

ple, but I prefer the doom-eagerness and atmospheric intensity conveyed by the Macbeth complex.

Although Freud never identified as fully with Macbeth as with Hamlet, there are some startling analogies that he cited, as when he prophesied the nearly thirty years of labor remaining for him, in a letter of 1910: "What is one to do on a day when thoughts cease to flow and the proper words won't come? One cannot help trembling at this possibility. That is why, despite the acquiescence in fate that becomes an upright man, I secretly pray: no infirmity, no paralysis of one's powers through bodily distress. We'll die with harness on, as King Macbeth said." The affect there, with its noble humor, is rather different than in the usurper Macbeth's apocalyptic desperation:

*I gin to be a-weary of the sun,
And wish th' estate o' th' world were now undone.
Ring the alarm-bell! Blow wind, come wrack,
At least we'll die with harness on our back.*

Freud indeed died in full armor, thinking and writing virtually to the end. That his identification with Macbeth, however slight, has its positive aspect, is intimated by "as King Macbeth said." More than once, Freud asserted that his vision of his own published works startled him, even as Macbeth cried out at the spectral line of Banquo's royal Stuart descendants: "What, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?" Again, the identification is light but proud, testifying to the contaminating power of Macbeth's imagination. Freud might say that the theme of *Macbeth* was childlessness, but on a deeper level he associated his own strength of imagination with Macbeth's, finding in the bloody tyrant and in himself both a heroic persistence and an image-making fecundity.

Shakespeare is the apotheosis of aesthetic freedom and originality. Freud was anxious about Shakespeare because he had learned anxiety from him, as he had learned ambivalence and narcissism and schism in the self. Emerson was freer and more original about Shakespeare because he had learned wildness and strangeness from him. It is appropriate that Emerson, rather than the equally canonical Freud, have the last word here: "Now, literature, philosophy, and thought, are Shakespeareized. His mind is the horizon beyond which, at present, we do not see."

PROUST: THE TRUE PERSUASION OF SEXUAL JEALOUSY

17.

Proust's GREATEST strength, amid so many others, is his characterization: no twentieth-century novelist can match his roster of vivid personalities. Joyce has the single, overwhelming figure in Poldy, but Proust has a portrait gallery: Charlus, Swann, Albertine, Bloch, Bergotte, Cottard, Françoise, Elstir, Gilberte, Bathilde the Grandmother, Oriane Guermantes, Basin Guermantes, the Mama of the Narrator/Marcel, Odette, Norpois, Morel, Saint-Loup, Madame Verdurin, the marquise de Villeparisis, and above all the dual figure of the Narrator and his earlier self, Marcel. Probably I have neglected some of equal importance with many of those listed, but that is already a score of characters I cannot forget.

In Search of Lost Time (herein called *Search* for short), which unfortunately may always be known in English by the beautiful but misleading Shakespearean title, *Remembrance of Things Past*, actually challenges Shakespeare in its powers of representing personalities: Germaine Brée observed that Proust's personages, like Shakespeare's, resist all psychological reductions. Again like Shakespeare, Proust is a master of tragic-comedy: I wince as I laugh, but I have to agree with Roger Shattuck that the comic mode is central to Proust because it allows him representational distance in exploring the then partly forbidden matter of homosexuality. Because of Proust's preternatural comic genius, he also rivals

Shakespeare at portraying sexual jealousy, one of the most canonical of human affects for literary purposes, handled by Shakespeare as catastrophic tragedy in *Othello* and near-catastrophic romance in *The Winter's Tale*. Proust gives us three magnificent sagas of jealousy: the ordeals, in sequence, of Swann, Saint-Loup, and Marcel (I will call him Marcel, even though the Narrator gives him that name only once or twice in the enormous novel). These three tragicomic, obsessive anguishes are only one strand in an encyclopedic work, yet Proust, like Freud, can be said to join both Shakespeare and the Hawthorne of *The Scarlet Letter* in confirming the canonicity of sexual jealousy. It is hell in human life but purgatorial splendor as *materia poetica*. Shelley affirmed that incest was the most poetical of circumstances; Proust teaches us that sexual jealousy may be the most novelistic.

