

# The French Third Republic through the Narrative Experience

Eva GJORGJEVSKA

e-mail: [eva.gorgievska@ugd.edu.mk](mailto:eva.gorgievska@ugd.edu.mk)

## Abstract

The approach to social developments in literary works is not intended to provide a documented representation of a particular historical and political moment, which would serve later as a serious archived leverage for history. However, the writer's sensibility is able to capture in his work the inner meaning of the past events to provide a certain testimony of the historical progress. In this paper we will focus on Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time* in order to extract its subtle vision of some historical moments during the French Third Republic in the light of the experience of the French society and the mentalities that formed public opinion. We will focus notably on the dual function of history that can be seen in Proust - first as an imaginary content that aestheticizes and idealizes history, and second as a conflict that in a particular historical moment based its prestige on culture, although each time the history was included in a different conception.

**Keywords:** *historical narration, the French Third Republic.*

## Introduction

In the Proustian quest that tends to create a narrative through which will be profiled the identity, history has an inevitable role and it is no coincidence that Proust uses this word with its two different meanings.<sup>1</sup> According to Proust, the narrative identity is rooted in the moral responsibility to the past, allowing the collective memory to take shape in the text. But every reader will agree that Proust's novel can not be called *historical* in the classical sense of

---

<sup>1</sup> The French language doesn't make the distinction between the two terms *history* and *story* and uses only the word *history* in its double sense.

the word, if *historical* means a narration supported by documentation of research and which claims to show the historical truth through real or fictional characters.

If we want to understand the period described by Proust, it is necessary to review the historical context of the creation of conflicts between the characters represented in the novel and focus on the poetic work done on the historical content by the author. Some historical moments that can help in the temporal determination of the action in the novel in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century are rather given on the basis of the contingency of the history than on its relevance. In particular, the history in Proust is far more present in order to show the significance of imagination of each character and his susceptibility to aesthetization, or the affirmation of erudition that opens the doors of salons, rather than to give a mimetic statement of a lived reality. The families who represent the traditional aristocracy (the Guermantes) in the novel express the history verbally and physically as a sign of social affirmation. That is why Stéphane Chaudier will talk of "ambiguous relationship between history and sociology", of history steeped in the culture that makes it "a sign and a product (in the commercial sense of the term)", of history as "aristocratic marketing centerpiece", of "collusion between history and mundanity" (Chaudier, 2008, p. 171). Taking into account that the two dominant social groups in the novel are the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, their prestige will play exactly on the map of history, that is to say on how each one of them can benefit from history. "Historic means aristocratic - and the matching of these two meanings is significant. The text reflects the idea that the noble is more historical than the plebeian - because the cultural traces left by the first one are more abundant or simply better taken into account "... (Chaudier, 2008, p. 171).

However, in the Narrator's digressions in which the artificiality of the history is revealed are very few or as Chaudier says: "If the distinction between "history" and "mundane history" exists in the mind of the speaker, it only shows itself after an intellectual effort of correction, which is very similar to self-censorship" (Chaudier, 2008, p. 171). The history that is under the threat of disappearance shows its qualities as signs emptied of content or value: "The aristocrat is almost always a superficial being, imbued with a vain superiority, claimed with much more confidence when it is less valuable. But as much inconsistent as it is, this man's knowledge of the world disputes, by its mere existence, the monopoly of scholarly history and its claim to form itself into standard " (Chaudier, 2008, p. 172).

