charles longs, at least if one is to believe Philippe. Charles is the type of man who has no appreciation of the deeper foundations of a region nor of the traditions of a place. These less obvious features of the landscape inspire Philippe to explore his own depths. But this exploration is not necessarily in opposition to the ideas that Charles Martin represents. In fact, Philippe accepts the possibility that he may make use of Charles' knowledge or, for that matter, of anything that may help him grasp the unique sense of a place.

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<sup>44</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 293-294.

With this possibility that he may adopt any instrument whatsoever, Philippe accepts a discipline in which the country is his *maître*. In other words, Philippe looks to find the depths of his self from the common folk, as represented by Bérénice, who have remained in touch with their country of birth, and from the land itself. In comparison with Bérénice, he sees himself as a disconnected and therefore shallower individual:

...moi je suis impuissant à rien défendre contre la mort. Je suis un jardin où fleurissent des émotions sitôt déracinées. Bérénice et Aigues-Mortes ne sauront-ils m'indiquer la culture qui me guérirait de ma mobilité? Je suis perdu dans le vagabondage, ne sachant où retrouver l'unité de ma vie.<sup>45</sup>

In a sense similar to France's yearning for a pre-analytical state of existence, Philippe searches for a pre-technological, pre-industrial relationship with the land, a relationship which will provide roots for his fugitive self. However, this somewhat romantic regret for the loss of contact with nature does not make nostalgia, as Shenton suggest, the only creative force for Barrès.<sup>46</sup> This force comes from an exploration of the self, a deepening of it, in order to recover the contact, the racial trace, which exists outside of consciousness. At the same time, it is a force which both rational and technological means can enhance. Philippe, and Barrès through the hero of his novel, seek to find a harmony between these two aspects of themselves, their race, and their civilization.

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<sup>45</sup>Barrès, *Culte* 294.

<sup>46</sup>Shenton 136.

## CHAPTER V

### BERGOTTE AND THE INCOMPLETE PROUSTIAN *MOI CREATEUR*

Pierre Abraham, a critic whose personal feelings about Proust's sexuality seem to influence his reading of Proust's work, complains of the unfinished quality of Proust's novel:

...l'écrivain n'a pas eu le temps de donner à son oeuvre l'équilibre des masses qui, rayant les répétitions adventices, supprimant les taches de quelques erreurs matérielles, aboutirait à une architecture maîtrisée. Bref, le "fini" que réclame toute oeuvre d'art pour être parfaite.<sup>1</sup>

Abraham has trouble discerning the finished quality of Proust's work because he cannot grasp the entirety of a work made up of what appears to be separate volumes, but what is described by Abraham as counterfeit partitions of a vast symphonic totality. In order to come to terms with the whole work, he writes "un cahier du lecteur" which attempts to experience the unpartitioned work in the way that one must listen to an entire symphony. He offers his criticism as the notes of one reader among many readers, each with his/her own response to the *Recherche* with which he/she may compare and evaluate Abraham's reading.

Abraham defends this approach:

Il semble que, pour aborder l'oeuvre, il faille se trouver ou se mettre dans des conditions de temps et de lieu, les mêmes que nous impose la symphonie. L'amateur le plus intrépide ne choisira pas sans réfléchir d'entendre une messe de Bach ou une symphonie de Tchaïkowsky. Cette nécessité de concordance entre l'atmosphère auditive et l'atmosphère intérieure, les moyens modernes d'entendre la musique sans quitter ses pantoufles l'ont accusée, loin de la faire disparaître. Et l'heureux possesseur d'un poste à sept lampes ou d'un phonographe perfectionné apprend par là-même, comme jamais il ne l'aurait soupçonné, l'art de couper le contact sonore quand son oreille proteste. Si la musique ne s'écoute que moyennant certaines précautions d'ordre mental, le livre ne saurait-il exiger du lecteur des préparatifs et une tonalité intérieure?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Pierre Abraham, *Proust: Recherches sur la création intellectuelle* (Paris: Les Editeurs français réunis, 1971) 10

<sup>2</sup>Abraham 20.

Abraham proposes that, in order to read Proust, the reader must prepare to harmonize his own inner processes with the work, a method of reading Proust similar to the manner of reading that Proust describes in *Journées de lecture*. In effect, Abraham uses his notebook method in a way which emulates Proust's reading of Balzac, and which tries to discern the *moi créateur* that binds Proust's work. However, Abraham's attitudes towards Proust's sexuality inhibit the effort, and Abraham engages in the exercise in only a half-hearted manner. But in undertaking such a method of reading, not only does Abraham follow the narrator's instructions to use the work as a kind of optical device through which a reader should view him/herself, Abraham also emulates the narrator himself who, like both France's and Barrès' narrators, looks back on his life as if it were a kind of raw, unrevised text in which he attempts to identify the continuity that runs through it and which attests to his own artistic development. Like Pierre and Philippe, Marcel attempts to find a connection between the present and the past, or in other words, between the narration and the action in his narrative, although in Marcel's case this continuity is a kind of an incomplete retrospective construct, a consistency-building reading of the "livre intérieur de signes inconnus" which the narrator calls "un acte de création."<sup>3</sup>

A good example of this interaction between the present of the discourse and the narrative past (in this case, of a memory of a past instant of the narrator's life) is the passage where the narrator explains how his memories of Combray were awakened by the sensation that he experienced when he sipped a cup of tea, the famous passage which describes the first contact with the epiphany of the *madeleine*. Genette would label the passage a "récit singulatif" which the narrator relates in the past tense, as it happened "un jour d'hiver." However, in order to revivify the "plaisir délicieux" of the initial experience, the narrator moves into the present tense:

Je bois une seconde gorgée où je ne trouve rien de plus que dans la première, une troisième qui m'apporte un peu moins que la seconde. Il est

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<sup>3</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 3:879.

temps que je m'arrête, la vertu du breuvage semble diminuer<sup>4</sup>

On the one hand, the narrator adopts in this passage a kind of indirect free discourse in order to present, as strongly as possible, the power of the experience. He makes himself disappear in order to let the memory of Marcel speak for itself. On the other hand, his subsequent efforts to regain the memory of the sensation seem to be more than just mere attempts at a mimesis of a past mental state. Since it is inside himself that the narrator searches for the sensation of the *madeleine*, the act is one of which the narrator, the individual to whom the discursive-*je* (the *je-narrant*) refers, is as capable as Marcel, actor in the story. The reader cannot, therefore, really discern who is speaking at many points in this passage:

Arrivera-t-il jusqu'à la surface de ma claire conscience, ce souvenir, l'instant ancien que l'attraction d'un instant identique est venue de si loin solliciter, émouvoir, soulever tout au fond de moi? Je ne sais. Maintenant je ne sens plus rien, il est arrêté, redescendu peut-être; qui sait s'il remontera jamais de sa nuit? Dix fois il me faut recommencer, me pencher vers lui. Et chaque fois la lâcheté qui nous détourne de toute tâche difficile, de toute oeuvre importante, m'a conseillé de laisser cela, de boire mon thé en pensant simplement à mes ennuis d'aujourd'hui, à mes désirs de demain qui se laissent remâcher sans peine.<sup>5</sup>

Is the *je* here the *je-narrant* or the *je-narré*? *Maintenant*—is it the present of the narrative instance or of the action? The two "levels" seem to become confused to the extent that the act of memory and the act of narration are simultaneous, and they appear to be fused into a kind of complex hypostasis which exists at two different times (an example of Proust's celebrated atemporality). The passage is, to employ Genette's terminology, a remarkable example of a "metalepse," because it suggests the momentary disappearance of the temporal distance so often noted in Proust's novel: the objectivity of the narrator is transgressed to the point that the reader directly experiences the uncertainty of the *je* as it

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<sup>4</sup>Proust 1:45.