In 1922, the year of Proust's death (he was just fifty-one), Freud published a powerful, brief essay on sexual jealousy, "Certain Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality." There is an opening association between jealousy and grief, and Freud assures us that persons who seem not to manifest these two universal affects have undergone severe repression, so that jealousy and grief become even more active in the unconscious. With grim irony, Freud divides jealousy into three parts: competitive, projected, delusional. The first is narcissistic and Oedipal; the second imputes to the loved one a guilt, whether real or imagined, that belongs to the self; the third, over the border into paranoia, takes as its usually repressed object someone of one's own sex. As is customary with Freud, the analysis is highly Shakespearean, though more in the mode of *The Winter's Tale*, which Freud did not mention, than in the tragic darkness of *Othello*, where Freud once specifically located projected jealousy. Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* almost systematically works through Freud's three varieties of jealousy. Proust's three grand cases of jealousy leap over the normal or competitive variety, dally briefly with the projected sort, and center themselves ferociously in the delusional mode. But Freud is Proust's rival, not his master, and the Proustian account of jealousy is very much Proust's own. Applying Freud to Proust on jealousy is as reductive and misleading as analyzing *Search's* vision of homosexuality in a Freudian way.

There is no subtler ironist than Proust in our century, and his novel's mythological likening of Jews to homosexuals does not exactly dispraise either group. Proust was neither an anti-Semite nor a homophobe. His

love for his Gentile father was real, but his passion for his Jewish mother was overwhelming, and his love affairs with the composer Reynaldo Hahn and with Alfred Agostinelli, the prototype for Albertine, were very authentic relationships. The refugees from Sodom and Gomorrah are compared by Proust to the Jews of the Diaspora, and more explicitly to Adam and Eve exiled from Eden. J. E. Rivers emphasizes that this parallel of Sodom, Jerusalem, and Eden is at the heart of Proust's novel and fuses the Jewish power of survival with homosexual endurance throughout the ages, so that both Jews and homosexuals achieve representative status as instances of the human condition since, as Proust says, "the true paradises are the paradises we have lost." Proust's humor can seem harsh in regard to the masochistic homosexuality of Charlus or the Jewish insecurities of the unpleasant Bloch, but we do Proust violence if we judge him to be chagrined by either his Jewish ancestry or his homosexual orientation.

Judging him does him violence in any case; *Search* is so meditative a work that it transcends Western canons of judgment. Its temper, as I recall Roger Shattuck observing, is curiously Eastern: Proust, the Narrator, and Marcel fuse in the implicit conviction that we are never fully formed but always go on slowly evolving in consciousness. I am aware that Proust is an apotheosis of French culture, not of Hindu thought. Perhaps Ruskin, mad as he was, imbued Proust with something of his secular mysticism; or, more likely, Proust's mastery of reverie carried him to the borders of an inward transformation. I wonder sometimes why Proust is unique in seeing and representing the high comedy, rather than the low farce, of sexual jealousy. The meditative process of *Search* carried him to a perspective in which Marcel's jealous sufferings can be seen as exquisitely, if still painfully, comic.

This does not mean that Proust in the solitude and silence of his cork-lined room immersed himself in as unlikely a work as the *Bhagavad-gita*, but *Search* is wisdom literature, even as Montaigne, Dr. Johnson, Emerson, and Freud are finally authors who touch a border between meditation and contemplation. Roger Shattuck says of *Search*: "We can read as far into it as our age and understanding allow." At the very close of the novel we don't necessarily believe that the Narrator has come to *know* a truth or a reality, but we sense that he is on the verge of *becoming* a kind of consciousness different from anything else that I at least have encountered in Western fiction. It is from the stance of that barely emer-

gent consciousness that sexual jealousy and passionate love become indistinguishable from one another.