**The conflict during the fall of the Second Empire and the beginnings of the Third Republic**

*In search of lost time* thematizes the two major classes of French society, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, at the time when the desire of the bourgeoisie to imitate the nobility that serves her as a reference model becomes evident, creating a moral and an aesthetic attraction. But if the nobility still retains prestige in the memory of its political power, yet it loses its economic strength, and it is here that the bourgeoisie can stage with its advantages. P.V. Zima (Zima, 1973) for example analyses the period of the Third Republic not as a confrontation of the two classes, but as a political-economic symbiosis between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. In particular, as the bourgeoisie needs the aristocracy to ensure the capital it has, the aristocracy needs the economic support of the bourgeoisie: "All this was more than atavism. It was a dynamic symbiosis of two social strata, when perhaps one supported the other economically, but was in return supported by it politically" (Zima, 1973, p. 252). With a long history and political foundations, the aristocracy must fascinate the bourgeoisie, and it becomes its model likely to imitate. But, losing the real power it had once possessed, the aristocracy keeps its prestige only in the salons, where the desire of the bourgeoisie becomes illusory: it becomes indeed a search for something that no longer exists in actuality, or as Zima said, a "desire of myth." For its part, the aristocracy is nostalgic for its past and the feudal system in which it was dominant and that it also wants to update, creating a self-myth that does not match the present times.

The complexity of the social situation is due, according to Zima, to the fact that the aristocracy itself remains divided over accepting the bourgeoisie. On one side there is the Orleanist aristocracy, who accepts the collaboration with the capitalist tendencies of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie for its part sees an interest in the association with the nobility in order to achieve the conditions of the free disposal of the capital, being afraid on the other side of the democratic society, the workers, the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie or the lower middle class who is likely to endanger the capital. But there is also another aristocracy related to the peasantry, which understands the gradual loss of power and influence, regrets the feudal past, the old regime, the Christianity, and cannot adapt to the new forms of capitalism:

In France there is, however, a feudal nobility, conservative, heir to the stubborn Frond of the Old Regime and the restoration of Charles X. Despite the revolutions of "89" and "30", this nobility proved itself incapable of playing an active role within the social symbiosis and in

the integration into the bourgeois economy. Representing a portion of the peasantry whose political importance (electoral) is questionable, since it lacks homogeneity and consciousness, it remains committed to a feudal world view, to a mystical conception of the Christian religion and reflects an anachronistic misunderstanding and hostility towards the capitalist system and the institutions of the parliamentary democracy (Zima, 1973, p. 252).

Therefore, the confrontation of the two classes is not represented in the novel through a Marxist vision, but using the metaphor of a transparent barrier that threatens at any time to break and cause a turbulence of unexpected events. Indeed, it is important to note that in the poetic image that Proust creates and that brings together the sea life, he puts the emphasis on the biological foundations, which consist of the desire for determination of personal social space. The hunger as a primary suffering in the social inequality and the irrationality that it bears in itself is what is causing the attack of the crowd:

And at night they did not dine in the hotel, where, hidden springs of electricity flooding the great dining-room with light, it became as it were an immense and wonderful aquarium against whose wall of glass the working population of Balbec, the fishermen and also the tradesmen's families, clustering invisibly in the outer darkness, pressed their faces to watch, gently floating upon the golden eddies within, the luxurious life of its occupants, a thing as extraordinary to the poor as the life of strange fishes or mollusks (an important social question, this: whether the wall of glass will always protect the wonderful creatures at their feasting, whether the obscure folk who watch them hungrily out of the night will not break in some day to gather them from their aquarium and devour them...) (Proust, 1987, JFF, t. 1, p. 517) (Translated from French by E.Gj.).

During this period, the impressions of the child-character will take place between the idealized picture of the Guermantes on one side, which fulfills their name with the imagination and history, and the reality on the other side, which reduces them to the status of ordinary and usual neighbors. The key scene is the one at the Opera that can present a micro-image of the society of the divided classes. The division of the spectators in the balconies and the parterre shows the unsurpassable barrier and the impossible transfer from one

class to another. The simple spectators (among them the narrator) are in the illuminated parterre, and the bourgeois take advantage of this opportunity to watch the people in the theater, naming them, showing them, identifying them and also seated with the desire to be seen. In the height of the balconies and almost completely hidden in the darkness on their seats, showing from time to time their faces as "goddesses out of the water", are situated the nobles who communicate naturally between them. The two worlds are separated, and we can see many contrasts here: top-bottom, light-dark, curiosity-indifference, creating a scene of baroque luxury.