<sup>5</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 46.

reconstructs a memory of itself.

In a sense, this process of reconstruction is implicit in literary language. As opposed to conversational language which has its *I* clearly defined by its context, literary language must figure (or perhaps embody is a better word) its *I* as part of its language act. The *I* appears as a void, a detached signifier and consequently susceptible to attachment to an imagined self or to a reading self. This possibility makes literary language a special kind of *parole*, a special kind of discourse distinct from the kind which Benveniste describes. As Daniel Moutote notes, literary discourse does not have the same communicative function that Benveniste's model of discourse has:

...la communication littéraire s'adresse moins à un *tu* qu'à un autre *moi*, avide d'être, comme le moi littéraire, comme lui au-dessus du réel, concurrent de tout moi réel dans son exigence de plénitude, et qu'il faut aider à se réaliser en le prenant aux sources de son être, non pour le convaincre de se convertir, mais pour le persuader de s'accomplir; non pour l'entraîner dans une voie préfixée, mais pour l'aider à se réaliser dans le sens de ses possibles. Le *Tu* est toujours en position d'infériorité; il est l'accusé, *iste*, celui pour qui le procès de communication est un procès tout court, celui qu'on prend en faute, et qui est en faute n'étant pas au fait. Au contraire, dans la communication littéraire, le lecteur se pose en émule du moi créateur, l'alter ego génial dont il prend plus ou moins consciemment le masque en ouvrant son livre.<sup>6</sup>

According to Moutote, Benveniste's description of the language situation is not really applicable to a literary work. In the differed communication of the printed text, the *I*-reader adopts the *I* of the text rather than just passively accepting the assigned role of a *you*, or of what Gerald Prince labels the narratee. Since in opening the book, *I* participate in the articulation of the text, *I* take possession of its words and become its subject. My relationship to the story of the *Recherche* is not just one of a *you* in a communication act, in which the language of another *I* mediates my experience of a story, *I* also become this mediator. Experiencing the language act of the performing narrator as if it were an actor's performance on a stage, *I* also become this actor who attempts to realize a character, as *I*

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<sup>6</sup>Daniel Moutote, *Egotisme français moderne: Stendhal--Barres--Valéry--Gide* (Paris: Editions Sedes réunis, 1980) 49.



attempt to realize Pierre, Philippe, and Marcel.

As a disciple of Benveniste, Genette can only view literary language from the perspective of a "narratee": a *tu* who interprets the language of another *je*. His approach is, in fact, based on the acceptance of this distancing of himself, as a reader, from the language of the text, a point of view which proposes to study "la parole distante" and its "reconstruction intelligible."<sup>7</sup> This consciously chosen approach, textually descriptive as it may be, does not really offer any understanding of a *parole* which, itself, is the written reconstruction of memory and which therefore establishes an uneasy relationship between memory, its articulation, and its reconstruction by the reader.

This doubly reconstructed memory (reconstructed by the narrator and by the reader) reveals a deeper self or *moi créateur*, surviving among all the barbarian, social selves from the various stages of Marcel's life. This surviving, creative self is first made apparent in the account of the revelation near the end of the first section of *A la recherche du temps perdu*. At this point in the narrative, the narrator tells about his oldest memories of Combray, memories which he has only just recently rediscovered. He also explains the changes in his life that permit him to remember the episode from his childhood, when Marcel's authoritarian father sends Marcel's mother to spend the night with her son because the "petit a du chagrin" and because he has "un air désolé."<sup>8</sup> The father's compassionate act is so unexpected that Marcel begins to cry the moment that his mother is alone with him in his bedroom. Despite the years that have passed, Marcel can still hear these sobs while in the quiet of his night-time bedroom in a way that resembles Pierre's remembered episode of the wallpaper rose:

Il y a bien des années de cela. La muraille de l'escalier, où je vis monter le reflet de sa bougie n'existe plus depuis longtemps. En moi aussi bien des choses ont été détruites que je croyais devoir durer toujours et de nouvelles se

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<sup>7</sup>Genette, "Structuralisme" 161.

<sup>8</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 1:36.

sont édifiées donnant naissance à des peines et à des joies que je n'aurais pu prévoir alors, de même que les anciennes me sont devenues difficiles à comprendre. Il y a bien longtemps aussi que mon père a cessé de pouvoir dire à maman: "Va avec le petit." La possibilité de telles heures ne renaîtra jamais pour moi. Mais depuis peu de temps, je recommence à très bien percevoir si je prête l'oreille, les sanglots que j'eus la force de contenir devant mon père et qui n'éclatèrent que quand je me retrouvai seul avec maman. En réalité ils n'ont jamais cessé; et c'est seulement parce que la vie se tait maintenant davantage autour de moi que je les entends de nouveau, comme ces cloches de couvent que couvrent si bien les bruits de la ville pendant le jour qu'on croirait arrêtées mais qui se remettent à sonner dans le silence du soir.<sup>9</sup>

In this passage from "Combray," we can detect a *je* who articulates the act of memory, who puts it into words, and who speaks of the time that separates the moment of the act of narration from the present (a distinction of the present *je* from the past *je*'s). It is also clear that this *je* can interrupt, change the order of events, or repeat them in the way that the narrator repeats the father's command in this passage. The event is now temporally distant; it has occurred "il y a bien des années," and it appears more or less to the narrator as a completed action which he can no longer alter and which he cannot really explain except by saying that his father was a character who did not have any principles. We also see in this passage temporal expressions that do not have any sense except in relation to a present. These deictic expressions such as "il y a bien des années," "depuis longtemps," and "depuis peu de temps," along with the use of various verb tenses (e.g. "je vis," "je recommence," "La possibilité...ne renaîtra jamais pour moi") imply that the narrative voice exists in a temporal present, a temporal existence that is, in this case, simultaneous with the act of remembering. The solitary state of Marcel's life that permits him to hear "les sanglots" also has an implicit duration ("maintenant"), even if this duration is not explicitly specified in the text. It is rather the event that seems atemporal, as it exists as an event in time, as a remembered event, as a transcribed event, and finally as a reconstructed event in the reader's imagination. In addition, as the agent of all these acts (of the action, of the remembering, of the transcription, and of the reconstruction) is designated by an

<sup>9</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 1:37.

undiscriminated *je*, an identity or *moi créateur* transcends each level and links them all.