SAMUEL BECKETT near the conclusion of his *Proust* (1931) says that Proust's men and women "seem to solicit a pure subject, so that they may pass from a state of blind will to a state of representation." For Beckett, Proust becomes the pure subject: "He is almost exempt from the impurity of the will." I assume that Beckett here means neither the Narrator nor Marcel, but rather Marcel Proust, who suffers from asthma, reads Schopenhauer, and strives to attain the condition of music. Walter Pater, who had the same relation to Ruskin that Proust had, is the critic who would have best understood Proust. Pater's "privileged moment," a secularized and materialistic epiphany, is what Proust's jealous lovers—Swann and Marcel—seek when they anxiously conduct their historical and scholarly searches into the erotic past. Proust's high and terrifying comedy makes his protagonists into veritable art historians of jealousy, who pursue their researches long after their love has lapsed and even, in Marcel's case, after the beloved is dead. Sexual jealousy, Proust suggests, is a mask for the fear of mortality: the jealous lover becomes obsessed with every detail of the space and time of betrayal because he dreads that there will not be enough space and time for himself. Like the art historian, the bereft lover is seeking the truth of a past illumination, but the researcher of jealousy finds the illumination a darkness.

Proust himself thought that the crucial part of *Swann's Way*, the first volume of *Search*, was the extraordinary account of Swann's jealous sufferings. And indeed when I think of Swann, I recall first the trajectory of his descent into the inferno of jealousy. J. E. Rivers says that "Proust's vision is not feminine; it is androgynous," which is sometimes true of Shakespeare also. My own experience of *Search*, particularly of its major or Albertine sequence (*The Captive* and *The Fugitive*), is that the narrator's stance could only be called that of a male lesbian, which is itself a variant of the androgynous imagination Proust both manifests and celebrates. Proust's Narrator in *Cities of the Plain* invokes the transsexual world of Shakespearean comedy (I will use throughout Terrence Kilmarlin's revision of C. K. Scott Moncrief's translation): "The young man whom we have been attempting to portray was so evidently a woman that the women who looked upon him with desire were doomed (failing a

special taste on their part) to the same disappointment as those who in Shakespeare's comedies are taken in by a girl disguised as a youth."

In the comedies, Shakespeare tends to link sexual disguise and sexual jealousy in ways that evade obsessiveness. Proustian comedy swerves away from Shakespeare into the audacity that allows compulsiveness its free play. Jealousy is never allowed a literary ancestry by Proust; Othello and Leontes are light years away from Swann and Marcel. No jealous lover in Proust would become murderous: the spirit of *Search*'s comedy forbids it. That is why the governing metaphor for Swann and Marcel is the scholarly researcher, particularly the Ruskinian art historian. Torture by fact finding is Proust's comic formula, since this is self-torture, and the facts themselves are essentially imaginative surmises. The pattern is set by Swann:

But in this strange phase of love the personality of another person becomes so enlarged, so deepened, that the curiosity which he now felt stirring inside him with regard to the smallest details of a woman's daily life, was the same thirst for knowledge with which he had once studied history. And all manner of actions from which heretofore he would have recoiled in shame, such as spying, to-night, outside a window, to-morrow perhaps, for all he knew, putting adroitly provocative questions to casual witnesses, bribing servants, listening at doors, seemed to him now to be precisely on a level with the deciphering of manuscripts, the weighing of evidence, the interpretation of old monuments—so many different methods of scientific investigation with a genuine intellectual value and legitimately employable in the search for truth.

Later, Swann's passion for reconstructing the petty details of Odette's social life is compared to the passion of "the aesthete who ransacks the extant documents of fifteenth-century Florence in order to penetrate further into the soul of the Primavera, the fair Yanna, or the Venus of Botticelli." Odette's soul is impenetrable, as Swann discovers, which becomes a perpetual provocation to fresh onslaughts of the torments of jealousy, mixed with the "nobler" desire to know the truth. In one of Proust's loveliest ironies Swann finds that "it was another of the faculties of his studious youth that his jealousy revived, the passion for

truth, but for a truth which, too, was interposed between himself and his mistress, receiving its light from her alone." Such a truth, at the matrix of all jealousies, receives only darkness from the gloom that the lover emanates. Freud's ironic description of being in love, "the over-estimation of the object," is inadequate to the passion that jealousy initially augments and then replaces. Here the genius of Proust goes beyond Shakespeare, beyond Freud, as an insight into erotic obsession:

Certainly, of the extent of this love Swann had no direct awareness. When he sought to measure it, it happened sometimes that he found it diminished, shrunk almost to nothing; for instance, the lack of enthusiasm, amounting almost to distaste, which, in the days before he was in love with Odette, he had felt for her expressive features, her faded complexion, returned on certain days. "Really, I'm making distinct headway," he would tell himself next day. "Looking at things quite honestly, I can't say I got much pleasure last night from being in bed with her. It's an odd thing, but I actually thought her ugly." And certainly he was sincere, but his love extended a long way beyond the province of physical desire. Odette's person, indeed, no longer held any great place in it. When his eyes fell upon the photograph of Odette on his table, or when she came to see him, he had difficulty in identifying her face, either in the flesh or on the pasteboard, with the painful and continuous anxiety which dwelt in his mind. He would say to himself, almost with astonishment, "It's she!" as though suddenly we were to be shown in a detached, externalised form one of our own maladies, and we found it bore no resemblance between love and death, far more striking than those which are usually pointed out, that they make us probe deeper, in the fear that its reality may elude us, into the mystery of personality. And this malady which Swann's love had become had so proliferated, was so closely interwoven with all his habits, with all his actions, with his thoughts, his health, his sleep, his life, even with what he hoped for after his death, was so utterly inseparable from him, that it would have been impossible to eradicate it without almost entirely destroying him; as surgeons say, his love was no longer operable.

Freud remarks on the heightening of passion by "incitement premiums," but he meant societal and related barriers as well as the inward process of repression. Proust pragmatically tells us that sexual jealousy is the greatest of incitement premiums, with the comic consequence that the sexual itself becomes devalued: "Odette's person, indeed, no longer held any great place in it." Her photograph, even her actual face, refuses identity "with the painful and continuous anxiety which dwelt in his mind." Love and death have come dangerously close, and the debonair Swann approaches the abyss, but to us it is exquisitely funny:

Sometimes he hoped that she would die, painlessly, in some accident, since she was out of doors, in the streets, crossing busy thoroughfares, from morning to night. And as she always returned safe and sound, he marvelled at the strength and the suppleness of the human body, which was able continually to hold at bay, to outwit all the perils that beset it (which to Swann seemed innumerable since his own secret desire has strewn them in her path), and almost with impunity, to its career of mendacity, to the pursuit of pleasure. And Swann felt a very cordial sympathy with the sultan Mahomet II whose portrait by Bellini he admired, who, on finding that he had fallen madly in love with one of his wives, stabbed her to death in order, as his Venetian biographer artlessly relates, to recover his peace of mind. Then he would be ashamed of thinking thus only of himself, and his own sufferings would seem to deserve no pity now that he himself held Odette's very life so cheap.

The climax of "Swann in Love," one of the most famous passages in all of Proust, follows a colorful dream that compounds Forcheville, Swann's rival for Odette, with Napoleon III, again in a comic register for us, but not for poor Swann, who at last believes that he has had enough:

But while, an hour after his awakening, he was giving instructions to the barber to see that his stiffly brushed hair should not become disarranged on the journey, he thought of his dream again, and saw once again, as he had felt them close beside him, Odette's pallid complexion, her too thin cheeks, her drawn fea-

tures, her tired eyes, all the things which—in the course of those successive bursts of affection which had made of his enduring love for Odette a long oblivion of the first impression that he had formed of her—he had ceased to notice since the early days of their intimacy, days to which doubtless, while he slept, his memory had returned to seek their exact sensation. And with the old, intermittent caddishness which reappeared in him when he was no longer unhappy and his moral standards dropped accordingly, he exclaimed to himself: "To think that I've wasted years of my life, that I've longed to die, that I've experienced my greatest love, for a woman who didn't appeal to me, who wasn't even my type."

