

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

WHEN PROUST DIED in November, 1922, three of the seven sections of *À la Recherche* were still unpublished. *La Prisonnière* (published in 1923) had been typed and revised but was not yet in proof. *Albertine Disparue* (published in 1925), on which he was working at the time of his death, and *Le Temps Retrouvé* (published in 1927) were still in manuscript, in those patched and corrected notebooks which Françoise calls the narrator's *paperoles*. Of the whole novel *Le Temps Retrouvé* is, in the words of the 1954 Pléiade editors, the section "qui se présente dans l'état le plus inachevé". A first version was probably already in existence in 1912. Additions and revisions made at various times during the following ten years – particularly at the end of and after the war – had transformed the text without altering the general design. How much more Proust would have written if he had lived it is difficult to say, if only because for a writer with his extraordinary fertility of invention revision was always essentially amplification. He cut and he tidied and he re-arranged but above all he added. So that if *Le Temps Retrouvé* seems to us substantially complete as it stands, we can be sure that before handing it over to the printers Proust would have made here and there some extensive interpolations. He would also have removed the countless minor blemishes caused by haste or carelessness in the original composition or the successive revisions, and he would have reconciled contradictions, smoothed away awkwardnesses of transition and in a few cases almost certainly altered the order of paragraphs or longer passages.

A superficial revision of this kind was attempted – quite legitimately, as the Pléiade editors point out (i, xxx) – by the *Nouvelle Revue Française* editors of 1927. From Proust's notebooks, with the help of a posthumous typescript made when these were more legible than they are now, they produced a more or less coherent text, in which, however, misreadings and ill-advised emendations unfortunately abound. A few examples will indicate its unreliability:

- cérébrale* for *centrale* (Pléiade, iii, 890)
- point royaliste* for *port-royaliste* (iii, 894)
- péripétie* for *prophétie* (iii, 908)
- un peu de vie* for *un peu dévié* (iii, 956).

These are errors caused by the difficulty of deciphering Proust's manuscript; others, such as the omission of *le roi des Belges* from a list of "Germans who had embraced the French cause" (iii, 913), are apparently deliberate. Moreover, there are numerous sentences of which the meaning has been altered or even destroyed by faulty punctuation or by minor emendations producing sense of a kind but not the perhaps more elusive sense which Proust wished to convey. This 1927 text was all that was available to

Proust's friend Sydney Schiff, when he added *Time Regained* to the great translation of *À la Recherche* which Scott Moncrieff died too soon to complete. Schiff – who as novelist and translator used the name Stephen Hudson – was aware of the defects of the French text but his only means of improving it was conjectural emendation.

An opportunity for a new translation which would bring the English reader of *Le Temps Retrouvé* nearer to the original text arose with the publication of Librairie Gallimard's Pléiade edition of *À la Recherche* in 1954. The Pléiade editors, M. Pierre Clarac and M. André Ferré, were charged by Proust's heirs with the task of "establishing a text of his novel which should be as faithful as possible to his intentions". This meant examining with the utmost care all the available relevant material: notebooks, typescripts and proof-sheets, revised and unrevised, as well as the original edition, and the result was a revised edition of almost flawless scholarship, which as it proceeds towards the end of the long novel departs more and more often from what had hitherto been the only known text. In *Le Temps Retrouvé* there is scarcely a single page without at least one discrepancy between the two texts, and although many of these are no more than differences of punctuation many others have a substantial effect upon the meaning. Moreover the Pléiade editors restore to the text two passages of considerable length (iii, 743-46, 779-81, both concerned with homosexuality) and a great many of a few lines or less which for one reason or another the original editors thought fit to omit. At the foot of the page they print thirty-six passages (some of twenty lines or more) which are afterthoughts not worked into the main sequence of the text – most of these are also in the original edition, but often in a modified form and in a different position – and in their elaborate critical notes they print all the significant variants found in the notebooks and a number of unfinished sentences which Proust would probably have used as the germ of lengthy developments.

This revised French text urgently called for a revised English translation. A reworking of Stephen Hudson's *Time Regained* was considered, but it was apparent that alterations of one kind or another would have to be made in almost every sentence and that it would be simpler as well as more satisfactory to prepare an entirely new translation. In translating I have allowed myself rather more freedom in departing from the authority of Proust's manuscript than the Pléiade editors. French readers want to know exactly what Proust wrote; they can guess for themselves what he might have written had he had time to revise. But English readers do not want a critical edition of a French text left in an unfinished state by its author, they want to read it with enjoyment and to understand it (since it is sometimes difficult) without too much difficulty. To help them to do this I have taken certain liberties: I have at many points altered the order of sentences or paragraphs and the division into paragraphs, I have sometimes eased the transition from one passage to another, and I have occasionally dared to add a few explanatory words – in fact I have done something of what the 1927 editors tried to do. I have, however, had the advantage of an accurate transcription of the notebooks, I have scrupulously respected Proust's words, whenever I have thought that they could represent his considered intention and I have included in my translation almost all that the 1927 editors omitted,

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including much of the material relegated to the critical notes by the Pléiade editors and leaving out only what is obviously repetitive or else too unformed to give any clear idea of Proust's meaning.

I have followed the 1927 editors and Stephen Hudson in dividing the volume into three chapters of unequal length. The frailty of the ordinary reader requires that some such division should be made, but this was not Proust's intention, for *À la Recherche* is *une œuvre de longue haleine*. Proust would have liked his ideal reader to take a deep breath, begin at the beginning and continue reading until, after a million and a quarter words, he reached the end. He had no use for chapters and only the exigencies of publication induced him to allow the work to be broken up into comparatively short volumes. For what was to be the final volume the title *Le Temps Retrouvé* was used by him as early as 1913, but it is not clear where Proust meant *La Prisonnière* to end and this last volume to begin. The break might as conveniently come at the beginning of the Tansonville episode (Pléiade, iii, 677) or at the point chosen by the Pléiade editors (iii, 691) as at the one preferred by the 1925 editors of *Albertine Disparue* (iii, 697). This last was naturally the point at which Scott Moncrieff ended *The Sweet Cheat Gone* and is therefore the one adopted by Stephen Hudson and by the present translation.

Reference: Marcel Proust, *Time Regained*, translated by Andreas Mayor, London, Chatto & Windus, 1970, p. vii-xi.