In discussing this passage as one which is typical of Proust's entire novel, Erich Auerbach says: "Through the temporal perspective we sense here an element of the symbolic omnitemporality of an event fixed in a remembering consciousness."<sup>10</sup> In other words, Auerbach describes the narrated memory in this passage from "Combray" as an atemporal entity because a remembering self or consciousness extracts it from its original temporal context and places it in another, that of a remembering consciousness. One might further add that the narration of the remembering act doubly abstracts the experience and detaches it from the time-bound, mortal remembering self. The memory, seen in this way, has a special value because, according to Auerbach, its existence outside of its original temporal context permits Marcel to have an unlimited perspective on himself as an individual implicated in the past action of his narrative. The temporal distance between the memory and the past reality provides a kind of objectifying perspective for the retrospective observation, such that the observer can search for a truth or a general principle which he could not see when he participated in the action.<sup>11</sup> Auerbach sees the narrator's constant intruding clarifications of his past life as the consequence of an act of memory that reviews the past in relation to principles that have been acquired later in life:

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<sup>10</sup>Auerbach, *Mimesis* 481.

<sup>11</sup>Gene Moore describes the narrator's method of observation and analysis as part of the narrator's "epistemological and social research" project, in which he makes an effort to fill the void of his remembering *je*, a self which exists in a state of alienation from its own past. This project is, in effect, a byproduct of the narrator's absence, his distance from the past events which he attempts to close. Moore describes this effort:

*A la recherche du temps perdu* is...generated entirely from the narrator's attempt to fill the void of his own epistemological absence by reconstructing a personal identity out of bits of memory; and the same absence, in social terms, makes possible the objectivity of the narrator's attempt to uncover and analyze the laws governing social behavior. The omnipresent—and omnivorously possessive—narrative *je* possesses neither a fixed personal identity nor an established social role; in the place of both, he stands for an epic process of epistemological and social research. (Gene M. Moore, *Proust and Musil: The Novel as Research Instrument* [New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1985] 22)

Freed from its various earlier involvements, consciousness views its own past layers and their content in perspective; it keeps confronting them with one another, emancipating them from the narrow meanings they seemed to have when they were bound to a particular present. There is to be noted in this a fusion of the modern concept of interior time with the neo-Platonic idea that the true prototype of a given subject is to be found in the soul of the artist; in this case, of an artist, who present in the subject itself, has detached himself from it as observer and thus comes face to face with his own past.<sup>12</sup>

For Auerbach, Proust's narrator is a kind of artistic character who exists in a time after the time in which the action of the narrative takes place (Genette would therefore call him extradiegetic). This character is nevertheless identifiable because he remembers his own life, an emphasis on memory that Hans Robert Jauss echoes in his reading of Proust's novel. Jauss does not accept Spitzer's division of the *je*'s of the *Recherche* into coexisting *erlebendes* and *erzählendes ich* because this distinction focuses only on isolated sentences and does not consider a more comprehensive view of the entire work. Because Spitzer's distinction is based on a syntactic focus, Jauss finds it to be too inflexible, unable to account for the distance implicit in the act of memory or for the interplay between the present and past *I*s.<sup>13</sup> Instead, Jauss proposes a division of the *je* in Proust's novel into an *erinnerndes* and an *erinnertes ich*, a division in which the present and the past *je*'s can actually reflect on each other and engage in a changing relationship that is similar to the relationship of present and past selves in an act of remembrance. In other words, the narrator, a remembering Marcel,

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<sup>12</sup>Auerbach 542.

<sup>13</sup>Wäre Spitzer in seine Analysen von der Satzfunktion der Sprache bis zur kompositorischen Ganzheit des Werkes aufgestiegen, so hätte er darauf stoßen müssen, daß das Doppelspiel des ‚reflektierenden und erlebenden Ich‘, welches er aus der Struktur der Proustchen Periode ablas, letztendlich in dem umfassenderen, weil für die ganze Komposition konstituiven Verhältnis des erinnernden und erinnerten Ich gründet. Dann hätte sich ihm auch die aus der ‚Sonderung der Zeit des Darstellens von der des Dargestellten‘ resultierende Distanz der Erinnerung enthüllt und wäre nicht mehr als ‚seelische Tiefendimension‘ im Vagen und Irrationalen geblieben. Das erzählende Ich stellt sich bereits in den ersten Sätzen der Erzählung als ein Ich dar, das sich an sein vergangenes Ich zu erinnern sucht; seine Reflexion ist von Anbeginn auf seine Vergangenheit gerichtet, erscheint also nicht als ein zeitloser Kommentar zu den Erfahrungen eines Andern, und die Höhe, von der aus es auf diese Erfahrungen blickt, bleibt der Erzählung nicht exterior, sondern kann als Distanz der Erinnerung selbst in ihr anschaulich werden. (Jauss 55)

searches for his own past as it exists in memory. This act of memory research allows him to disengage himself from the action in order to try to discover or to create (as memory may be unreliable) the truth that rules over the events of his past life, the order in his life, its aesthetic organization. The discovery or imposition of this order represents an act of aestheticization which the remembering self conducts on its past life to the point that the act of memory is fused with the narrative act in a way that reflects the *Recherche's* ambiguous generic status (autobiography or novel?) and which also reflects the ambiguous nature of the Proustian *moi créateur*.

Sigbrit Swahn and Louis Martin-Chauffier interpret this apparent fusion of memory and narrative in two different ways. Swahn provides a clarification of the ambiguous role of the remembering self when he discusses the complex and often conflicting critical views of the Proustian *je-polymorphe*. In his comprehensive survey of the criticism which addresses the problems of the Proustian *je* and the *Recherche's* generic status, Swahn concludes that both the *je* and the work are hybrids, as "la *Recherche* nous paraît comme un croisement entre l'autobiographie poétique et le roman naturaliste du 'cas'" and "[l]e je de la *Recherche* apparaît comme un acteur chargé de plusieurs rôles, celui du poète sensible, du romancier impassible, de l'autobiographe menteur."<sup>14</sup> Both the work and the narrator-hero are composite structures that play on the fictional-factual distinction which is normally made in different ways in poems, novels, and autobiographies. the *Recherche's* ambiguity undermines this distinction, no matter how one makes it. We, as readers, are left to feel the authenticity of Proust's work only in relation to the books that exist within ourselves.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Sigbrit Swahn, *Proust dans la recherche littéraire: Problèmes, méthodes, approches nouvelles* Etudes romanes de Lund 27 (CWK Gleerup, 1979) 76.

<sup>15</sup>Proust writes: "...ce serait même inexact que de dire en pensant à ceux qui le liraient, à mes lecteurs. Car ils ne seraient pas, selon moi, mes lecteurs, mais les propres lecteurs d'eux-mêmes, mon livre n'étant qu'une sorte de ces verres grossissants comme ceux que tendait à un acheteur l'opticien de Combray; mon livre, grâce auquel je leur fournirais le moyen de lire en eux-mêmes. De sorte que je ne leur demanderais pas de me louer ou de me dénigrer, mais seulement de me dire si c'est bien cela, si les mots qu'ils lisent en eux-mêmes sont bien ceux que j'ai écrits..." (Proust, *Recherche* 3:1033).