We are located in a period where the distinction between the classes is acute and is reflected in the structure of the theater between the "ordinary people" and the "white deities:" "because, despite the individual characteristics, there was still at this time, between any rich man of this part of the aristocracy and any rich man of the world of finance or of the high industry, a very significant difference" (Proust, 1987, CG t. 2, p. 47). In this show and this real drama of life, the essence is rarely in the real experience of the representation, because it is reduced to the superficial vision, when the importance of the presence is equal to the fact to be seen.

### **The image of the bourgeois upstart in the novel**

The analysis of the social life, which represents, for Proust, an important part of the portrait of the national identity, starts with the presentation of the bourgeois salon of Mrs. Verdurin in the second part of the novel, *Swann`s Way*. Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the identities (social, national, religious, etc.) begin to move, to lose their permanent contours and to become versatile. At the same time, the principle of capital becomes the first principle of social reorganization. As indicates Jean Canavaggia: "It is Marat who had seen in his *Friend of the People* that "the feudalism of the former regime would be replaced by the feudalism of money" (Canavaggia, 1986, p. 18). It is the strengthening of the capital that allows the bourgeoisie to protest and to compete with the aristocracy. The period is not yet a simple change of ideologies. It is marked by a constant loss of the economic power of the aristocracy, but also by its continued domination at the imaginary level, in the consciousness of its own importance and also in the unreachable ideal of the prestige in the eyes of the new bourgeoisie. As stated Barbara Carnevali:

At the dawn of the 20th century, although it had been wounded to death, not only was the French nobility not yet out of the history, but it retained almost intact its social eminence, despite its loss of political

power and a considerable economic weakening. The secret of its longevity lies essentially in the *prestige*. As if it had followed a strategy of unconscious survival aimed to compensate for the material decline, as if it had put on the forces that remained on the symbolic plan: in exasperating its class identity, seeing in it the only attribute that its competitors could never have claimed - the idea itself of *nobility* - and in preening over themselves more than any other European nobility of its distinction (Carnevali, 2006).

On the other side remains the bourgeoisie whose capitalist supremacy is not sufficient to succeed in the creation of the myth of itself and of the symbolic domination. It remains in its conscience that it must reach what once the aristocracy possessed, choosing the path of culture and of arts as a sign of refinement and taste. P. V. Zima analyses the way in which a particular group, in this case the bourgeoisie, is trying to arrive at a higher stage, always taking for model a higher "reference group". Thus, the path of the imitation is open:

The members of a particular social group can aspire to introduce themselves to a "superior" group as that to which they belong, to "emigrate - sounds like Proust - into the high society". The individual wishing to climb the social ladder will adopt the values and the ways of its "reference group" that he has flattered, hoping to persuade those who he wishes to become similar to, to open to him their ranks. The essential is that the values that he claims to "arrive at", in order to make him a "situation" that he considers worthy of its qualities, are not the values of his group of origin, but the values of an admired group, which he hopes to become a member of by endorsing their "vision of the world" (Zima, 1973, p. 252) (Translated from French by E.Gj.).

### **The Jew and the society or the inaccessible truth**

A new historical moment, which will put into consideration the Jewish question and will be present throughout the novel, is the Dreyfus affair. This affair took place in 1894 and involved the accusation of Alfred Dreyfus of having collaborated with the enemy and transmitted confidential information of the French army to the Germans. In 1897, when Clemenceau requested a revision of the trial, one discovers the forgery of Esterhazy's signature, while the guilty person in all these shenanigans is found to be one Colonel Henry, who committed suicide when the truth was discovered. Despite the many

