

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45342-4 - History and Ideology in Proust: A la Recherche du Temps Perdu and the Third French Republic

Michael Sprinker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

This critical reinterpretation of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* offers a fresh, socio-historical analysis of the novel. Departing from the more formalist and rhetorical trends in recent Proust criticism, Michael Sprinker draws upon historical scholarship to assess Proust's portrait of French society, and shows that the novel's account of the class structure and of the rivalry between the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie during the first half-century of the Third French Republic was both precise and critically engaged. He argues that in other areas, notably the nature of nationalist sentiment and gender ideology, Proust offers insight into phenomena studied only in fragmentary ways in previous historical writing on this crucial period. His study provides an original approach in its combination of history and literature, and is the most thorough work of marxist criticism on Proust to date.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45342-4 - History and Ideology in Proust: A la Recherche du Temps
Perdu and the Third French Republic

Michael Sprinker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN FRENCH 50

HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY IN PROUST

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45342-4 - History and Ideology in Proust: A la Recherche du Temps Perdu and the Third French Republic

Michael Sprinker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN FRENCH

General editor: Malcolm Bowie (*All Souls College, Oxford*)

Editorial Board: R. Howard Bloch (*University of California, Berkeley*), Terence Cave (*St John's College, Oxford*), Ross Chambers (*University of Michigan*), Antoine Compagnon (*Columbia University*), Peter France (*University of Edinburgh*), Toril Moi (*Duke University*), Naomi Schor (*Harvard University*)

Recent titles in this series include

38. Margery Evans: *Baudelaire and Intertextuality: Poetry at the Crossroads*
39. Judith Still: *Justice and Difference in the Works of Rousseau: Bienfaisance and Pudeur*
40. Christopher Johnson: *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida*
41. Carol A. Mossman: *Politics and Narratives of Birth: Gynocolonization from Rousseau to Zola*
42. Daniel Brewer: *The Discourse of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century France: Diderot and the Art of Philosophizing*
43. Roberta L. Krueger: *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance*
44. James H. Reid: *Narration and Description in the French Realist Novel: The Temporality of Lying and Forgetting*
45. Eugene W. Holland: *Baudelaire and Schizoanalysis: The Sociopoetics of Modernism*
46. Hugh M. Davidson: *Pascal and the Arts of the Mind*
47. David J. Denby: *Sentimental Narrative and the Social Order in France, 1760–1820: A Politics of Tears*
48. Claire Addison: *Where Flaubert Lies: Chronology, Mythology and History*
49. John Claiborne Isbell: *The Birth of European Romanticism: Staël's De l'Allemagne*

A complete list of books in the series is given at the end of the volume

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45342-4 - History and Ideology in Proust: A la Recherche du Temps
Perdu and the Third French Republic

Michael Sprinker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY IN PROUST

A la recherche du temps perdu and the
Third French Republic

MICHAEL SPRINKER

*Professor in English and in Comparative Literature,
State University of New York at Stony Brook*



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45342-4 - History and Ideology in Proust: A la Recherche du Temps Perdu and the Third French Republic

Michael Sprinker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521453424

© Cambridge University Press 1994

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1994

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Sprinker, Michael.
History and ideology in Proust / Michael Sprinker.
p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in French)
Includes index.
ISBN 0 521 45342 9

1. Proust, Marcel, 1871–1922. A la recherche du temps perdu.
2. Proust, Marcel, 1871–1922 – Political and social views.
3. Literature and society – France – History – 20th century.
4. Proust, Marcel, 1871–1922 – Knowledge – History.
5. Social problems in literature. 6. History in literature.

I. Title. II. Series.
PQ2631.R63A8921994
843'.914–dc20 93–47273 CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-45342-4 Hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2010

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate. Information regarding prices, travel timetables and other factual information given in this work are correct at the time of first printing but Cambridge University Press does not guarantee the accuracy of such information thereafter.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45342-4 - History and Ideology in Proust: A la Recherche du Temps
Perdu and the Third French Republic

Michael Sprinker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

... art is an unconscious form of historiography, the memory of what has been vanquished or repressed, perhaps an anticipation of what is possible. In art the primacy of the object, understood as the potential freedom of life from domination, manifests itself in the freedom from objects.

T. W. Adorno *Aesthetic Theory*

Now that ain't workin', that's the way you do it
You play the guitar on the MTV
That ain't workin', that's the way you do it
Money for nothin', and your chicks for free
Money for nothing and chicks for free

Dire Straits

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45342-4 - History and Ideology in Proust: A la Recherche du Temps
Perdu and the Third French Republic

Michael Sprinker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i>	xi
Introduction		i
1 Base and superstructure		17
2 Class and class struggle		51
3 Ideology		107
4 Revolution		154
<i>Notes</i>		186
<i>Index</i>		226

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45342-4 - History and Ideology in Proust: A la Recherche du Temps Perdu and the Third French Republic

Michael Sprinker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure to acknowledge several of the debts owed to various individuals and institutions, without whose support this project would certainly not have been completed so expeditiously – if at all. The bulk of the research and writing was accomplished during two semester-long stints at the Center for the Humanities at Wesleyan University and a one-semester residence in the Center for the Humanities at Oregon State University. To the respective directors of these two worthy institutions, Richard Ohmann and Peter J. Copek, I shall be forever grateful.

Malcolm Bowie, the academic editor of the series, and the staff of Cambridge University Press were immensely helpful and conscientious in shepherding the manuscript through the publication process. I can only hope that they won't regret their efforts in my behalf.

Several individuals read sections of the manuscript in draft, and to them go my sincere thanks for pertinent criticism and advice, not all of which, alas, I had the good sense to follow. My colleagues at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Sandy Petrey and Gene Lebovics, were especially helpful, the former in pressing me always to make the meditations between history and fictional representation more explicit, the latter in insisting that I meet at least a minimal standard of historiographic accuracy. Whether the final result will satisfy either of them, it is not given to me to determine.

Gregory Elliott and Graham Burchell offered provocative readings of an early version of the entire manuscript. While I could not agree with their conclusions, I have attempted to

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45342-4 - History and Ideology in Proust: A la Recherche du Temps Perdu and the Third French Republic

Michael Sprinker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

take their criticisms into account. Similarly, the anonymous reader commissioned by Cambridge University Press provided what every author must prize above all else: a sympathetic but minutely critical reading. I have endeavored to answer the objections posed in every instance where I disagreed, and where I took the point without dissent, the reader's views have been silently incorporated in the text. The present book is much improved as a result of these valuable editorial interventions.

This book contains a large number of diagrams, some rather complicated to realize with computer graphics. For assistance in preparing them I am most grateful to Kristyanne Beenfeldt Sprinker, whose engineering and drafting skills removed all burden from my shoulders.

Most of all, I must thank my students at Stony Brook, who listened patiently while I inflicted different versions of this book's argument on them, and who pressed me continually to precise and strengthen it. The one indispensable ingredient in my own scholarly and critical work has been the sustaining pleasure of teaching, without which I could scarcely have written a single word. I can only hope that what finally resulted from these stimulating encounters may be some small recompense for my students' generosity in helping me to write the present book when doubtless they had better things to do.