Louis Martin-Chauffier also thinks that Proust's work has this transparent quality, and he feels the work to be remarkable because of the relative insignificance of the two characters, the autobiographical man and the novel's hero, whom one normally emphasizes in the study of a novel or of an autobiography. In Proust's case, Chauffier says:

The greatness of the work depends entirely on the intermediaries: Marcel, the narrator, who tries to recapture the time which is lost and finally succeeds in doing so, and Proust, the author, who has already recaptured it long before Marcel, the narrator, emboldened by his discovery, decided to take up his pen to relate its low, minute, long and invisible progress.<sup>16</sup>

Viewing the work as a kind of dialogue between the enlightened author and the maturing narrator, Chauffier emphasizes the importance of this interaction and downplays the issue of the work's generic status. This way of reading the novel focuses on the aesthetic acts of the enlightened author and of the somewhat uncertain narrator, a stereoscopic, aesthetic reconstruction of the past which corresponds with what B.G. Rogers calls "the double vision" of Proust's narrator, placed at two different moments in time.<sup>17</sup> To do away with Chauffier's needless author/narrator distinction, the *je* speaks of past events in which he was implicated, but from which he maintains an objectifying distance as an observer of these events. This distance allows him to meditate on past events, to formulate general laws about them, and to consider them as if they were events in a fictional work. However, this distance often vanishes and, as exemplified by the long passages of recorded salon conversation, the events occur as if we were experiencing them. In other words, the events of Proust's novel are situated in two different moments of time, in two different temporal contexts, the context of Marcel's past formation as a writer and of the present narration of this past, a post-revelation experience of the past that the reader, at least in part, reconstructs.

This reconstruction is especially evident when the reader's memory contains Proust's novel. Memory, a telescopic element through which one sees either the events of past life

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<sup>16</sup>Chauffier 1014.

<sup>17</sup>Rogers 118.

or, if these events involve the activity of reading Proust, a passage of the *Recherche* that has been read, preserves an aspect of the event always in the present, or in a state that one might call atemporal (witness the use of present tense in written criticism). In Iser's terms, this atemporal construct represents the gestalt product of a consistency-building process. It can also be connected to Bakhtin's notion of monoglossia, as it implies that the reader tries to read the text through a frame of reference which makes it seem like a unified language structure, a structure that provides a good model for a remembering self's reconstruction of memory. In a sense, as a reader retrospectively reconstructs a novel that he/she has read, Marcel builds a continuity into the diverse memories of his life, a continuity that Siegfried Kracauer also describes:

At the end of the novel, Marcel, who then becomes one with Proust, discovers that all his unconnected previous selves were actually phases or stations of a way along which he had moved without ever knowing it. Only now, after the fact, he recognizes that his way through time had a destination; that it served the single purpose of preparing him for his vocation as an artist. And only now Proust, the artist, is in a position not only to identify the discontinuous worlds of his past as a continuity in time but also vicariously to redeem his past from the curse of time by incorporating its essence into a work of art whose timelessness renders them all the more invulnerable. He sets out to write the novel he has written.<sup>18</sup>

As a reader of Proust, Kracauer builds his consistency between the narrative and its transcribed memory in terms of the retrospective unity implicit in the remembered life which Proust uses to structure his work. However, another parallel exists between memory and narrative discourse, one which challenges the formation of memory gestalts. The perception of specific parts of a text or of memory, the sequential re-experiencing of memory or of text from start to finish, requires time. As Marcel-insomniac needs a period of silence to experience a specific memory, to hear the sobs of the child in his bedroom at Combray, a reader also needs time to read the narrative of this memory and to move through all the wandering viewpoints of the text. There is, in effect, a temporal correspondence between the

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<sup>18</sup>Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Thing Before the Last* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969) 162-163.

two acts of reading and remembering which attest to the indeterminate number of nights necessary to accomplish these two activities. The act of reminiscence implicit in a piece of writing that is, at least in part, a product of memory and that produces memories (at least in the reader as he struggles to recall all the parts of the novel) implicates a temporal game where the remembered event transcribed into a text becomes another event that stimulates memories in the reader.<sup>19</sup>

Marcel's experience of Bergotte and his work provides an example of this kind of artistic experience *mise en abyme* in Proust's novel. In fact, one might say that a parallel exists between our reading of Proust's novel, Marcel's experience of his own memory, and his reading of the literary works of Bergotte. In addition, this writer, whom Marcel at first so much admires, has a peculiar relationship with Marcel. José Cabanis suggests that "Bergotte est bien plus qu'un personnage de roman : c'est l'écrivain masqué. C'est plus modestement chacun de nous"<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Bowen refers to Bergotte as "a stand-in, scape goat, whipping boy for his creator," and as "a figure to which Proust shifts his 'literary guilt.'"<sup>21</sup> Chantal also remarks that the narrator's defense of Bergotte against accusations of

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<sup>19</sup>This conception of the reading act complies with Proust's own. In "Journées de lecture," Proust speaks of an author's book as the starting point for the reader's reflection, a notion on which Proust elaborates:

Et c'est là, en effet, un des grands et merveilleux caractères des beaux livres (et qui nous fera comprendre le rôle à la fois essentiel et limité que la lecture peut jouer dans notre vie spirituelle) que pour l'auteur ils pourraient s'appeler "Conclusions" et pour le lecteur "Incitations". Nous sentons très bien que notre sagesse commence où celle de l'auteur finit, et nous voudrions qu'il nous donnât des réponses, quand tout ce qu'il peut faire est de nous donner des désirs. Et ces désirs, il ne peut les éveiller en nous qu'en nous faisant contempler la beauté suprême à laquelle le dernier effort de son art lui a permis d'atteindre. (Proust, "Journées de lecture" 176.)

<sup>20</sup>José Cabanis, "Bergotte ou Proust et l'écrivain," *Proust Collection Génies et Réalités* (Paris: Hachette, 1965) 194.

<sup>21</sup>Elizabeth Bowen, "Bergotte," *Marcel Proust 1871-1922*, ed. Peter Quennell (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1971) 69.



preciosity anticipates and defends in advance similar accusations against Proust.<sup>22</sup>

Marcel's initial response to Bergotte's work reinforces the sense that, in reading Bergotte, Marcel models the reading act and that Bergotte represents a kind of double for the narrator. When Bloch introduces the narrator to Bergotte's works in one of his visits to the family residence at Combray, Marcel becomes quickly enamoured of these works:

...les premiers jours, comme un air de musique dont on raffolera, mais qu'on ne distingue pas encore, ce que je devais tant aimer dans son style ne m'apparut pas. Je ne pouvais pas quitter le roman que je lisais de lui, mais me croyais seulement intéressé par le sujet, comme dans ces premiers moments de l'amour où on va tous les jours retrouver une femme à quelque réunion, à quelque divertissement par les agréments desquels on se croit attiré. Puis je remarquai les expressions rares, presque archaïques qu'il aimait employer à certains moments où un flot caché d'harmonie, un prélude intérieur, soulevait son style; et c'était aussi à ces moments-là qu'il se mettait à parler du "vain songe de la vie", du "tourment stérile et délicieux de comprendre et d'aimer", des "émouvantes effigies qui anoblissent à jamais la façade vénérable et charmante des cathédrales", qu'il exprimait toute une philosophie nouvelle pour moi par de merveilleuses images dont on aurait dit que c'était elles qui avaient éveillé ce chant de harpes qui s'élevait alors et à l'accompagnement duquel elles donnaient quelque chose de sublime.<sup>23</sup>

Marcel does not at first know what quality of Bergotte's writing attracts him, but he believes that the novel's subject matter interests him so much that he cannot put the book down. However, Marcel begins to notice certain Bergottian features which he finds appealing. He admires Bergotte's idealist philosophy, the sense of harmony in his books, his use of rare and archaic expressions, the sweetness of his style that manifests itself in his language, and the sense of what Marcel perceives to be a sublime vision. In effect, Marcel recognizes in Bergotte the writer that he would be, and this identification leads the young aspiring *littéraire* to idolize the older writer. Marcel wants to have "une opinion de lui...sur toutes choses."<sup>24</sup> He also comes to adopt the older writer as a kind of literary father figure whom

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<sup>22</sup>Chantal 1:192.