revisions, despite the evidence favoring of Dreyfus, the case will remain in the collective memory and in the attitudes of some French as a sign of a betrayal of the nation by the Jews (Canavaggia, 1986) and as a destabilizing event in French society. These events will disturb the spirits of the characters in the Proustian novel and will also testify to the power of the mind to create reality, to modify the truth and of the use of a present reality in the social criticism developed in a more refined and implicit way. The narration passes through all the spheres of social life and no class is spared, but all classes are obliged to take a position in relation to the question of national character. The truth of Dreyfus will be defended not only by his compatriots, but also by individuals who had no previous relationship with the Jews. On the other hand, the blindness that led to a kind of fanaticism during the Dreyfus affair among some Jews is a negative factor and is different from the Jewish question raised by the concrete conditions.

When it comes to the Dreyfus affair, the memory does not have the status of an archived history based on documentation and according to the classification of Ricœur, can be called "a manipulated memory," a sort of "reliving" that is created by virtue of a certain ideology. In Proust's vision, the Affair shows the impossibility of historical support of the facts, which remains non-spoken and hidden, not allowing the evidence of truth: "The ideological process is opaque to a double title. First, it remains concealed; to the difference of the utopia, it is too unavowable; it is hidden and is returning in a denunciation against the opponents in the field of competition between ideologies: it is always the other which has been languishing in the ideology" (Ricœur, 2000, p. 99-100).

The ideology, as is indicated by the same philosopher, is the basis from which a story can be created with the identity function of a determined people, in this case the Jews: "It is to this title of factor of integration that the ideology can be obtained as guardian of the identity, to the extent that it provides a symbolic replica of the causes of fragility of this identity" (Ricœur, 2000). Especially, as the truth of Albertine is inaccessible for the narrator, even the truth of the trial of Dreyfus is invisible. The narrator can infinitely seek the truth about the tastes of Albertine, but he will learn nothing. Similarly, he can vainly seek the truth about the accusation of Dreyfus, but this truth depends on the political machinations that are inaccessible to the ordinary man.

Thus, at this stage of the novel, the anti-Semitism is a phenomenon of individual blindness and a lack of light on the subject of the Jewish question rather than a negative image of the Jew. At the beginning of the Affair, a large part of the intellectuals group around radical tendencies and the anti-nationalism, not taking into account the beliefs of the government. But at the

time, the cumbersomeness of these determinations grows and the divisions become more painful.

However the situation is completely different when it comes to the support that Dreyfus can get from the Jews as himself. Among other themes, the novel follows the perpetual integration of the Jew into French society. That is why the first appearance of the character of Bloch happens in a social environment more open to his Jewishness. This is explained during the evening organized by the old aristocrat Mrs. Villeparisis. As regards the social treatment of Bloch, it does not reach the level of anti-Semitism. Notably, in the future, anti-Semitism shows itself, as defined by Sartre, as an ambiguous passion:

The Romanians, the Egyptians and the Turks can hate the Jews. But in a French salon the differences between these people are not so noticeable and an Israelite doing his entry as if he was coming out of the bottom of the desert, the body looked like a hyena, the neck obliquely tilted and spreading in large "salams", confirms perfectly a taste of orientalism (Proust, 1987, CG, t. II, p. 181).

Despite the Dreyfus affair, the Jews do not feel hatred for the French. Rather the Jews are viewed with a delicious interest that can be used to satisfy the need of exoticism, to fulfill the needs of imaginary otherness. Jewishness at this stage in the novel is an idea to consume, which is added to the egoistic needs in the salon, but that is not as ephemeral and that deeply affects the characters in their spiritual needs:

The young Greek lady, daughter of a wealthy banker, and to the mode at this time, resembles one of these figures which, in history, ballet, and aesthetics at the same time, symbolize in flesh and bone, the Hellenic art; yet, at the theater, the stage trivializes these images; on the contrary, the spectacle in which the entry in a living room of a Turk, a Jew, attends us, by animating the figures, making them more strange, as if the beings were recalled by a mediumistic effect. It is the soul (or rather the little things to which it is reduced, at least so far, the soul, in these kinds of materialization), it is the soul viewed previously by us only in the museums, the soul of the ancient Greeks, of former Jews, ripped out of life and at the same time trivial and transcendental, which seems to run before we sign this disconcerting mimicry" ... it seemed to me that if I was, in the light of the living



room of Mrs. Villeparisis, taking shots of Bloch, they would have given Israel this same image, so disturbing because it does not seem to emanate from the humanity, so disappointing because at the same time it resembles too much to humanity, as can be shown us in the spiritualist photographs (Proust, 1987, CG t. 2, p. 593).

For the one that is in a privileged position of spectator of this diversity, the presence of the other nationalities has an effect of reincarnation of a work of art that must present the cultural identity of a country. More precisely, it is a question of collective representation which is realized through one person in the eyes of the spectators, and that, much more than a piece of theater, has the power to transmit the spiritual essence of a people, extracted from the past centuries. Jean-Paul Sartre even indicates the sadistic and passionate nature of anti-Semitism:

Such is the anti-Semitism. Also one of the components of the hatred is the deep and sexual attraction for the Jews. It is first a curiosity fascinated by the evil. Especially, I think, it belongs to the sadism ... But since the evil, for the anti-Semite, is embodied in these disarmed and not at all frightening men, it is never found in the painful need to be heroic: it is *fun* to be anti-Semitic. We can beat and torture the Jews without fear... Also the sadistic attraction of the anti-Semite for the Jew is so high that it is not uncommon to see one of these sworn enemies of Israel surrounded by Jewish friends (Sartre, 1954, p. 51) (Translated from French by E.Gj.).

The Affair highlights one of the Proustian rules in the creation of the truth. It shows the truth in its full arbitrariness, as a kind of construction, a manipulation. The evening at Mrs. Villeparisis' happens in the heart of the Dreyfus affair. The Jewishness continues to be a phenomenon of passion beyond reason. The narrator says: "When the philosophical systems that contain the most truth are dictated to their authors, in the last analysis, by a reason of feeling, how can we assume that, in a simple political matter as the Dreyfus affair, reasons of this kind could not, to the knowledge of the competent debater, govern his reason?" (Proust, 1987, CG t.2, p.593). Even if the concrete social situation says that the tolerance of the Jew is indisputable, behind the visible events a political situation is happening that testifies the not so naive and indifferent acceptance of this man. But what the author proposes is that the way in which the individual consciousness, in this

case that of Bloch, sees his own existence as Jew, opens the question of what it means to be Jewish. One of the ways in which Bloch is assimilated here is the effort of integration by the insistence on its own intellectualism. But this difficult assimilation happens at the time when any action is considered as foreign, coming from outside, feels inauthentic, is practiced in a specific purpose and not for itself. By playing the intellectual interested in the political situation and advocating for the rights of the accused, Bloch invests all his forces to reach the truth, to prove the lucidity of his thought. The lack of experience, the contention, does not allow him to look simple and to have a broader perspective on the events. In claiming to surpass the others by the possession of truth, he has not the depth to know that the one closest to the truth is he who knows that constancy is not its characteristic. The Dreyfus affair proves indeed that things are based on different interpretations and the important thing is to know which interpretation will be dominant. Even if it is not a complete relativization, due to Dreyfus being guilty or innocent, the aggressive desire to possess the truth can mislead the researcher.

Gradually, by seeking the consent of the guests in the salon, Bloch does not succeed in convincing them of Dreyfus's innocence and eventually he becomes undesirable. The desire to keep their position, as well as certain snobbery, led most people to consider Bloch with contempt, even if they could perhaps agree with his position on Dreyfus. Some suspect Bloch might even be a spy because of the many issues that he raises. Even if there is not a great risk of exclusion of the Jews, the political issues that concern them are accentuated and Bloch does not remain among the French, but must bear the stigma of his own destiny. Also, the new situation in France began to promote anti-Semitism as a national cause.

