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MARCEL PROUST IN CONTEXT

This volume sets Marcel Proust's masterwork, *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*, 1913–27), in its cultural and socio-historical contexts. Essays by the leading scholars in the field attend to Proust's biography, his huge correspondence, and the genesis and protracted evolution of his masterpiece. Light is cast on Proust's relation to thinkers and artists of his time, and to those of the great French and European traditions of which he is now so centrally a part. There is vivid exploration of Proust's reading; his attitudes towards contemporary social and political issues; his relation to journalism, religion, sexuality, science and travel, and how these figure in the *Recherche*. The volume closes with a comprehensive survey of Proust's critical reception, from reviews during his lifetime to the present day, including assessments of Proust in translation and the broader assimilation of his work into twentieth- and twenty-first-century culture.

ADAM WATT is Associate Professor in French at the University of Exeter and is a member of the Équipe Proust at the ITEM/ENS in Paris. He is author of *Reading in Proust's 'À la recherche': 'le délire de la lecture'* (2009), *The Cambridge Introduction to Marcel Proust* (Cambridge, 2011) and an illustrated biography of the author, *Marcel Proust* (2013).

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Notes on contributors

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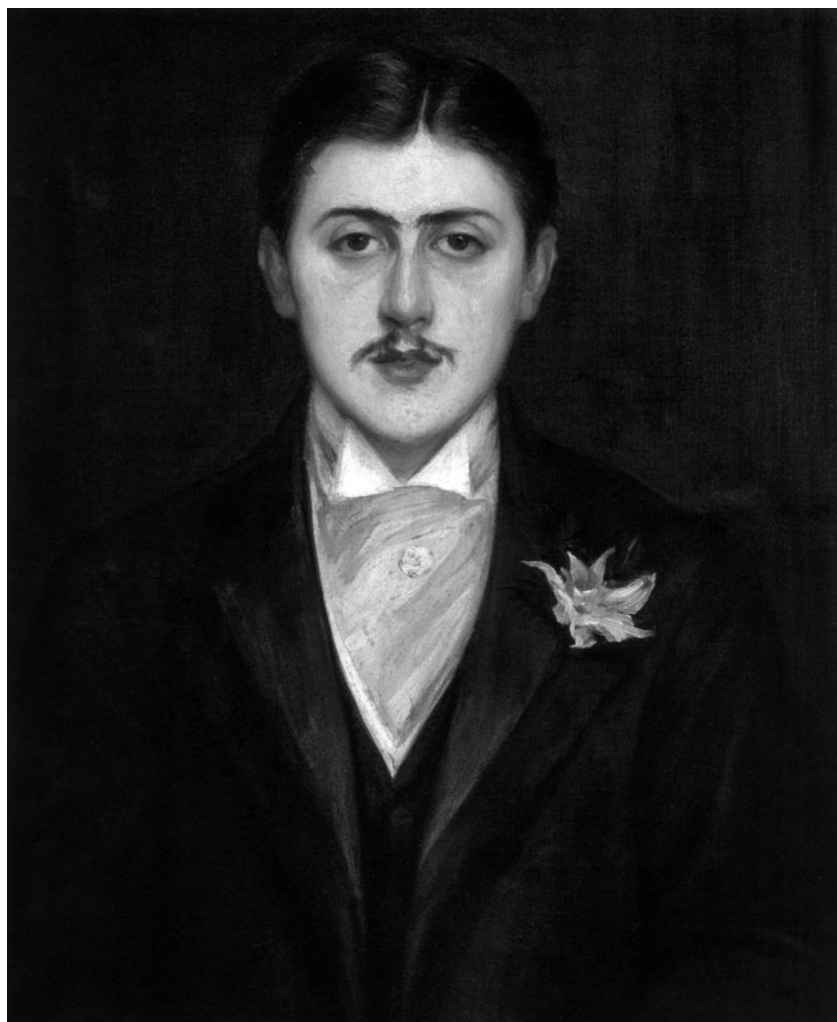


Figure 1. Marcel Proust, portrait in oils by Jacques-Émile Blanche, 1892

Preface

What unique place might we allot to his work? Between philosophy, science, epic poetry, satire, memoirs and all hitherto recorded forms of the novel?¹