Caddishness reappears when unhappiness ceases, and this allows our morality to sink to its normal level. That delicious observation is preamble to Swann's immortal lament, fit medicine for all of us, of whatever gender or sexual persuasion. Odette certainly was not Swann's mode, genre, type, being neither high enough nor low enough for an aesthete and dandy with so brilliant a social life. Swann, alas, is caught; in Proust's cosmos you cannot say "Goodbye, Odette, and I forgive you for everything I ever did to you" (the American mode) or "Falling out of love is one of the great human experiences; you seem to see the world with newly awakened eyes" (Anglo-Irish style). For Swann love dies, but jealousy endures longer; so he marries Odette, not despite but because she has betrayed him, with women as well as with men. Proust's explanation for the marriage is worthy of him:

Almost everyone was surprised at the marriage, and that in itself is surprising. No doubt very few people understand the purely subjective nature of the phenomenon we call love, or how it creates, so to speak, a supplementary person, distinct from the person whom the world knows by the same name, a person most of whose constituent elements are derived from ourselves.

Long after Swann's jealousy in regard to his wife has followed his love for her into oblivion, his memory of jealousy still torments him, and his researches continue:

He went on trying to discover what no longer interested him, because his old self, though it had shrivelled to extreme decrepitude, still acted mechanically, in accordance with preoccupations so utterly abandoned that Swann could not now succeed even in picturing to himself that anguish—so compelling once that he had been unable to imagine that he would ever be delivered from it, that only the death of the woman he loved (though death, as will be shown later on in this story by a cruel corroboration, in no way diminishes the sufferings caused by jealousy) seemed to him capable of smoothing the path of his life which then seemed impassably obstructed.

The presage of the Albertine-Marcel hell belongs here because Swann is Marcel's forerunner, the John the Baptist who prophesies the jealous crucifixion of the Narrator's younger self. Proust provides a double transition between the two martyrdoms, the ordeal by jealousy that afflicts Saint-Loup in his affair with Rachel, and Swann's direct, prophetic warning to the unheeding Marcel.

Before examining this crossing, it seems appropriate to confront two unfair criticisms currently aimed at Proust. Why is the Narrator not half-Jewish, as Proust was, and, doubtless now more important, why is the Narrator heterosexual when Proust was bisexual, with the homoerotic impulse stronger in him? One prevalent defense stresses Proust's desire for universality, but that seems hardly relevant. Another points out that even in 1922, while the aftermath of the Dreyfus affair was still fresh, homosexuality carried a stigma. This is not altogether convincing either; Proust is so great an artist that his aesthetic dignity deserves our seeking aesthetic motives for what were essentially aesthetic decisions. Is it a better novel if the Narrator is a Christian heterosexual?

Biographical scholars have cleared away the nonsense that allegorizes Marcel's affair with Albertine into Proust's relationship with Alfred Agostinelli. *Within a Budding Grove* is an ingenious translation of *L'Ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*, though it does not catch all of *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Blossom*. Ironize that into a budding grove of young boys and you destroy the aesthetic wistfulness that Proust achieves. Albertine's lesbianism, a haunting splendor as Proust handles it, allegorizes very crudely as Agostinelli's lapses into heterosexuality. Proust knew precisely what he was doing: Swann and Marcel are con-

trasts to the homosexual Charlus and the bisexual Saint-Loup. The tortments of love and jealousy transcend gender and sexual orientation, and it would spoil the novel's mythology of the Cities of the Plain if the Narrator could not distance himself from homosexuals and Jews alike.

Proust's main concern is not social history or sexual liberation or the Dreyfus affair (though he was consistently an active supporter of Dreyfus). Aesthetic salvation is the enterprise of his vast novel; Proust challenges Freud as the major mythmaker of the Chaotic Era. The story he creates is a visionary romance depicting how the Narrator matures from Marcel into the novelist Proust, who in the book's final volume reforms his consciousness and is able to shape his life into a new form of wisdom. Proust rightly judged that the Narrator would be most effective if he could assume a dispassionate stance regarding the mythology that raises the narrative into a cosmological poem, Dantesque as well as Shakespearean. Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert are left behind in Proust's leap into a vision that compounds Sodom and Gomorrah, Jerusalem, and Eden: three abandoned paradises. The Narrator, as a Gentle heterosexual, is more persuasive as a seer of this new mythology.

BETWEEN SWANN and Marcel, sufferers in the breathless air of jealousy, the Narrator inserts Saint-Loup, who will marry Gilberte, Swann's daughter and Marcel's first love, and who will die all too soon, a victim of World War I. Embedded in the waning affair between Saint-Loup and Rachel is what may be Proust's most pungent apothegm on jealousy: "Jealousy, which prolongs the course of love, is not capable of retaining many more ingredients than the other products of the imagination."

