

Proust in Spain before the Civil War.

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In his "Informe crítico: Proust en España," Luis Maristany mentioned some of the first critical texts on the work of the French novelist Marcel Proust to be written or published in Spain. He, however, devoted most of this study to the Spanish translation of the initial volumes of *A la recherche du temps perdu* by Pedro Salinas. Maristany did not attempt to cite the earliest text or to show how the interest in Proust developed in Spain throughout the 1920s.¹ These were in fact two of my intentions in "Proust en España y en Hispanoamérica: La recepción 1920-1929," where I also examined in some detail the case of other Hispanic countries, especially Argentina, Chile and Mexico. Although I covered in general terms the first decade, I did not try to reach the time of the Civil War (1936-1939), which, as I have learned, had a profound impact upon the critical response to Proust in Spain. Here I would like to study in greater depth the critical reception for the entire period from 1920 to 1936 and to discuss some of the Spanish narrative works of the time that were affected by the *Recherche*.

Unlike Italy, where Lucio D'Ambra published an article on *Du côté de chez Swann* in December 1913, Spain cannot be said to have begun its reception of Proust long before any other country.² Nonetheless, as we shall see, a writer from Barcelona, "Gaziel," would claim to have heard of Marcel Proust in Paris soon after the appearance of the first volume of the *Recherche*. It is also worth noting that just six days after Proust received the Prix Goncourt on December 10th, 1919, for his second volume, *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, a newspaper of Madrid, *El Liberal*, not only announced the name of the recipient of this award, but it also published in translation a text from Proust's first book, *Les plaisirs et les jours*: "El elogio de la mala música."

¹ On various occasions, José Luis Cano and Rafael Conte referred to this early period of the reception of Proust in Spain, but their remarks were merely vague. For Jacques Fressard in "La réception de Proust en Espagne," José Ortega y Gasset appeared to be the first and only Spaniard interested in Proust during the 1920s.

² See "Il nuovo Stendhal" in *La Rassegna Contemporanea* 10 Dec. 1913 or in *Proust e la critica italiana*, 1-3.

Less than two and a half months later "Corpus Barga" (Andrés García de la Barga), who wrote from Paris a literary column for *El Sol* of Madrid, began to explain to the Spanish reading public the nature of Proust's work. His first remarks on March 27th, 1920, were quite brief--only four paragraphs--but he devoted an entire article to the author of the *Recherche* just ten days after his death on November 18th, 1922.³ In "El entierro de Proust," Barga outlined the characteristics of Proust's novel by comparing it to the works of well-known French authors, such as Balzac and Madame de Lafayette. He also noted that the Catalonian painter Josep Maria Sert had been a friend of Proust's.

Close on the heels of Barga was another Spanish critic, Enrique Díez Canedo, who studied *Du côté de chez Swann* and *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* in greater depth in his article "Marcel Proust," which was first published in April 1920 in the Basque journal *Hermes*. In portions of this article that were reprinted after Proust's death in *España* (2-XII-1922), Díez Canedo demonstrated, in particular, his accurate understanding of Proust's structural intention, which would later be denied by José Ortega y Gasset. Referring to the anticipated contents of Proust's later volumes that were listed in the early ones, Díez Canedo wrote:

Esos indices nos confirman la impresión de que no se trata... de una sucesión de recuerdos, sin más unidad que su reflejo en el alma del personaje principal, sino de algo construido, trabado, arquitecturado... y quizá escrito ya, si no del todo, en mayor parte. No podemos establecer todavía la relación; pero ya podemos sospecharla... (13).

Clearly the commentaries by José Ortega y Gasset on Marcel Proust received greater attention in Spain, as well as elsewhere, than those of any of his Spanish contemporaries. The public lecture "El arte de Marcel Proust" that he presented at the Instituto Francés of Madrid on May 9th, 1922, was reviewed in *El Sol* (10-V-1922), *La Pluma* (V-1922) and *Cosmópolis* (VI-1922). It even reached Proust's attention in Paris through a notice in *Le Gaulois* (7-VI-1922), and the French

³ Prior to Barga's article of Mar. 1920, I have found in Spain only a review of *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, which was sent from France by Julien Martel and appeared in *Cosmópolis* in Feb. 1920. I would also point out that the reception of Proust in Venezuela slightly preceded that of Spain because the French correspondent Francis de Miomandre published an article on Proust in *El Universal* of Caracas on 23 Jan. 1920.

