

PROUST

FREN2021

This course is for students who have achieved a good result in FREN3009 or its equivalent. No student should enrol in it without first consulting me.

The work will consist of reading *Du côté de chez Swann* and *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (the first two parts of Proust's novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*), of presenting an *exposé* and writing an essay of about 2000 words.

There will be two classes a week, provisionally set for Wednesdays and Thursdays at 9 o'clock in room W3.03.

James Grieve

1. Form

I always think that two great helps to the reader are (a) a simple, unequivocal statement of intentions, in the opening lines; and (b) division of work by sub-titles, gaps of a line or two, etc. The reader must always be able to feel confident that he knows (and that you know!) where you are going; it is also helpful if he can pause now and then to draw breath, take stock, gauge the progression of your argument. Perhaps some of the opacity I find in your text even after two readings might have been illumined for me by sign-posts of the sort I mention. A third formal essential is surely the conclusion; no bouquet of compliments, however fair, can take its place.

2. Content

You have read much of Proust; you touch on many of the important aspects of the work. You bring out the banality of his matériaux and stress the extraordinariness of his manner and techniques. You seem to take for granted the grandeur which your title mentions — might it not have been more appropriate to assess it, to judge, in fact, by whatever standard you like, whether Proust is indeed great and what, to your mind, constitutes greatness?

I have nothing against the long quotation in itself. But at times you place lengthy lumps of Proust in your own text for no other apparent purpose than to repeat in Proust's own words what you have already said; in any discussion of a passage, your words should usually outnumber those of Proust. Be sure, too, by close reading, that you grasp the real significance of your chosen quotation — I suspect that, in common with most critics, you have read more into Proust's talk of réalisme than he put into it (you quote it, p. 3), but you say so little about it that I can't be sure. Do have a look at that page again; use the Pléiade edition this time, III, 889, and link this passage to where it really belongs, viz., p. 883, line 2 (all of 883, 884, 885, 886, 887 & 888 being a later insertion).

3. Language

Generally sound. But you must eliminate those odd spelling errors, incorrect genders and misuses (or inventions) such as brillance, reparation, maniérismes, etc. Your main tense worried me now and again, it was so unsure of what it wanted to be: conditional, imperfect, perfect — for synopsisizing (may Fowler turn in his grave!) a narrative, the historical present is the only one to use.

4. Bibliography

Quite an impressive list. I recognised here and there in your text a debt or two to Zéphir, Maurois, etc., that should be receipted by a footnote.

5. Mark

14/20? ethel says 15/20,
I compromise = 14 1/2
20 which, as usual when I collaborate with Ethel later proves to have been too generous!

Comments on the Proust essay
of Van Nuffel.

General:

The topic on which you were asked to write invited you to make some sort of comparison of forme and fond, of the importance in Proust's novel of techniques and content.

Now, admittedly your part I deals with matters which one could, roughly, call formal (although the space you give to Proust's parenthetical and fanciful suggestion that his work is somehow comparable to a cathedral is out of all proportion to the length of your essay and to the real importance of cathedrals in the world of either Proust or his fictional narrator); and your part II deals with the book's subject-matter. However, nowhere do you attempt to compare the value of these two aspects; nowhere, in fact, and this is the gravest of your critical solecisms, nowhere do you come to grips with the topic that was set you.

It is not enough to demonstrate familiarity with the text (which you have done in part II). You must also shape your knowledge according to the aspect of it that you are required to argue; and you must make some attempt at judgment. By this I don't mean passing moral, extra-literary judgments on fictional characters, a temptation we must all resist and which has led Emma Bovary into the witness-box. The moral judgment on a fictional character — which always tells the reader more about you than about the character — may have some justification, but only after you have exercised some literary judgment. And literary judgment entails not only knowledge of a work and of an author's intentions, but also a suspension of prejudice and an ingrained readiness to judge the author, first and foremost, on his own standards and on no-one else's. To do otherwise leads directly to the Inquisitor's blue pencil or to the Union of Soviet Writers. Having judged him by his own standards, one can then say that one doesn't like those standards, or that he is pernicious or morbid or perverted or whatever — that is honest partisanship, fidelity to prejudice, and valid as such but not as literary appreciation. See George Orwell on this, he puts it better (The Frontiers of Art and Propaganda, etc).

Quotations: Several of your quotations are quite inapposite; remember too that often a paraphrase can take the place of the long quotation.

A small point: when typing, set your margins closer for quotations, and type them in single-space.

Bibliography: You include no list of any reading you did for this essay. Was this because you did little? I find evidence in your text of only two critical works, Mauriac and Maurois; neither is profound nor more than superficially illuminating.

Mark:

12/
20

1 June '69

T. C. Lauder 1965


— La grandeur de Proust ne découle ni des thèmes ni des matériaux dont il a bâti son roman, mais bien de la manière dont il l'a bâti, de l'art qu'il met à explorer ces thèmes, et de la profondeur de ses analyses.