Readers of Proust are still asking these questions today, posed by the society painter Jacques-Émile Blanche in a memoir that appeared in 1928, the year after the publication of *À la recherche du temps perdu* was completed. Proust was dead only six years but the myth of the man was already alive and strong. It had been growing, in fact, since the time of Blanche's portrait of the author, in oils, in 1892, some thirty years before (see Fig. 1). The plurality of Proust's writing – prose that shifts effortlessly from cool logic to impassioned bluster, from the observational noting of the laboratory to spinning the fine and delicate thread of metaphor – invites multiple modes of interpretation, multiple frames of reference through which we might read. Such writing is singular, provocative, demanding. The chapters that follow offer a succession of approaches to individual aspects of this plurality; they provide spaces in which we might think about Proust, his work and the conditions of its creation: in its own way each chapter contributes an answer, or part of an answer to Blanche's question.

Proust's lifetime (1871–1922) spanned an exceptional period of accelerated world-historical change and development in every sphere of human activity. To explore the 'contexts' of Proust's work, then, is to step into rapidly flowing waters, to seek to capture the dynamic rush and thrust of socio-cultural shifts that stretch from the Paris Commune and its fall, via the bold display of industrial and colonial force at the World's Fair of 1889 and the rarefied whirl of the Belle Époque, to the cold, violent reality of a world war and its aftermath. At no other time in history has experiment in literature, music and visual art been more radical or revolutionary than during Proust's short life.

Part I of *Marcel Proust in Context* approaches the author's biography, his extraordinary correspondence, the faltering journey that led towards the construction of *À la recherche* and the intriguing story of its evolution from two to three to (eventually) seven substantial volumes. The first section of Part II offers an account of Proust's relations to the arts most broadly understood: how does his reading offer a context for understanding his writing practice? In what ways did Proust assimilate or resist the artistic and intellectual currents of his own time and those of the longer tradition of which he is now a part? How did the artistic energies that pulsed and surged through Paris in the early years of the twentieth century feed into Proust's project?

À la recherche is at once a sustained exploration of the nature of the self and a study of a whole social world in a state of flux. The second section of Part II takes 'Self and Society' as its focus and considers a range of frames of reference: the writings of Freud and the development of psychoanalysis; contemporary thinking on sexuality and medical matters; science, religion, travel and journalism. The French socio-political landscape of Proust's time is treated in three complementary chapters that close this section, exploring Proust's relation to questions of politics and class, his attitude towards the Dreyfus Affair and the ways in which the First World War had an impact on the shape, substance and reception of *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

Part III tackles the critical reception of Proust's work in two ways. A first group of four chapters explores the responses *À la recherche* has elicited since the publication began in 1913, up to the present day, mapping trends and assessing the fortunes of the novel through the past century. Three final chapters conclude the volume with discussions of Proust's reception in more specifically defined terms: first within the sometimes troubling category of modernism; then within contemporary media culture; and finally in translation, that medium which has broadened the reach of this most plural of novels further still.

In preparing this volume I have been fortunate to work with a terrific team at Cambridge University Press: I would like to thank Linda Bree for suggesting the project in the first place and Anna Bond and Abi Jones for their support and hugely efficient assistance in the final stages. Thanks also to Lesley Lawn for providing the translation of the chapter by Luc Fraisse and to Catherine Terk at Rue des Archives for her help in sourcing the illustrations. Thanks too for her love and support, as always, to Stace. It has been an honour to work with the distinguished scholars from institutions in France, Canada, the US and the UK whose work fills the

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Preface

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pages that follow. Writing a short piece about a big subject is always a challenge and a multiplier effect seems to take hold whenever Proust is involved. Fortunately (and for this I am very grateful) my contributors managed to resist the swell rather better than Proust ever did.

ADAM WATT

Notes

- 1 Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Mes modèles: Barrès, Hardy, Proust, James, Gide, Moore* (Paris: Stock, 1928), p. 118.