novelist convinced Robert de Flers to have it cited in *Le Figaro* (17-VI-1922). Subsequently Ortega was asked to write for *La Nouvelle Revue Française* his famous essay "Le temps, la distance et la forme chez Proust," which was incorporated into the "Hommage à Marcel Proust" of January 1st, 1923. Its version in Spanish, "Tiempo, distancia y forma en el arte de Proust," was first published in Argentina (*La Nación* of Buenos Aires, 14-I-1923), instead of Spain.⁴

I will certainly not deny the value of this essay, which is still considered to be one of the outstanding contributions by a non-Frenchman to the "Hommage à Marcel Proust."⁵ I studied in detail Ortega's essay and his subsequent commentaries on the *Recherche* in my article "Ideas de Ortega y Gasset sobre la novela proustiana." I wish to emphasize, however, that the author of *El espectador* was not the first or only Spanish writer interested in Proust in the early 1920s, and at least on a few points, such as the construction of the *Recherche*, Enrique Díez Canedo was more accurate.

We should, of course, also remember Pedro Salinas, who may have discovered the work of Proust while he was a Spanish lecturer at the Sorbonne in Paris during World War I. Contrary to what we read in Léon Pierre-Quint's international bibliography (*Comment travaillait Proust*, 1928), it was Pedro Salinas who translated to Spanish Proust's first volume *Du côté de chez Swann* instead of José Ortega y Gasset (108). I will not belabor the case of Salinas, which I have also studied elsewhere; I will merely emphasize the veracity of the assertion implied in the title of my article "Pedro Salinas as Proust's First Translator," for no one in the world rendered any of Proust's volumes to another language before the Spanish poet. I will also add that the interest of Salinas in Proust was such that he wrote for *Indice* (1921) a dramatic fantasy about the French author: "Para un descanso en *La recherche du temps perdu*, emprendida por M. Proust." Salinas imagined that he received a personal introduction to *Du côté de chez Swann* when he entered by chance a theatre, and he saw Proust and his characters on the stage.

⁴ See letter #194 (dated by Philip Kolb 15-V-1922) in volume XXI of the *Correspondance de Marcel Proust*, where Proust wrote to Robert de Flers, "Je suis désolé que tu n'aies pas fait passer l'écho sur la conférence faite sur moi à Madrid." In the notes one may also read quotations from the brief texts published in *Le Gaulois* and *Le Figaro* (267-268).

⁵ Leighton Hodson included a major portion of it in his anthology in English *Marcel Proust: The Critical Heritage* (1989). Previously Ortega's essay, which can be read in *El Espectador* Vol. 7-8 or in his *Obras completas* Vol. 2, had also been translated twice to English, for *The New Statesman* (16-IX-1924) and for *The Hudson Review* (winter 1958).

The early knowledge of Proust in Spain during these years was indubitably aided by Salinas's translation of the first two volumes: *Por el camino de Swann* (1920) and *A la sombra de las muchachas en flor* (1922). This allowed Spaniards who did not know French to read Proust before any other language group besides the French speakers themselves.⁶ Cipriano Rivas Cherif reviewed both volumes (*La Pluma*, IX-1921, and *España*, 14-VII-1923). Even though this critic demonstrated more admiration for the work of the translator than for the novel itself, his appreciation of Proust was greater by the time of the second volume.

It was only four days after Proust's death when "Gaziel" published "Un escritor sinfonista" in *La Vanguardia* of Barcelona on November 22nd, 1922.⁷ Clearly this Spanish-Catalonian writer, whose real name was Agustí Calvet, was already familiar with the name of Proust, and, as he says, was surprised to learn of his death. In this article Gaziel also tells how he first heard of Proust in Paris near the beginning of 1914 through the poet who would later be known as "Saint-John Perse" and other persons:

En algunos cenáculos parisinos se hablaba ya de él, como un personaje un tanto misterioso y un escritor extraordinario, desconocido y casi inédito. . . . Saint-Léger. . . me habló de Proust. Un joven filólogo dalmata, que se pasaba la vida a la caza de rarezas literarias, me dio a leer de él unas páginas mecanografiadas. Proust era, verdaderamente, un formidable artista, un innovador, un hombre que debió crearse una técnica y un estilo, para poder traducir en palabras su visión del mundo.