1. You give insufficient guidance to the reader (did you give any?) about the direction you're following; especially at the beginning. If this essay were a game of hare and hounds, the hare won, hands down. You need a plan; you need to state it; you need to abide by it.

2. Of the points you make, some are excellent, most are at least relevant to Proust. But most could also be met with: "So what?" That is to say: though clearly relevant to a general understanding of Proust's novel, their relevance to this particular way of looking at Proust is not at all apparent. Again, I feel that a coherently stated and followed-out scheme of thought would have helped you to relate your undoubted knowledge of Proust to the demands of this topic.
Also, some of your points, no matter how well-taken, seem to have been hastily buried among a camouflage of words. E.g., on page 3 you tell us that voluntary memories are source des matériaux, and I applaud you and expect to follow you through a long paragraph or two in which, casting an acknowledging glance at page 899 of vol. III, you would simply enumerate Proust's matériaux and his themes before going on to assess their grandeur, if any. I had thought this line was the first of an aria, but it turns out to be an aside. Similarly, later on, when you start to mention his art architectural (page 6).

3. Your essay shows a circumstantial acquaintance with some parts of Proust, and at times a perceptive grasp of his recurring preoccupations, habitual methods, the shape of the work, use of simile and metaphor* etc, but fails to order these for the reader, to progress, to assess, to relate. You make no attempt to reach a personal assessment of Proust's greatness. What makes for greatness in any writer, I wonder? Could one not say, of anyone, what this topic says of Proust? (Anyone, except the odd exception; perhaps Baudelaire?) After all, it is surely banal to say, as this topic says, that a man is gigantic not because of subject but because of form. Obviously, Joyce is not great because he chose a day in the

* But read The Image in the Modern French Novel, by Ullman

life of an homme moyen sensuel, nor Beethoven because of
 etc — but because of what they did
with them.

Yet one could deduce from what you say that you believe Proust great because of his thèmes et matériaux: after all, you do devote more space to them than anything else. But this is my deduction; you yourself do not conclude.

Also, what about the analyses? You mention them in your concluding sentence. It would, no doubt, be difficult to say anything readable on such a vast subject, but you could have shown that you'd read some of La fugitive, described en gros his analytical method, and judged in some way his achievement.

In your discussion of style, you could have written a paragraph on the Proustian sentence; in your discussion of technique, another paragraph on characterization. Both paragraphs would no doubt have touched on Proust's purpose in setting about things as he did.

4. I notice an apparent misconception of the value that Proust found in mémoire involontaire: what was that value? (See Zéphir, Jacques J : La personnalité humaine dans l'oeuvre de M.P.)

5. You must be more accurate in quotation. Do not paraphrase an author and put your paraphrase between inverted commas. If you truncate an author, tell your reader you've done so, thus: [...]. If you change the person of a pronoun to fit with your own context, do so thus: [son], to show that Proust wrote, not son, but probably mon.

You must also be more appropriate in quoting other authors, e.g. Balzac, Beaumarchais, Gide etc. Often, the apt quotation culled from somebody can throw light on a topic, as well as giving a genteel air of decorative erudition. But be careful: it must be apposite; it must not seem strained; it should not be introduced without warning, making the reader swallow it as a piece of Proust before being told he's hooked on a bit of Barrès (page 2).

Incidentally, footnotes need not repeat each time all the relevant bibliographical detail e.g. on page 3 your footnote could read 1) I, 43. All the rest is contained in your bibliography. D'ailleurs, you caught on to this after a few pages yourself.

6. Bibliography :

Your booklist is disappointing and suggests that you browsed little along that shelf. It is doubtful whether the

last 4 titles should be included, unless you add "ou citées" to your oeuvres consultées.

7. Language :

There is fluency in your writing and (perhaps) an awareness of how effective a weapon the short sentence can be; if I were you, I'd write many more of them. The flow is broken, though, by some shocking syntax, even grammar; a barbarism; mistaken agreements and genders; an apparent inability to use "y"; some tenses. On this last point, the best advice is no doubt Dr Tory's: use the historic present when giving a résumé of a narrative (see page 11: "était si différent qu'il ne le reconnut pas" could read "est si différent qu'il ne le reconnaît pas".)

Some of your longer sentences escape you; they should be stopped in time, pinned down with a well-aimed full-stop, dismembered, recast.

Some of your affirmations, à les regarder de plus près, affirm nothing, e.g. page 12: "L'idée nouvelle et intéressante, qui forme

la conception artistique de l'oeuvre... etc";
or again your final sentence.

8. On the whole, this essay misserves you, and I can only be disappointed at the way you have attacked it. In other words: you are better than this.