Figure 2. Proust photographed on his death-bed by Man Ray, 1922

Note on the text

All quotations are taken from the Vintage Classics six-volume edition of *In Search of Lost Time*, translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff (except for *Time Regained*, translated by Andreas Mayor and Terence Kilmartin), revised by Terence Kilmartin and D. J. Enright (London: Vintage, 2000–2). References are given in the form (3: 456), i.e. volume number, followed by page reference. These are followed in the text by volume and page references to the four-volume ‘Pléiade’ edition of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, produced under the general editorship of Jean-Yves Tadié (Paris: Gallimard, 1987–9). References to the French text take the form (IV, 321).

References to Proust’s essays and shorter writings are taken from *Against Sainte-Beuve and Other Essays*, translated by John Sturrock (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988) and *Contre Sainte-Beuve précédé de Pastiches et mélanges et suivi de Essais et articles*, edited by Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard, 1971) and are incorporated in the text in the form *ASB* or *CSB*, each followed by page numbers. Where no reference to *ASB* is given, the passage in question is not included by Sturrock.

References to Proust’s early, unfinished novel *Jean Santeuil* are identified with the abbreviation *JS*, followed by page references first to *Jean Santeuil*, translated by Gerard Hopkins (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985 [Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1955]), then to *Jean Santeuil précédé de Les Plaisirs et les jours*, edited by Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard, 1971). Where only one page reference is given, this is to untranslated material from the French text.

All references to Proust’s correspondence (abbreviated to *Corr*, followed by a volume number and page reference) are to the *Correspondance de Marcel Proust*, edited by Philip Kolb, 21 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1970–93); translations from the correspondence, and from all other works in French, unless otherwise stated, are by the author of the chapter in question.

Chronology

- 1871** 10 July: Marcel Proust is born to Jeanne Proust née Weil and Dr Adrien Proust in the village of Auteuil, to the west of Paris. He is very weak in infancy.
- 1872** The Proust family moves to an apartment on the boulevard Malesherbes in the 8th arrondissement of Paris.
- 1873** 24 May: Robert Proust, Marcel's brother, is born.
- 1878–86** Family vacations at Illiers (renamed Illiers-Combray in 1971) in the Eure-et-Loir.
- 1881** Proust's first, and near-fatal, asthma attack. Respiratory and other health problems will henceforth be a permanent part of his life.
- 1882–9** Proust attends the Lycée Fontanes (renamed Condorcet in 1883); attendance poor due to ill health, but various friendships formed.
- 1889** Proust turns eighteen. *Classe de philosophie*. Inauguration of the Eiffel Tower as the entrance arch to the World's Fair. November: Proust signs up for one year's voluntary military service.
- 1890** 3 January: Death of Proust's maternal grandmother, Adèle Weil. Enrols at the Faculty of Law and the School of Political Science.
- 1891** Journalism appears in *Le Mensuel*. Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.
- 1892** Proust and friends from Condorcet found a review, *Le Banquet*. Increased socializing.
- 1893** Publications in the important journal, *La Revue blanche*. Completes Licence en droit.
- 1894** President Carnot assassinated in Lyon by an anarchist. December: court martial judges Captain Albert Dreyfus guilty.

Chronology

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- 1895** Completes Licence ès lettres. Unpaid position at the Bibliothèque Mazarine. Scarcely attends due to 'ill health'. Stays in Brittany with Reynaldo Hahn. Begins notes towards *Jean Santeuil*. Trial of Oscar Wilde.
- 1896** March: Publication of *Les Plaisirs et les jours*.
- 1897** Duels with journalist Jean Lorrain over Lorrain's public insinuations of Proust's homosexual relation with Lucien Daudet. Henry James, *What Maisie Knew*.
- 1898** 13 January: Zola's 'J'accuse' in *L'Aurore*. Later in the year Proust attends Zola's trial.
- 1899** *Jean Santeuil* abandoned, Proust starts work on a translation of Ruskin's *The Bible of Amiens*. Freud, *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*). Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*.
- 1900** Ruskin's death. Proust publishes a series of articles on the Englishman. Travels to Venice with his mother and friends in April; returns, alone, in October. Death of Nietzsche.
- 1901** Thomas Mann, four years Proust's junior, publishes *Buddenbrooks*.
- 1902** Travels to Belgium and Holland with Hahn, visits Bruges and Amsterdam amongst other places. Sees Vermeer's *View of Delft* and many old Dutch masters.
- 1903** February: Marriage of Robert Proust. Society pieces published in *Le Figaro*. Gertrude Stein moves to Paris from the United States. November: sudden death of Proust's father.
- 1904** *La Bible d'Amiens* published. Translation of Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* begun. Society journalism continues.
- 1905** June: Proust's important essay on reading, the preface to *Sésame et les lys*, is published. July: French government passes a law separating the Church from the State. Mme Proust is taken ill in Évian and rushed back to Paris by Robert. 26 September: death of Mme Proust. December: Proust checks in to the clinic of Dr Sollier, something he had promised his mother he would do.
- 1906** Sollier's treatment having made little difference to Proust's health, he spends August to December in the Hôtel des Réservoirs in Versailles, unwilling to be alone in the family home. Dreyfus reinstated in the Army. *Sésame et les lys* is published. Proust resolves to move into what was his great-uncle Georges Weil's Paris residence, 102 boulevard Haussmann.