<sup>23</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 1:93-94.

<sup>24</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 1:95.

the narrator imagines, "[d]'après ses livres...comme un vieillard faible et déçu qui avait perdu des enfants et ne s'était jamais consolé."<sup>25</sup> Levaillant also suggests that Bergotte permits the narrator access to the deeper reality of literature; he gives birth to this young aspiring writer and brings him into the realm of the truth in art that transcends the banal universe of daily life.<sup>26</sup>

Marcel is, however, disappointed when he meets Bergotte at the Swann's, and discovers him to be "un homme jeune, rude, petit, râblé et myope, à nez rouge en forme de coquille de colimaçon et à barbiche noire."<sup>27</sup> The unexpected physical appearance of the narrator's favorite writer is not only incongruent with the narrator's imagined Bergotte, but this meeting with the real Bergotte also has a devastating effect on Marcel's reading of Bergotte's work, an effect which Marcel explains:

J'étais mortellement triste, car ce qui venait d'être réduit en poudre, ce n'était pas seulement le langoureux vieillard, dont il ne restait rien, c'était aussi la beauté d'une oeuvre immense que j'avais pu loger dans l'organisme défaillant et sacré que j'avais, comme un temple, construit expressément pour elle, mais à laquelle aucune place n'était réservée dans le corps trapu, rempli de vaisseaux, d'os, de ganglions, du petit homme à nez camus et à barbiche noire qui était devant moi.<sup>28</sup>

Marcel imagines Bergotte as a kind of cathedral in which the spirit of his work resonates. The strength of the artistic spirit imagined on the basis of the writer's work has a kind of inverse correlation with the imagined author's worldly presence. An ascetic in Marcel's mind, Bergotte exists in Marcel's imagination as a kind of self-denying sage who directs his reflection away from the material concerns of daily life. Of course, Marcel's encounter with Bergotte at the Swann dinner party totally destroys this romanticized image of the writer-aesthete, and, despite Proust's belief in the separation of the social man from his

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<sup>25</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 1:97.

<sup>26</sup>Levaillant 33.

<sup>27</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 1:547.

<sup>28</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 1:547.

artistic self, it also disenchant the work. Marcel seems somewhat unable to reconcile the physical man to his work, a failure which inhibits his admiration for Bergotte's work and, consequently, contravenes the principle of *Contre Sainte-Beuve* which dissociates the external man from his *moi créateur*.<sup>29</sup>

This failure to reconcile the man and his work seems, at first, to be an insurmountable obstacle that prevents Marcel from taking advantage of the occasion to converse with the writer that he has long admired. In fact, Marcel does not really recognize the writer in the man that he meets at Swann's party because he, at first, cannot find any similarity between this Bergotte and the Bergotte that he finds in the writer's works. However, after a prolonged effort, the young admirer of Bergotte's novels begins to see a few correspondances between the writer's conversational language and his written work:

Dans certains passages de la conversation où Bergotte avait l'habitude de se mettre à parler d'une façon qui ne paraissait pas affectée et déplaisante qu'à M. de Norpois, j'ai été long à découvrir une exacte correspondance avec les parties de ses livres où sa forme devenait si poétique et musicale. Alors il voyait dans ce qu'il disait une beauté plastique indépendante de la signification des phrases et, comme la parole humaine est en rapport avec l'âme, mais sans l'exprimer comme fait le style, Bergotte avait l'air de parler presque à contresens, psalmodiant certains mots et, s'il poursuivait au-dessous d'eux une seule image, les filant sans intervalle comme un même son, avec une fatigante monotonie. De sorte qu'un débit prétentieux, emphatique et monotone était le signe de la qualité esthétique de ses propos et l'effet, dans sa conversation, de ce même pouvoir qui produisait dans ses livres la suite des images et l'harmonie.<sup>30</sup>

As Marcel searches beyond Bergotte's affectation and his displeasing (barbaric) manner of

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<sup>29</sup>Elizabeth Bowen describes the narrator's meeting with Bergotte as the beginning and climax of a rather uneventful relationship (Elizabeth Bowen, "Bergotte," *Marcel Proust 1871-1922*, ed. Peter Quennell (London: Wiedefeld and Nicolson, 1971] 60). Marcel's image of Bergotte as an old and feeble man who entombs great works of art is shattered by the encounter with the rather banal individual who attends the Swann's dinner. Bowen attempts to show how this initial meeting is also the beginning of Marcel's dissatisfaction with Bergotte's work, but in the end, Bowen admits that any judgement of Bergotte's work is "left open" in the novel, and she mistakes Marcel's indifference to Bergotte's *moi social* with an indifference for his *moi créateur* (68).

<sup>30</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 1:550.

speaking, he finds a language which seems to unmask the writer. He notices a stylistic quality to the writer's phrasing, an artistry independent of what is being said and perhaps, when this style is completely inappropriate, one which lapses into affectation. However, this language also appears to counteract its communicative function (to fall into linguistic terminology) and to focus attention on its own articulation, on how this expression relates (to) the speaker's soul, on the monotonous pronunciation which leads its listener to hear a different music and to see another image *au-dessous de* this language.

In other words, we experience in this passage Marcel's effort to build consistency between Bergotte and his work which requires an ability to perceive a quality in Bergotte's conversational language that is not readily apparent in the texture of the language itself. Marcel perceives a deeper resonance that he more readily detects in Bergotte's writing, but that Marcel can also detect, or perhaps invent, as a "débit prétentieux, emphatique et monotone" in certain parts of Bergotte's conversation. The effort to connect the physical Bergotte with an imagined, literary one promotes the perception of an artistic quality even in Bergotte's small talk. In a discussion of this effort and of Marcel's idolization of the older writer, Cabanis perceives that the youthful Marcel learns to overlook the apparent flaws of the visible Bergotte, and consequently he acquires the critical position that Proust first expresses in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*:

Le vrai Bergotte est dans ses livres. Il parle d'une façon affectée et lassante, parce qu'il ne cesse de songer à eux, et au pouvoir évocateur et magique des mots dont il fait, dans sa conversation, un premier essai. Les propos de Bergotte ne sont pas la suite, ou l'écho, ou la traduction imparfaite de ses livres : ils les précèdent. Ce sont des exercices de style.<sup>31</sup>

Bergotte's spoken words are, for Cabanis, stylistic exercises which provide material for his books. Elements of the writer's life, they mediate between that life and its artistic reconstruction and represent, in a certain sense, an inferior form of this art, a form in which the aesthetic transformation is less complete.

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<sup>31</sup>Cabanis 192.