James Grieve

BT

A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU

Quelques aspects à étudier:

1. peinture d'une société
2. analyse psychologique
3. mémoire volontaire, mémoire involontaire
4. l'univers intérieur et la personnalité
5. le temps retrouvé, l'art et le rôle de l'écrivain
6. la conception du temps dans l'oeuvre de Proust
7. style et métaphores

1) Plan to be submitted by beginning of 1st term.

2) Work to be submitted by Easterish.

"La grande vertu de Proust réside, il faut bien le dire, dans le fond de son livre - thèmes, matériaux, préoccupations - plutôt que dans la forme qu'il leur a donnée, que dans son style, ses procédés analytiques ou ses intentions".

Discutez.

Suggested reading :

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Green, F.C. | <u>The Mind of Proust</u> |
| Brée, Germaine | <u>Du Temps perdu au Temps retrouvé</u> |
| Fernandez, Ramon | <u>Proust</u> |
| Peyre, Henri | <u>Hommes et oeuvres du XXème siècle</u> (pp.149-178) |
| Turnell, Martin | <u>The Novel in France</u> (pp. 319-405) |
| Zéphir, Jacques | <u>La personnalité humaine dans l'oeuvre de Marcel Proust</u> |

october 1967

Some comments on the essay of S Falk on Proust

- 1 Are you sure that it is not misleading to confuse P with the narrator?
- 2 Language: still hobbled by English; also, too many misspellings and minor errors. You are tiringly diffuse, eg the few pages from page 7 (approximately) could be reduced to about as many sentences.

Also, give up reading (or working for) newspapers until you can rid yourself of the sub-editor's disquieting tic of making five paragraphs do the work of one.

- 3 Matter: you are hampered by your evident ignorance of A la recherche du temps perdu; on the other hand, you seem to have consulted FC Green's The Mind of Proust (though you forgot to include it in your bibliography). In order to be capable of coming to grips with such a subject, you would need to have done much more reading than you have. You cannot merely dismiss/as an artificial dichotomy between forme and fond, unless, by a discussion of these two aspects, you prove it to be such. You say nothing (or extremely little) about fundamental features of the work: structure, style, imagery, love, characterization, psychology, snobbery, evolution of a generation of a society, etc; while stretching to inordinate lengths 1) an exposition of mémoire involontaire which, despite overabundant quotation, never hits on the real significance of the phenomenon in the world of MP, and 2) a discussion of the narrator's discovery of his vocation, which is muddled by your constant confusing of Proust and the fictional Marcel. I doubt whether it can be said that you have treated the subject I asked you to treat; and, failing that, whether you have demonstrated any accurate knowledge of Proust or done any worthwhile work on him.

/the subject

Which leaves me in a quandary: I suspect you of greater merit than is suggested by the mark that this work constrains me to give you

12/20 JAG

should have been under 10/20

says Derek:

to

Jim: your assessment seems to me/be fair; and remembering that fourteen was the mark that Sanderson earned for his essay, I think that 12 is right for this one.

I hope that the criticisms will not discourage Miss Falk, but rather will inspire her with the ambition to prove in the examinations that she can do better.

says Vivianne:

c'est plein de vide

says Jacqueline:

ça n vauz même pas douze

* *then a coup de patte; there was none! And well she knew it, having read next to nothing.*

Bruce Hall

31. 10. 67.

Mr. Grieve

It is probably better to say nothing at all, but on the spur of the moment I consider that it was submitted on the laudable principle of its being better to offer something than nothing. Your comments are fair and just; as to your disappointment I can say little, save that I regret putting you to what were evidently greater pains in the marking than went into the writing. For my part, ashamed at having produced such a thing, I would infinitely prefer never to have seen it again.

Yours truly,
Bruce Hall.

COMBRAY

(jusqu'à la page 54)

1. — Dès la première page que nous apprend sur l'auteur la comparaison du sifflet de train avec un oiseau?
 2. — Quelle signification prend la description poétique de l'oreiller?
 3. — A quelle période de la vie de l'auteur correspond la fausse joie d'une raie de lumière aperçue sous la porte?
 4. — Que pensez vous de la syntaxe dans ce deuxième paragraphe?
 5. — Elucidiez ce paradoxe: le kaléidoscope de l'obscurité
 6. — A quel moment le sommeil laisse-t-il ressurgir les trésors du passé?
 7. — Quel détail de l'anecdote nous prouve qu'il y a interférence entre les diverses époques du passé et le présent?
 8. — Quelle exploration le sommeil permet-il à l'auteur?
 9. — Quel est le dépositaire le plus fidèle des souvenirs?
 10. — Quelle impression générale donne la description de la chambre de Combray?
Quel contraste s'établit entre Combray et St Loup? !?
 11. — Par quelle comparaison M.P. évoque-t-il le douillet du lit et la solidarité du dormeur et de sa chambre?
 12. — Quels sont les 3 genres différents de chambre suggérés?
 13. — M.P. déplore-t-il ses insomnies?
 14. — Justifiez la comparaison entre la lanterne magique et le vitrail, à quel moment de la phrase la clé de cette comparaison est-elle donnée?
 15. — Quel rapport Marcel enfant voit-il entre la légende de Geneviève de Brabant et sa propre vie?
 16. — Que reproche-t-il à la lanterne magique?
 17. — Quel rôle assume le bouton de porte?
 18. — Relevez la hiérarchie des autorités familiales qui apparaît dans ce paragraphe où l'on voit la grand-mère se promenant sous la pluie?
 19. — En face de la scène de persécution familiale quelle solution adopte le petit fils?
 20. — Comment en brossant le portrait de son visage, l'auteur réconcilie-t-il une effusion de tendresse et une acuité d'observation impitoyable?
-