Like several other Spanish writers at this time, Ortega y Gasset was acutely aware of the originality of Proust. In "Tiempo, distancia y forma en el arte de Proust," Ortega asserted that the French novelist had discovered "una nueva manera de ver" and "una nueva manera de tratar el tiempo y de instalarse en el espacio" (*Obras* 701-702). The Spanish philosopher attributed this change, in part, to Proust's relation with impressionism, which had altered the perception of

⁶ Since the English translations by C. K. Scott Moncrieff, *Swann's Way* and *Within a Budding Grove*, were published in 1922 and 1924 respectively, persons that did not know French in England and the United States had to wait approximately two years longer in each case to read Proust.

⁷ Another article that followed the death of the French novelist was "El caso de M. Proust" by Antonio Marichalar, which appeared in "Los Lunes" of *El Imparcial* (24-XII-1922).

reality of many artists. But he also emphasized the importance of memory in the *Recherche*: "Por vez primera pasa aquí formalmente el recuerdo de ser material con que se describe otra cosa a ser la cosa misma que se describe" (703). To some extent Ortega exaggerated when he claimed that Proust made no attempt to reconstruct the past and merely included in the text what spontaneous memory had provided, but he was correct that Proust studied in depth the nature of memory.

Concerning the reduced distance that Proust placed between himself and things and his attention to minute detail, Ortega was also essentially right, but Proust's apparent microscopy or "puntillismo" did not imply that he avoided "toda construcción," as Ortega alleged. Furthermore, the French novelist's slow development or "morosidad" did not mean "no hay dramatismo, no hay proceso" (708) in the *Recherche*.

The French critic Benjamin Crémieux, who had also written for the famous homage, disagreed with Ortega concerning the lack of construction in Proust's novel and sent him an essay in which he had tried to prove the contrary. The proud Spaniard saw this disagreement as a challenge, had Crémieux's text translated to Spanish and published it in *Revista de Occidente* (1924). In his introduction, where he suggested that "el análisis de la obra de Proust [era] uno de los temas más sugestivos" of that time, Ortega promised to write his own more complete study of the *Recherche* because, as he said, "espero sostenerme frente al arma fina del crítico francés" (Note 191).

Unfortunately this book was never completed, even though as late as June 1926 we find that Ortega intended to devote the fourth volume of *El Espectador* to Proust, and he even hoped that Gallimard would publish it.⁸ Apparently Ortega was waiting to see if Proust's last volume would confirm his idea that the *Recherche* did not have a structure or instead show that it was a meticulously constructed novel, as Crémieux had predicted.

In this debate, I must acknowledge that the French critic had a distinct advantage. As he would later reveal in a similar dispute with Louis de Robert over Proust's composition methods, Crémieux admitted that Proust had told him in a letter that he had rigorously composed and

⁸ In "Simples conversaciones con Ortega y Gasset," Armando Donoso of Chile wrote of his inquiries concerning the fourth volume of *El Espectador*: "Ortega nos responde que estará enteramente consagrado a un estudio sobre Proust. . . . nos asegura que está totalmente rehecho, porque se lo ha pedido Gallimard para darlo en sus ediciones." *Atenea* (30-V-1926): 396.

constructed his novel.⁹

Despite the absence of Ortega's promised book on Proust, we can observe the further development of his interpretation in his essay "Ideas sobre la novela," which first appeared in *El Sol* (10-XII-1924 to 12-I-1925) under the title "Sobre la novela." Here Ortega insisted that Proust had carried his slow development technique to such an extreme that only a series of static planes existed, and these displayed no movement, progress or tension. In his view, almost nothing held them together: "le falta el esqueleto, el sostén rígido y tenso, que son las alambres en el paraguas" ("Ideas" 116). Even though he called the *Recherche* "la última creación de alto estilo," because of its lengthy psychological analyses and its lack of action and drama, Ortega concluded that it was "una novela paralítica" (126).