It is this aestheticization of life which creates its value, a fact that the narrator recognizes when he states that "le génie, même le grand talent, vient moins d'éléments intellectuels et d'affinement social supérieurs à ceux d'autrui, que de la faculté de les transformer, de les transposer."<sup>32</sup> The artistic transposition ennobles its material, makes it into a creative work that reflects life not through the mimesis of realistic description, but through the mirror of the writer's self, of a self transformed into a mirror that shows us both the image of life and of the creative self-mirror imaging this life. As Marcel puts it, writers do not have to be especially cultured or sensitive individuals; they must, however, possess this reflective power.<sup>33</sup> It is of little importance that Bergotte insults Swann when, sharing a cab with Marcel on the way home from the dinner party, he tells Marcel about the compromising nature of Swann's marriage. This fact does not reflect on Bergotte's work because art has the power of redemption to transform moral ugliness into an aesthetic object. As Chantal notes, Proust refutes the notion that a work of art needs a "beau sujet."<sup>34</sup> It is the quality of the mirror, the power of the transformation where Proust places the emphasis, and which renders the actions and the attitudes of the social man irrelevant to the experience of his work and to the encounter with his *moi créateur*.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 1:554.

<sup>33</sup>"...ceux qui produisent des oeuvres géniales ne sont pas ceux qui vivent dans le milieu le plus délicat, qui ont la conversation la plus brillante, la culture la plus étendue, mais ceux qui ont eu le pouvoir, cessant brusquement de vivre pour eux-mêmes, de rendre leur personnalité pareille à un miroir, de telle sorte que leur vie, si médiocre d'ailleurs qu'elle pouvait être mondainement et même, dans un certain sens, intellectuellement parlant, s'y reflète, le génie consistant dans le pouvoir réfléchissant et non dans la qualité du spectacle reflété." (Proust, *Recherche* 1:554)

<sup>34</sup>Chantal 1:223.

<sup>35</sup>Walter Benjamin makes a similar point, when he describes how Proust transforms his sickness into his art: "This asthma became part of his art—if indeed his art did not create it. Proust's syntax rhythmically and step by step reproduces his fear of suffocating. And his ironic, philosophical, didactic reflections are the deep breath with which he shakes off the weight of memories" (Walter Benjamin, "The Image of Proust," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn [New York: Schocken Books, 1969] 214).

The lack of contact between Bergotte and Marcel after this dinner party indicates Marcel's reaction against the social Bergotte, a negative response which does not affect Marcel's enthusiasm for Bergotte's work. However, later in the novel, when Bergotte pays regular visits to Marcel's dying grandmother and when he, consequently, also regularly sees Marcel, Marcel is no longer taken with Bergotte's work. But, even at this point in the novel, in explaining the reduced esteem that he holds for Bergotte's work, Marcel does not mention Bergotte's lack of social graces; the discovery of the works of an anonymous, new writer has eclipsed Marcel's admiration for Bergotte, whose work has become too familiar. Marcel writes:

Dans les livres de Bergotte, que je relisais souvent, ses phrases étaient aussi claires devant mes yeux que mes propres idées, les meubles dans ma chambre et les voitures dans la rue. Toutes choses s'y voyaient aisément, sinon telles qu'on les avait toujours vues, du moins telles qu'on avait l'habitude de les voir maintenant. Or un nouvel écrivain avait commencé à publier des oeuvres où les rapports entre les choses étaient si différents de ceux qui les liaient pour moi que je ne comprenais presque rien de ce qu'il écrivait.<sup>36</sup>

Marcel's reading of Bergotte no longer offers him this transformation of life; Bergotte's familiarity makes his work seem similar to life, perhaps identical with it, so that Marcel can no longer find the presence of the creative self in it. His reading of a Bergotte novel does not require him to take notice of the transformations which give the work its artistic quality (an indication that the *moi créateur* is not just an inherent feature of the text but also something that Marcel helps to create when he reads). However, Marcel does find this creative presence in the work of the obscure writer who replaces Bergotte in Marcel's admiration. In this new work, Marcel finds a novelty, a disorienting relationship among objects that Marcel can nearly not understand.

Is this writer a model for a Proust who separates himself from his master, Bergotte, a writer who typifies the fin-de-siècle French novelist and who may have been modeled on France and Barrès? Does the *Recherche* in its characteristically self-reflexive manner draw attention to the presence of its own *moi créateur*? One is tempted to think of this

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<sup>36</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 2:326.

anonymous writer in both these ways and to consider him as a later double for the narrator, one which replaces Bergotte. The case for this possibility becomes especially strong when Marcel lists the admirable qualities of this new writer's work, and they seem extremely Proustian:

Celui qui avait remplacé pour moi Bergotte me laissait non par l'incohérence mais par la nouveauté, parfaitement cohérente, de rapports que je n'avais pas l'habitude de suivre. Le point, toujours le même, où je me sentais retomber, indiquait l'identité de chaque tour de force à faire. Du reste, quand une fois sur mille je pouvais suivre l'écrivain jusqu'au bout de sa phrase, ce que je voyais était toujours d'une drôlerie, d'une vérité, d'un charme, pareils à ceux que j'avais trouvés jadis dans la lecture de Bergotte, mais plus délicieux. Je songeais qu'il n'y avait pas tant d'années qu'un même renouvellement du monde, pareil à celui que j'attendais de son successeur, c'était Bergotte qui me l'avait apporté.<sup>37</sup>

In this new Proustian writer, Marcel finds a novel coherence based on the forging of inhabital relationships which not only mark the presence of a transforming creative self in the work, but which transform Marcel's perceptions of his world. Among these transformations, Marcel perceives an identity which reinforces his sense of the *moi créateur* of this writer, a *moi créateur* which in this case remains disembodied. In addition, once Marcel is able to penetrate the writer's syntax, a struggle shared by many a reader of Proust, he sees both a truth and a charm "plus délicieux" than the similar qualities that he found in Bergotte's work.

Both the truthful, charming depths of this new found writer and the difficulty of his syntax prefigure the task of "déchiffrement" that Marcel will undertake when he tries to read his own *livre intérieur*, a book of which Marcel becomes aware as a result of the revelations that are granted him in *Le Temps retrouvé*. If we now examine the passage where he discovers this "paradis" that exists inside himself, a similarity between Marcel's experience of memory and these above features of this new, obscure writer's work becomes apparent. En route to a "matinée Guermantes," Marcel, suddenly set off-balance by a passing

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<sup>37</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 2:328.

car, experiences a sensation that is poorly understood and poorly explained by the narrator in the passage that transcribes the event in a singulative narrative of the past:

En roulant les tristes pensées que je disais il y a un instant, j'étais entré dans la cour de l'hôtel de Guermantes, et dans ma distraction je n'avais pas vu une voiture qui s'avavançait; au cri du wattman je n'eus que le temps de me ranger vivement de côté, et je reculai assez pour buter malgré moi contre les pavés assez mal équarris derrière lesquels était une remise. Mais au moment où, me remettant d'aplomb, je posai mon pied sur un pavé qui était un peu moins élevé que le précédent, tout mon découragement s'évanouit devant la même félicité qu'à diverses époques de ma vie m'avaient donnée la vue d'arbres que j'avais cru reconnaître dans une promenade en voiture autour de Balbec, la vue des clochers de Martinville, la saveur d'une madeleine trempée dans une infusion, tant d'autres sensations dont j'ai parlé et que les dernières oeuvres de Vinteuil m'avaient paru synthetiser.<sup>38</sup>

There is no confusion of the *je*'s signification in this passage because the past-tense verbs clearly indicate that the event happens to the remembered *je* and not to the remembering Marcel. However, one again feels the intrusion of the remembering *je*, a disembodied *je* whose presence makes us aware that this time Marcel-hero has the revelation experience, and that this experience allows him to penetrate all his memories right to their end, to feel the depths of these memories "jusqu'au bout de leurs phrases," and to discover a truth or a charm in them.