Even more picturesque is the scene of the dinner of the narrator and Saint-Loup in a restaurant in Paris where in a symbolic way the aristocrats and the Jews are separated by a wall. More than a hierarchy which is due to the qualities of the person, the anti-Semitism is represented as one of the current beliefs, a system of ideas, as a fact of mentalities, as a perception presented in a temporal constellation:

They considered Dreyfus and his supporters as traitors, although, twenty-five years later, the ideas having had time to be classified and for dreyfusisme to take a certain elegance in history, the sons of these same young people would declare to the "intellectuals" who interrogate them, that surely, if they had lived in that time, they would have been for Dreyfus, without knowing much more what had been the Affair than the countess Edmond of Pourtales or the marquise of

Galliffet, other splendors already extinct in the day of their birth (Proust, 1987, t. 2, CG, p. 253).

### **The French society during World War I**

In the last part of the novel *Time Regained*, one of the trends of the Narrator is the reconstruction of the historic period of the Franco - German conflict in the war of 1914-1918. Summarized as an impossible testimony, the novel abandons the causation of the history in order to transfer in the inner world of the narrator for which the war in its generality means an intensity of emotions and passions: cruelty, torture, decadence, and suffering. Emotional and profoundly intimate, history gets its full meaning when it intersects with the personal story of the narrator, renewing some conflicting emotions of his childhood. The novel has a complex narrative structure, which is a fragmentation of the narration of several tragedies in which the characters discuss history in order to describe it from a social, ontological, ethical, and poetic point of view... By enclosing in an overall aesthetic of instability of the contours of things, history is shown as a continual review of the relationship between the individual and the nation, between the selfishness and humanity, between the depth of the things and their transient manifestation. The narrator poses himself in a specific position of the narration: reformed during the war because of the weakness of his health, he spends his time in the hospital and the narrated events are testimonies of his two short visits to Paris. This confirms his low commitment to the problem of the war - a fact that will give him perhaps a slight feeling of guilt because of the absence of the participation in the collective sacrifice, but, on the other hand, will allow him to analyze through other characters the phenomenon of the personal debt for a national cause. But, to transmit his opinions, the narrator creates a character, the baron Charlus, an intelligent aristocrat in a context of social and moral decay, slave of passions, through which the novel will glimpse all the aspects of the war. The baron is narrator's double, his spokesman, a figure of the creation and of the humanism that must meet the artist. The violence of history is shown as an extroverted theater of the latent psychological layers of that character, while each disaster of civilization that holds the instinct of the destruction by analogy becomes a reverse mirror of the affectivity that Proust radiographs through his characters. The baron is in effect the threshold that allows the ethics to transform into aesthetics, the action into creation.

But, before being incarnated in the characters, the aesthetic transformation happens first in the impressions that produce the space. In fact, the narration produces a metonymic condensation of several spaces or times,

in comparison to which can be understood the historical time, a parallelism between the history and the intertext of literature, a comparison between the personal history and the collective history by which it exceeds its first deconstruction into fragments. As if we needed a vision that would mean a reevaluation, a reflection, a decoding, a flashback and that would represent history as a perpetual transformation, as if history was asking to be transformed in the plasticity of the writing.

During the war, the city becomes a frightening space threatened by the bombing. The collective mourning shows in the streets through the signs of worsening poverty and the abandonment of houses, it creates a recognition of the cruelty and apathy and the triumph of destruction and vice. The dark area of the city and its threat are a metaphor of a space that refers to the intra-uterine life and renews some primitive fears. The city in war and its destructive force are an opening for mankind into a life of irrational aggression. Despite the obvious risk of destruction, the protagonist, who is driving around the city and whose consciousness transfer the images, makes this ruthless debacle multiplied; the force of emotional products of anguish are transformed into a strong emotion of aesthetic rapture. In this way, the diversity of the people who are scattered throughout the city (military, Indian, African) and the shades of the colors of the sky create the aesthetic impressions which remind us of the Orient, the sirens remind us of the Valkyries, and the grenades are the reminiscent of the fireworks, by producing a magical effect which makes one forget the war.