- 1907** Picasso's *Demaiselles d'Avignon* completed in Paris. Various articles and stories published. Summer in Cabourg on the Normandy coast. Proust meets Alfred Agostinelli, a young taxi driver. Proust will return to Cabourg every year between 1907 and 1914.
- 1908** Proust plans a project 'Against Sainte-Beuve', part critical essay, part dialogue. Features of what will become *À la recherche du temps perdu* take shape. Succession of brilliant pastiches, around the Lemoine Affair, appear in *Le Figaro*.
- 1909** *Contre Sainte-Beuve* amounts to around 400 pages; publishers show no interest. Marinetti's first *Manifesto of Futurism* in Paris; Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 9.
- 1910–11** Proust develops the core sequences of his novel that will become *Du côté de chez Swann*, *Le Temps retrouvé*, part of *Le Côté de Guermantes* and, latterly, parts of *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*.
- 1912–13** Successive rejections from publishers.
- 1913** In the spring, Agostinelli moves into Proust's apartment as a secretary. *Du côté de chez Swann* is accepted for publication at the author's expense by Grasset. Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel*. 14 November: publication of *Du côté de chez Swann*.
- 1914** May: Agostinelli dies, drowned in the Mediterranean as a result of a flying accident. August: French forces mobilized. Printing presses cease activity during the war. Céleste Albaret officially enters Proust's service. James Joyce, *Dubliners*.
- 1915** Proust develops *Sodome et Gomorrhe* and the 'Albertine cycle', *La Prisonnière* and *Albertine disparue*.
- 1916** Negotiations with the Nouvelle Revue française who wish to take over publication of *À la recherche* from Grasset. May: Proust reports suffering a seventy-hour period of insomnia. July: first Dada manifesto proclaimed in Zurich.
- 1917** February and October: revolution in Russia. 18 May: in Paris, Proust attends the première of *Parade*, performed by the Ballets Russes, with a scenario by Cocteau, score by Satie, set and costumes by Picasso and programme notes by Apollinaire.
- 1918** Proust's health, always fragile, becomes a near-constant preoccupation as he devotes longer and longer hours to correcting his novel.

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- 1919** June: NRF reissues *Du côté de chez Swann*, publishes *Pastiches et mélanges* and *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*. The relative who owned 102 boulevard Haussmann decides to sell and Proust has to move, twice, eventually settling at 44 rue Hamelin in October. December: *À l'ombre* awarded the Prix Goncourt.
- 1920** André Breton employed by Gallimard as proofreader for *Le Côté de Guermantes*. May: Breton and Soupault's *Les Champs magnétiques*, the first work of surrealist (or proto-surrealist) 'automatic writing'. October: *Le Côté de Guermantes I* published.
- 1921** May: Proust sees Vermeer's *View of Delft* once more, at an exhibition at the Jeu de Paume. *Le Côté de Guermantes II* and *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* are published together.
- 1922** Increasing doses of self-medication. February: Joyce's *Ulysses* published in Paris. April: *Sodome et Gomorrhe II* published. October: T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* appears in *The Criterion*. 18 November: Proust dies after developing pneumonia. Gaston Gallimard and Robert Proust undertake to publish the remaining volumes of the *Recherche*.
- 1923** Publication of *La Prisonnière*.
- 1925** Publication of *Albertine disparue*; Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*.
- 1927** Publication of *Le Temps retrouvé*.