I reflect, as I read this, that Proust is the true doctor for all those unhappily in love, which means, sooner or later, all those in love. Unfortunately, his medicine, like all remedies for love, works only after the illness—even in its pure form of jealousy—is over. He provides retrospective comfort, the only kind we can accept. It is a belated delight to be told that jealousy is a weak poem, unable to develop even the three or four images that it harbors. In the novels that we write with our lives, the jealousy that consumes us at a particular time fades into the seriocomic paths of all deceased Eros. Saint-Loup is neither an art historian of jealousy, like his father-in-law, nor its novelist, like his friend Marcel. Love, kept falteringly alive by jealousy, dies with it, and Saint-Loup

gently suffers the curious comfort of having become a familiar and reassuring relic for Rachel:

Sometimes Rachel came in so late at night that she could ask her former lover's permission to lie down beside him until the morning. This was a great comfort to Robert, for it reminded him how intimately, after all, they had lived together, simply to see that even if he took the greater part of the bed for himself it did not in the least interfere with her sleep. He realised that she was more comfortable, lying close to his familiar body, than she would have been elsewhere.

It is difficult to establish the priorities between humor and sadness here; what matters most is that neither Saint-Loup nor Rachel feels either sadness or regret as they fall asleep together in the emptiness that has replaced passion. His former jealousy has fallen away from Saint-Loup into this quasi-familial interchange. Swann, as he acknowledges to Marcel, is not capable of even that much of a retrospective ghostliness of ancient attachments:

"People are very inquisitive. I've never been inquisitive, except when I was in love, and when I was jealous. And a lot I ever learned! Are you jealous?" I told Swann that I had never experienced jealousy, that I did not even know what it was. "Well, you can count yourself lucky. A little jealousy is not too unpleasant, for two reasons. In the first place, it enables people who are not inquisitive to take an interest in the lives of others, or of one other at any rate. . . . Even when one is no longer attached to things, it's still something to have been attached to them; because it was always for reasons which other people didn't grasp. The memory of those feelings is something that's to be found only in ourselves; we must go back into ourselves to look at it."

In his aesthetic solipsism, Swann seems more than ever a parody of Ruskin, whose idolatry of art is transmuted into the collector's self-idolatry. In Proust's fine irony, Swann's word "inquisitive" simply means "caring," and we abandon Swann with a sense of great chill. The metaphor or

transference that Freud called "love," Proust calls "jealousy," so that when Marcel tells the invalid Swann that he has never felt jealous, he implicitly confesses that he did not love Gilberte. Time's revenges are about to descend upon him in the novel's great affair of jealousy, the demonic parody of its search for lost time. The Albertine-Marcel saga of possession, jealousy, death, and subsequent augmented jealousy begins as it should, with jealousy, which, according to the Narrator, *precedes* Marcel's love for Albertine. Early in *The Captive* the pattern is made clear: the excitation of his jealousy is what motivates Marcel, in a contest with Albertine's lesbian lovers that he can never hope to win:

In leaving Balbec, I had imagined that I was leaving Gomorrah, plucking Albertine from it; in reality, alas, Gomorrah was disseminated all over the world. And partly out of jealousy, partly out of ignorance of such joys (a case which is extremely rare), I had arranged unawares this game of hide and seek in which Albertine would always elude me.

If Freudian love is the overestimation of the object, then Proustian jealousy, far more dialectical and ambivalent, is at once the underestimation of the object and the lunatic hyperbolization of her appeal for everyone else. And as Proust emphasizes, it can contain total contradictions:

I should not have been jealous if she had enjoyed her pleasures in my vicinity, with my encouragement, completely under my surveillance, thereby relieving me of any fear of mendacity; nor should I have been jealous if she had moved to a place so unfamiliar and remote that I could not imagine, had no possibility of knowing, and no temptation to know, her manner of life. In either case, my uncertainty would have been eliminated by a knowledge or an ignorance equally complete.