But also dominant is the scene in the salon of Mrs. Verdurin who bases her social success on her openness to the news from the front. She transforms the competition in the field of culture into media power. Every night the salon is open to chosen people who visit Verdurin to discuss the war. The only evidence of compassion and participation of these people who are watching the war from distance is the curiosity that they show about the wounded:

With regard to charity, thinking of all the miseries arising from the invasion, of so many mutilated, it was quite natural that she was obliged to make herself "even more ingenious", which forced the women with high turbans to go at the end of the afternoon to the "teas" around a table of bridge commenting the news of the "front", while at the door they were followed by their automobiles, having on the seat a beautiful military who chatted with the chauffeur (Proust, TR, 1989, t. 4, p. 48).

In fact, the sequence of events that concerns war will not move on the field of battle as would a novel with a war problematic, but the narrator is a witness of worldly transformations due to the war. The war elements that are present in the wardrobe of the ladies are saying that, for those who do not participate, the war takes on a superficial dimension, an inspiration for new pleasures at social gatherings. Rather than just a question of honor, the experience of the war is reduced to the mundane details and directs the taste in matters of culture. This alleged concern does not exclude the selfish pleasure, as Mrs Verdurin shows in all of her hypocrisy:

Mrs. Verdurin, suffering from her migraine headaches, no longer having croissants to soak in her milk coffee, had eventually obtained from Cottard an order that would permit her to have them in a certain restaurant. It had been almost as difficult to obtain the attention of the public authorities as the appointment of a general. She regained her first croissant the morning that the newspapers wrote about the sinking of the *Lusitania* (*Ibid.*, p. 80).

In this case, the space of the salon attended by Ms. Verdurin is a genuine expression of social power. The displacement of Ms. Verdurin from the rue Montalivet to the quay Conti, is a symbol of change of the capital of the bourgeoisie and the strengthening of its domination.

So almost ironically, the novel who insisted in thousands of pages on the fascination of the cultural and historical memory, led to a full anomie and the removal of all signs that relies on identity. This makes the identity a purely abstract or mental category based on the conviction that others have on a character or a group. The prestige that the aristocracy had once will be exceeded, while the vulgarity and the sham of the bourgeoisie will be transformed into creative innovation with a cultural potential. In addition, Mrs. Verdurin recognized the genius of Vinteuil before he became a musician in Paris, she felt the time when it was clever to become dreyfusiste and she appreciated the Russian Ballet, she was able to restore the vanguard in the furnishings of her salon and in her choice of artists. Bloch, who was once an example of inadequate and uneducated character, put all of the attention on his Jewishness, now he is almost unrecognizable, transformed into a man with manners, who has even changed his name, since he is called Jacques du Rozier. Therefore, it seems that the points of view that the reader could meet in the previous sections of the novel and that made reference to history as an inevitable inclusion in the body were that of the observations of the character

at a time of his experience of reality. These are not the views of the narrator who encounters a new Bloch who has succeeded not only to clear from himself the history of the people to which he belongs with all the blunders mentioned before, but also to create a new direction in history, that of the sophistication and taste in its behavior: "The discretion, discretion in the actions, in the words, had come to him with the social situation and the age, with a sort of social age, if we can say ", in such a way that "the grandchildren of Bloch would be good and discreet almost from birth"! (Proust, 1987, TR, t. IV, p. 970.) What the Narrator previously referred to as a biological predisposition now is submitted to a cultural refiguration. In fact, the new way of refined existence already creates the history for the future generations giving them the privilege to be sophisticated from birth, not having to update the roots of their ancestors, but to start with the same beginning almost as Saint-Loup. Proust, who in the middle of the novel insisted on the predestination of the gestures, in some respects also surprises himself with the presentation of examples that show the domination of the culture.