Searching within himself, in a similar interior universe to the one inside of the *erinnerndes ich* of the earlier revelation, Marcel finds the ringing garden bell, the sound of his parent's footsteps, the baptistry in Saint Mark's church in Venice, all the elements of this "paradis" which still exists inside of the self. These elements may often remain outside of consciousness as undetected memories like that of the bell which the infant Marcel heard, but the adult can still remember them more or less involuntarily as a result of this unexpected experience. These memories make Marcel aware of an entire aesthetic which he elaborates when he retreats into the Guermantes' library. In a certain sense, he rediscovers all the literature and knowledge of his life which already exists in himself to the extent that

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<sup>38</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 866.



he knows precisely where to search for the sound of this bell:

Pour tâcher de l'entendre de plus près, c'est en moi-même que j'étais obligé de redescendre. C'est donc que ce tintement y était toujours, et aussi, entre lui et l'instant présent, tout ce passé indéfiniment déroulé que je ne savais que je portais.<sup>39</sup>

At this point in the narrative, the voices of the narrator and of the hero seem to fuse, and an identity forges itself on the level of aesthetic ideas. Marcel discovers during his period of refuge in the library a literary ideology which agrees with the position that the narrator expresses earlier in the novel. It is what Wayne Booth would call a position in accordance with the viewpoint of the implied author because we can judge it to be one of the essential points which the novel asserts. Marcel acquires this knowledge and finishes his literary apprenticeship while in the library, and he can therefore begin to transcribe his novel or, in other words, begin to function as a narrator (*metteur en mots*) of his own story, a function that implies the transcription and aestheticization of his memories.

Proust maintains, all the same, a temporal distinction between the narrator and the hero in the novel. In effect, an awareness of the time existing between the actual present of the "tintement" and "l'instant présent" implies that a "passé indéfiniment déroulé" also exists between the presents of the narrator and of Marcel (after all Marcel is only a name which signifies another element in the narrator's memory). Also, this temporal distance remains visible because the comparisons made between this event and others suggest the presence of intellectual operations that one does not usually make in the moment of action, but rather makes them after a period of reflection. Furthermore, the expression "d'autres sensations dont j'ai parlé" does not refer to Marcel's past life but to the past narration of the narrator. We can always see the presence of two separate chronologies, although at this point near the end of the novel, the narrator and the actor share a large amount of common past. The narrator's past also contains the actor's future, a period of time which includes nearly all the

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<sup>39</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 3:1046.

time of the narration, a time which, according to Genette, is imperceptible to the reader, or rather, which appears to be instantaneous.<sup>40</sup> If we accept Genette's view, we, as readers of the *Recherche*, can have no sense of the temporal distance between the narrator and "tout ce passé déroulé" which exists in the memory of the actor and which is marked by the use of the past tense.

In fact, we experience this time by way of the analogy with our reading time. The temporal reference marks in the above passage correspond to moments in our past reading experience. We have our memory of our reading to guide us, so that when Marcel makes references to his past, as he tries to regain and to clarify the sensation that he has just finished having, we think of them in terms of our past:

Chaque fois que je refaisais rien que matériellement ce même pas, il me restait inutile; mais si je réussissais, oubliant la matinée Guermantes, à ce que j'avais senti en posant ainsi mes pieds, de nouveau la vision éblouissante et indistincte me frôlait comme si elle m'avait dit: "Saisis-moi au passage si tu en as la force, et tache à resoudre l'énigme de bonheur que je te propose." Et presque tout de suite, je la reconnus, c'était Venise, dont mes efforts pour la décrire et les prétendus instantanés pris par ma mémoire ne m'avaient jamais rien dit, et que la sensation que j'avais ressentie jadis sur deux dalles inégales du baptistère de Saint-Marc m'avait rendue avec toutes les autres sensations jointes ce jour-là à cette sensation-là et qui étaient restées dans l'attente, à leur rang, d'où un brusque hasard les avaient impérieusement fait sortir, dans la série des jours oubliés,<sup>41</sup>

In contrast with the episode of the *madeleine*, the repetition of the act and the discovered memory does not seem to take part in the present experience of the narrator nor of an *errinnendes ich*. The trip to Venice is a moment from Marcel's past, already lived by Marcel-actor and already remembered and narrated by the narrator. We do not need to await a narrative that will tell us about Marcel's remembered experiences of Combray in order to understand the reference made to Venice because a correspondence exists between the remembered life experience and the remembered narrative. We remember the moment

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<sup>40</sup>Genette, "Discours" 234.

<sup>41</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 867.

from the past narrative in the same way that Marcel remembers his past life.

There is, consequently, an effective difference between the two narrative passages which recount Marcel's revelations. The taste of the *madeleine* has no lasting effect on Marcel in the very moment of the experience, but as component in the narrative, this passage seems to prefigure the narrative about Combray. The second revelation affects Marcel more than the narrator, and inspires him to begin to compose a narrative, to become the narrator of a history with which we, the readers of the *Recherche* are, at this point in the novel, also familiar. In a sense, like Marcel's experience of the new, obscure writer, we have come to the end of Proust's sentences and found in their depth an unrefined novel which exists in Marcel and which Marcel intends to transcribe at the end of the *Recherche*. Marcel's novel remains unwritten, and one could argue that Proust's work is only a draft for this other work that Proust leaves to his readers the task of completing. Proust gives us rather an indication of Marcel's literary intention as a guideline for our reading-creating at the end of

*Le Temps retrouvé:*

Si c'était cette notion du temps évaporé, des années passées non séparées de nous, que j'avais maintenant l'intention de mettre si fort en relief, c'est qu'à ce moment même dans l'hôtel du prince de Guermantes, ce bruit des pas de mes parents reconduisant M. Swann, ce tintement rebondissant, ferrugineux, intarissable, criard et frais de la petite sonnette qui m'annonçait qu'enfin M. Swann était parti et que maman allait monter, je les entendis encore, je les entendis eux-mêmes, eux situés pourtant si loin dans le passé.<sup>42</sup>

Marcel intends to devote himself to the composition of a literary work that foregrounds the actual experiences of a continually remembered past, a work that establishes its intensity through a detailed exploration of this remembered past. Marcel becomes, in this way, aware of the role of memory and of a self formed by a personal history as the mediator of the remembered experience, as the originator of it, and as the creator of an extra-temporal universe within himself. This universe represents a kind of first draft of the novel, and it becomes, in revised form a kind of unaccomplished literary work that begins to build a

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<sup>42</sup>Proust, *Recherche* 3:1046.

consistency within the remembered past but that finally leaves this consistency for the reader to complete.