Certainty and knowledge alike destroy the romance of jealousy, which in Proust's interpretation is all romance, literary and experiential. But what can we ever be certain of except death, and what at last can we know, except the incommunicable experience of death? Why does Proust, the artist of jealousy, produce so unrelenting a tragicomedy of the lover's compulsiveness? It is Proust—not Ruskin, Pater, Wilde, and

their heirs in Yeats, Joyce, Beckett—who is the uncontested high priest of the religion of art. Art, and not sexual possession, is Proust's only escape from the experiential romance of jealousy, and *Search's* final volume, *Time Regained*, rescues the novel from the literary romance of jealousy. However Proust acquired his quasi-Hindu stance of the self, he hugely enjoys his apocalypse of jealousy in *The Captive* and *The Fugitive*, and so do we. But we wince at it also, and Proust is preparing us for a very different vision of reality, one for which there is a past and perhaps even a future, whereas for jealousy there is only present time, however retrospective the jealousy may be.

Albertine diagnoses Marcel's jealousy not at all, assuring him that her lies result only from her love for him. The Narrator never solves the reader's wonder about why Albertine holds onto Marcel as long as she does; she is the Muse and does not yield her secrets. When she flees, her farewell letter ends, "I leave you the best of myself," a statement as true and as false as everything else in the affair. After her accidental death horseback riding, Marcel receives two notes from her in response to his lying letter that he will marry her friend Andrée; the first congratulates him on his choice, while the second offers to return to him. This perfect contradiction, abrogated only by Albertine's death, prepares Marcel and the reader for the well-nigh Napoleonic campaign of research that the survivor mounts into the erotic life of the lost beloved, mostly by his inquiry into Andrée, once her lover and now, for a time, his.

Only an inadequate reader would dare to make moralizing observations against Proust's *Search*; the book's grandeur and its irony defend it from fools. But Proust's wisdom is very hard; love is authentic among grandmother, mother, and Marcel, but between no one else in the novel. Even friendship seems as impossible as love; the true persuasion is jealousy, which is bewilderingly complex among those of the truest persuasion, the hardy exiles of Sodom and Gomorrah:

Some—those no doubt who have been most timid in childhood—are not greatly concerned with the kind of physical pleasure they receive, provided that they can associate it with a masculine face. Whereas others, whose sensuality is doubtless more violent, feel an imperious need to localise their physical pleasure. These latter, perhaps, would shock the average person with their avowals. They live perhaps less exclusively beneath

the sway of Saturn's outrider, since for them women are not entirely excluded as they are for the former sort, in relation to whom women have no existence apart from conversation, flirtation, loves not of the heart but of the head. But the second sort seek out those women who love other women, who can procure for them a young man, enhance the pleasure they experience in his company; better still, they can, in the same fashion, enjoy with such women the same pleasure as with a man. Whence it arises that jealousy is kindled in those who love the first sort only by the pleasure which they may enjoy with a man, which alone seems to their lovers a betrayal, since they do not participate in the love of women, have practised it only out of habit and to preserve for themselves the possibility of eventual marriage, visualising so little the pleasure that it is capable of giving that they cannot be distressed by the thought that he whom they love is enjoying that pleasure; whereas the other sort often inspire jealousy by their love-affairs with women. For, in their relations with women, they play, for the woman who loves her own sex, the part of another woman, and she offers them at the same time more or less what they find in other men, so that the jealous friend suffers from the feeling that the man he loves is riveted to the woman who is to him almost a man, and at the same time feels his beloved almost escape him because, to these women, he is something which the lover himself cannot conceive, a sort of woman.

The tone of this passage defies description: there is irony of course, and a certain detachment, but the primary aura seems to be a kind of wonder. Proust has had distinguished critics—Beckett, Bréc, Benjamin, Girard, Genette, Bersani, Shattuck (whom I prefer) among them—but more than Joyce, Proust defeats his critics. A novel of 3,300 pages, sinuous beyond comparison, is almost an *Arabian Nights* in itself. Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* seems to me the only Western novel as strong (or as long!), but *Clarissa* centers on only two personages, the martyred *Clarissa* and her despoiler, Lovelace. Marcel and Albertine are the enigmas of *Search*, but it is hardly their novel alone. Nor is it the Narrator's, the now-matured Marcel; uncannily it is Proust's novel, and he is not quite either the Narrator or Marcel. I know the Narrator's views on jealousy; I

am not certain that I know Proust's, for the Narrator is neither homosexual nor Jewish. When wisdom speaks most powerfully, in the closing volume of the novel, the Narrator almost imperceptibly fuses into the novelist Proust, and the mordant humor of jealousy is set aside. That will come later, but we are not done with that true persuasion as yet.