Not only did the bourgeoisie finally manage to triumph, but the aristocracy went in the opposite direction, losing a part of its prestige and its charm and transforming the characters in senile figures that cannot catch up with the times. Perhaps the most ironic is the case of the baron Charlus in front of whom not only the nobility has been reduced to absurdity, but also its discursive power, whereas he appears at the end of the novel as an old man affected by aphasia and mental impotence, being pushed in a wheelchair and revealing the signs of his past vice. The reader remembers the pretentious contempt of the baron against Ms. Saint-Euverte, who will be rewarded by a profound salvation, as if the disease had not only cleared the reasoning capabilities, but also the awareness of the social indices. Once reason deleted all its pride, it will remain in Charlus the only goodness and the simplicity.

### **Conclusion**

As a result of this approach, the Proustian reality is built as an image, a surface and a constant change, and also as the unconscious, the darkness of being, and the violence. The history is built on several oppositions: history as passage and as constancy, a historical progress and a decline of the baron, the bourgeoisie against the aristocracy ... The historical time is conflicted because its representation oscillates between the random historical moments whose logic does not exist before they are connected in series and a kind of leak of the history that corresponds to the depth of being and which is the counterpart of the stagnation of time. The kaleidoscope of time is a de-essentialization of history, a figure of transformations that does not have a center, a relativity

of values recorded in time. Finally, the history is determined by the psychological predisposition to accept that does not destabilize the existing values.

### Bibliography

- Canavaggia, J. (1986) *Proust et la politique*. Paris: Nizet.
- Carnevali, B. 'On Proust and the philosophy of the prestige.', *Fabula-Lh T*, 1, 'The philosophers readers', February 2006, URL: <http://www.fabula.org/lht/1/carnevali.html>, page consulted the July 05, 2014.
- Chaudier, S. (2008) « Le discrédit de Clio », *Proust et les moyens de la connaissance / textes réunis par Annick Bouillaguet*, Strasbourg, Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, « Formes et Savoirs ».
- Proust, M. *A la recherche du temps perdu*, édition publiée sous la direction de J.-Y. Tadié, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 4 vol., 1987-1989. – t. 1, 1987. *Du côté de chez Swann ; A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs (1re partie) ; Esquisses, Introduction, Notices, Notes et variantes, Résumé, Table de concordance*. Avec la collaboration de F. Callu, F. Goujon, E. Nicole, P.-L. Rey, B. Rogers et Jo Yoshida.
- Proust, M., t. 2, 1988. *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs (2e partie) ; Le côté de Guermantes ; Esquisses, Notices et variantes, Résumé, Table de concordance*. Avec la collaboration de D. Kaotipaya, T. Laget, P.-L. Rey et B. Rogers.
- Proust, M., t. 3, 1988. *Sodome et Gomorrhe ; La prisonnière ; Esquisses, Notices, Notes et variantes, Résumé, Table de concordance*. Avec la collaboration de A. Compagnon et de P.-E. Robert.
- Proust, M., t. 4, 1989. *Albertine disparue ; Le Temps retrouvé ; Esquisses, Notices, Notes et variantes, Résumé, Table de concordance, Notes bibliographiques, Index des noms de personnes ; Index des noms de lieux ; Index des œuvres littéraires et artistiques..* Avec la collaboration de Y. Baudelle, A. Chevalier, E. Nicole, P.-L. Rey, P.-E. Robert, J. Robichez et B. Rogers.
- Ricoeur, P. (2000) *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. Paris: Seuil.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1954) *Réflexions sur la question juive*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Sprinker, M. (1995) *History and Ideology in Proust: A la recherche du temps perdu and the Third French Republic*. Cambridge University Press.
- Zima, P. V. (1973) *Le Désir du mythe: une lecture sociologique de Marcel Proust*. Paris: Nizet.