Which writer is meant by X?

Et dans ces existences, dont les ~~mêmes~~ ^{mêmes} faits décèlent perpétuellement en X une si profonde perception des mobiles, de leur complication, de la dissimulation des plus puissants, de toute la vie inconsciente qui rend chacun différent de ce qu'il croit & de ce qu'on le croit être, X est parvenu à distinguer & à rendre le trait le plus difficile: la lente transformation que le temps impose à ceux qu'il détruit. Seul, avec les plus grands des psychologues russes, il saisit les personnes successives qui apparaissent tour à tour au-dehors & au-dedans de chaque individu.

Question 1: About what date was the following written?

Question 2: Who is X?

James Grieve
Senior Lecturer

17 April 1972

Nous gravissions lentement l'échine du vieux pont. Il faisait un soleil éclatant. Ces dames s'abritaient sous leurs ombrelles ; on clignait des yeux. Sur le quai, contre le long mur du jardin Charmaison, une bonne femme pliée en deux, un grand mouchoir à carreaux bleus sur son bonnet, poussait une petite voiture à bras.

Il y a des moments où les choses les plus ordinaires nous frappent, on ne sait pourquoi, et semblent nous dire : « N'oubliez plus nos formes, ni nos couleurs, ni l'assemblage que par hasard nous faisons. » Je ne crois pas avoir jamais ouvert les yeux sur un paysage qui m'ait plus séduit que ne le fit la vue de ce long mur ensoleillé, de cette charrette à bras, de l'ombre des tilleuls et de Marguerite Charmaison vêtue de bleu, qui marchait doucement, tenant un livre à la main.

faire reconnaître de Marguerite. Alors je fus envahi par une de ces grandes tristesses qu'on ne ressent plus, après ces enfantillages, qu'à l'âge d'homme, lorsque la seconde timidité, celle de l'amour, vous stupéfie. Et, dans ma détresse, mes yeux étaient attirés par le magique spectacle de

L'Enfant à la Balustrade

[1903]

Par
René Boylesve



Lorsque Marguerite avait eu quinze ans, son père l'avait menée à Rome. Rome, et les seuls noms des villes anciennes de l'Italie, le nom de l'Italie même, ont une magie qui transpose d'avance et agrandit, dans l'œil de la jeunesse ardente, toutes les images qu'il y pourra rencontrer. A

uait.

En se relevant, elle m'embrassa. Comme elle m'embrassait la joue, j'avais son menton sur mes lèvres. Je ne le baisai pas. Une boucle de ses cheveux, où jouait le soleil, forma devant mon œil une voûte à claire-voie qui me parut aussi grande qu'un panier d'osier. Je sentis très bien que le moment qui s'écoulait là, avec le menton de Marguerite sur ma bouche et cette boucle de cheveux devant mon œil, resterait longtemps dans ma mémoire. Je n'en jouissais pas ; il me semblait que je n'en avais pas le temps ; mais je me promettais d'y songer longuement, plus tard.

III. NOMS DE PAYS: LE NOM

Where does this section take place? Where is Balbec? What impression does Marcel have of Balbec? How does he come to have such an impression?

- 459-460: Can you explain why Marcel imagines these places (Bayeux, Vitré, Quimperlé, etc.) as he does?
- 463: What is *le laboratoire charbonneux*?
- 464-465: Why does Marcel not go to Venice or to Balbec?
- 466-467: Compare the effect of the name Gilberte on Marcel with p. 171.
- 467-474: What similarities do you notice between Swann's love for Odette and Marcel's for Gilberte?
- 474: What similarity is there between Marcel's idea of Balbec and his idea of love?
- 478: How does this column of dust stand upright by itself above the piano?
- 488: cf. p. 172, on Gilberte.
- 492-493: What is the meaning of the sentence beginning: "Comme, de loin, la culmination du rocher...?"
- 496: Does anything on this page strike you as clumsy?
- 497: "Cette complexité du Bois de Boulogne...": notice the change of tense.