## CHAPTER VI

### POSTFACE

In Proust's posthumously published critical work, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (the work that this thesis is, in effect, a pastiche of) Proust attacks Sainte-Beuve's critical practice, a methodology which had become generally accepted and perhaps even institutionalized in fin-de-siècle Paris. According to Proust, Sainte-Beuve's method refused to make any distinction between the artist and the man/woman who appeared at parties, gave lectures, engaged in politics, or wandered around the streets of Paris. For Sainte-Beuve, the artist was somehow an outgrowth of this social being, and therefore, if you knew the social being, you had a special insight into the artist and into the work. This method of course privileged those critics who actually knew a particular artist, giving them a kind of first-hand knowledge and therefore a special authority over his work. Proust was able to discredit this method by showing that Sainte-Beuve's judgements of the literary merits of Stendhal, for example, were not reliable (Sainte-Beuve had disparaged Stendhal's work because he did not like the personality of the man that he had met at social events). This critical approach bases itself on a belief in a cultural norm of the artist, to which any "real" artist would conform, or from which she/he may deviate but only in acceptable ways (a norm which Stendhal, in Sainte-Beuve's eyes, obviously did not respect).

Although attempting to be non-judgemental, Genette's discourse analysis, a textually restrictive approach, has as its basis a similar cultural norm, and it similarly masks the artist by attempting to discuss his work in relationship to the norms of narrative discourse, an elaborate set of named variations of a temporally linear narrative for which a simple predication is the ultimate model. In this view, the artist becomes synonymous with the quality of deviance from these norms, a view which simultaneously reinforces a conservative view of narrative and tolerates a measure of deviation, variation that falls within the acceptable limits of narrative standard deviation implicit in Genette's terminology. In effect,

Genette merely replaces the norm of the artist, or of the aesthete, with another, the cultural norm of narrative that he names "histoire" and asserts to be the deep structure of any narratively based text. And although Genette does not pretend to evaluate narrative, excessively deviant narrative can be named out of existence, just as Sainte-Beuve can name Stendhal as a non-artist. For example, in "Frontières du récit," Genette attempts to define narrative and to distinguish it from other forms of discourse: description, discourse (e.g. language which directly addresses the reader), and actual reproduction or citation of someone else's language. Consequently, any work can contain multiple discursive genres, a point which Genette apparently reaffirms when, at the beginning of "Discours du récit," he states that there is much more in the *Recherche* than the narrative examined by his analysis. However, this analysis does in fact attempt to assign a narrative function to all of Proust's novel, a position which Gerald Prince will reiterate when he ascribes a measure of narrativity to all language.

Consequently, although I find a usefulness in some of Genette's terminology (his discussion of the novel's spatio-temporal complex, his emphasis on narrative voice and perspective), I also find that his method tends to reduce the text to what Stephen Pepper calls its texture to what Genette in "Figures" calls its "surface," or to what Proust would call the optical instrument—the nature of the medium examined almost as if it were opaque. Like Sainte-Beuve, Genette provides only a limited and somewhat inadequate context to view a writer's work, one which this thesis enriches, not by viewing *A la recherche du temps perdu* in terms of the cultural norms of an artistic being or of a type of discourse, but by viewing the work in relation to two fin-de-siècle works from which I do not abstract norms. Instead, I use what I like to imagine to be a kind of comparatist approach where, by the aposition of individual works, I attempt to show the relationships between them in ways which are unmediated by such abstractions. In this case, my interest falls on how Anatole France, Maurice Barrès, and Marcel Proust portray themselves as artists, views of themselves which spill over into the relationship that they construct between a remembering narrator and

his remembered self. The value placed on memory as means to overcome the separation of the past and present, and of the social and the artistic selves, surfaces in each text and, in effect, instigates a kind of fusion between memory and text, a *rapprochement*, a breaking down of the distinction between memory and text to the point that Proust's narrator can speak of the text inside of himself, a text that he proposes to write at the end of the *Recherche*, a text that is often assumed to be the one that we read when we read Proust's novel, and which becomes subsequently an element of our memory, a text inside of us, reconstructed, distorted, embedded in ourselves.

It is the relationship of these "texts" as a complex, and as a point of contact of artist-text-reader that were described in each of my readings, readings which also refused to focus on any one persona in this triad. In dealing with the works, I affirmed the value of a critical approach which reconstructs the artist whose vision is contained by the writing and which locates my place as a reader of this text, as an active member of the writer-text-reader partnership. The acrobatics involved in switching from one perspective to another, the variations of distance, the juxtaposed use of structural and organic vocabulary reflect this effort and, in a sense, demonstrate my discontent with a carved-up field of literary study. This methodological counterbalancing also reflects the problems of distance, the desire to remain close to the text and at the same time deal with each story as a whole.

As a result, I have produced three readings of works which are connected in so far as they attempt to aestheticize a remembered self in a way that reflects back on to a remembering, artistic self who is discovered both in the process of memory and in the expression of memory. France and Barrès anticipate this Proustian search, although either writer is necessarily involved in an artistic effort that reflects his own individuality. France juxtaposes, in *Le Livre de mon ami*, the estrangement of a childhood seen as a civilized but pre-scientific state of being, the narrator's sentimental nostalgia for this more innocent and natural order of existence, his doting-fatherly affection for his infant daughter, and a literary

discussion aimed at defending childhood from a too early exposure to scientific thought. France also attempts to write in ways which recapture a childhood (preanalytic) sensibility while he paradoxically remains trapped in his adult worldview. It is a similar paradox which resurfaces in Proust's writing but which Proust attempts to overcome by way of involuntary memory.

The narrator of *Le Culte du moi* also arrives at a position which values intuition over intelligence and its formal constructs, a faith which serves as a basis for his aesthetic and political ideology. But before this final position can be achieved, the hero must pass through various manifestations of his *moi*: a self defined by rejecting the Barbarians (the world represented by his teachers, his encounters with female sexuality, and the worldly and pragmatic life of Paris), a self-indulgent assertion of his independence which results in his dissatisfaction with rootless subjectivity, and finally an unconscious connection with his ancestors, a discovery which allows him to plant himself in the geography of *la Lorraine*. This relationship of self with a regional landscape is modeled for Barrès, the hero Philippe, and the reader by Bérénice. She, in a sense, represents a kind of refutation of adult urban life, an ideology into which she indoctrinates the writer-hero-reader trio who are all represented by the *je* in Barrès' text.

Finally, Proust portrays a similar master-disciple relationship, but one in which Marcel finds his master to be the *moi créateur* of Bergotte, a character in Proust's novel who represents a kind of writer figure and who may have been modeled on both France and Barrès. Initially, Marcel adores the older writer, or at least he adores the figure that he imagines to be the older writer. Later, Marcel is able to divorce an artistic self from the Bergotte that he first meets at the Swann's dinner party, an artistic self to which he is able to grant a continued existence, although not entirely visible in the social being. He also perceives a similar *moi créateur* in another text, the text of his memory. The elucidation of this *moi* becomes one of the central concerns of his narrative, but this elucidation can only



be seen as a kind of reflection in various memories, just as Bergotte's creative self is only visible as a recognizable feature of his various works. In this way, Proust (hi)storicizes his self and therefore moves away from Bergotte, France, and Barrès. Proust also moves beyond the scope of Genette's critical method, by pointing us to the creative source of a work which aims at uncovering this creative source, a focal point of which the text is a mere optical instrument. We should, of course, be aware of this instrument but, still nevertheless, look through it.

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