There is an ecstatic passage in *The Captive* that pretends to assail jealousy and instead ironically celebrates it:

one's jealousy, ransacking the past in search of a clue, can find nothing; always retrospective, it is like the historian who has to write the history of a period from which he has no documents; always belated, it dashes like an enraged bull to the spot where it will not find the dazzling, arrogant creature who is tormenting it and whom the crowd admires for his splendour and cunning. Jealousy thrashes around in the void.

A disabled historian and a deceived bull: as metaphors for jealousy, these are not complimentary, and yet the Narrator, recalling Marcel's investigations of Albertine's exuberantly active career of lesbian Eros, is moved to analogize jealousy and the desire for posthumous fame:

When we try to consider what will happen to us after our own death, is it not still our living self which we mistakenly project at that moment? And is it much more absurd, when all is said, to regret that a woman who no longer exists is unaware that we have learned what she was doing six years ago than to desire that of ourselves, who will be dead, the public shall still speak with approval a century hence? If there is more real foundation in the latter than in the former case, the regrets of my retrospective jealousy proceeded none the less from the same optical error as in other men the desire for posthumous fame.

The specific other men are the precursors: Flaubert, Stendhal, Balzac, Baudelaire, Ruskin, but they certainly include Proust the novelist, into whom the Narrator will merge. The "optical error" is a sickness not ignoble, as Keats would have said, and the link between jealousy and literary art is overt. Earlier though, the Narrator has made a parenthetical remark: "It is astonishing what a want of imagination jealousy, which

spends its time making petty suppositions that are false, shows when it comes to discovering what is true." The limitations of jealousy are another preamble to the emergence of Proustian vocation. Thrashing about in his void, Marcel found, "There is no idea that does not carry in itself its possible refutation, no word that does not imply its opposite."

Paralysis ensues; Marcel is little better off when he affirms that "Ly-ing is essential to humanity. It plays as large a part perhaps as the quest for pleasure, and is moreover governed by that quest." Such an observation might perhaps help to make a moralist, but not a novelist. A good contrast comes when the Narrator, in *Time Regained*, is able to see how useful Albertine had been to him, from a literary point of view: "The happy years are the lost, the wasted years, one must wait for suffering before one can work." We perceive that the Narrator has become one with Proust the novelist when the long-deceased Albertine receives her just tribute:

And in a sense I was right to trace them back to her, for if I had not walked on the front that day, if I had not got to know her, all these ideas would never have been developed (unless they had been developed by some other woman). But I was wrong too, for this pleasure which generates something within and which, retrospectively, we seek to place in a beautiful feminine face, comes from our senses: but the pages I would write were something that Albertine, particularly the Albertine of those days, would quite certainly never have understood. It was, however, for this very reason (and this shows that we ought not to live in too intellectual an atmosphere), for the reason that she was so different from me, that she had fertilized me through unhappiness and even, at the beginning, through the simple effort which I had to make to imagine something different from myself.

There is the essence of why the Narrator, who had been Marcel, is now enabled to become Proust the novelist and not merely another Swann, reduced to examining his collection of jealous memories. What saves Proust from being the snob and the jealous paranoiac he might have been is an enormous labor, at once therapeutic, aesthetic, and (what else can I call it?) mystical. All of Proust's readers hear at last in

Search the reverberations that Roger Shattuck aptly compares to Hindu conceptions of the self. *Search* is the product of a discipline that has cast aside what Krishna in the *Bhavad-gita* calls "dark inertia." It may be another irony, not necessarily Proustian, that the novelist of *In Search of Lost Time* is our truest modern multiculturalist, transcending some of the distinctions between the Western and Eastern Canons.