In 1925 the interest of Spaniards in Proust reached its culminating point. Between January and March, Luis López Ballesteros published in *ABC* of Madrid eleven articles on the *Recherche*. I cannot claim that these articles were excellent or original. This translator of Freud generally repeated what he had read in French texts about Proust. Nevertheless their sheer number in this major newspaper was significant. Furthermore "Azorín" (José Martínez Ruiz) published in *ABC* his famous essay, "El arte de Proust" on November 4th of the same year, and José María Salaverría wrote two additional articles for the same newspaper, which appeared on November 21st and 24th, 1925.

Azorín's text, which would later be incorporated into his collection of essays *Andando y pensando* (1929), is indeed the most interesting one of all of these, even though it does not conform to the standard rules of literary criticism. Instead, Azorín tried to illustrate, through example, three of what he considered to be the most important qualities of Proust's work: the use of indefinite details, the labor of the subconscious and the sensation of time. The second aspect is quite fascinating because Azorín illustrates how, through the subconscious process of condensation, a woman scarcely seen by Proust's narrator could take on qualities which he

⁹ See Crémieux's explanation in "Un débat avec M. Louis de Robert sur la composition chez Proust," *Du côté de Marcel Proust* (1929). Here we can read the quotation from Proust's letter (19-I-1922): "On méconnaît trop en effet que mes livres sont une construction, mais à ouverture de compas assez étendue pour que la composition *rigoureuse* et à quoi j'ai tout sacrifié, soit assez longue à discerner. On ne pourra la nier quand la dernière page du *Temps retrouvé* (écrite avant le reste du livre) se refermera exactement sur la première de *Swann*" (80).

himself had not imagined.¹⁰

Despite the considerable interest in Proust in 1925 this growth did not continue. The following year Proust was discussed, but primarily in reference to a controversy surrounding Pedro Salinas. Although Ernesto Giménez Caballero had also intended to examine the *Recherche* in his two articles "Los contemporáneos franceses: Proust" (*El Sol* 14 & 17-VI-1926), he first shifted the subject to the translations by Salinas and then nearly accused the translator of plagiarizing Proust in his then recently published collection of narrative texts *Vispera del gozo* (1926). I do not wish to examine in detail here this polemic which other scholars and I have already discussed.¹¹ I will merely note that several Spanish writers came to the defense of Salinas, including three of those who, as we have seen, had previously written about Proust: Enrique Díez Canedo (*El Sol* 16-VI-1926), Azorín (*ABC* 9-VII-1926) and Corpus Barga (*El Sol* 1-X-1926). Clearly all of these authors were more familiar with the *Recherche* than Giménez Caballero, but none of them found Salinas guilty of following Proust's work too closely. Barga, who may have inadvertently suggested the literary relation by having called one of the texts by Salinas, "Entrada en Sevilla," "legítimamente proustiana y admirable" (*El Sol* 29-XI-1925), tried to deflect the criticism by claiming that the French writer who had the greatest influence upon *Vispera del gozo* was not Marcel Proust but rather Jean Giraudoux (*El Sol* 1-X-1926).

The year 1927 was, of course, a very important one for Proust in France and many other countries because his final volume, *Le temps retrouvé*, was first published by *La Nouvelle Revue Française* in nine installments and then appeared in book form in September of that year. Clearly a few Spaniards were very interested in seeing how Proust had completed his work. The then leading novelist Benjamín Jarnés, who obviously had read the early portions of *Le temps retrouvé*, wrote a long note about them for *Revista de Occidente* ("Frente a la novela nueva," VI-1927). He cited, in particular, Proust's remarks on how, instead of seeing his characters, he had x-rayed them. Quoting also a letter by Proust to Camille Vettard, Jarnés mentioned how the French novelist compared his approach to using a telescope that was focused upon time.

¹⁰ Azorín's interest in Proust can also be observed through three articles that he wrote for *La Prensa* of Buenos Aires. One was a review of Léon Pierre-Quint's biography of Proust (18-X-1925). The other two were entitled "Las dos ideas de Proust" (22-X-1925) and "Cartas de Proust" (5-VI-1931).

¹¹ See, for example, *Idle Fictions: The Hispanic Vanguard Novel 1926-1934* (1982) by Gustavo Pérez Firmat (8-11) or *El azar impecable* (1993) by José María Barrera López (135-138).

Although the Spanish author realized the significance of this scientific image, he allowed Ortega's interpretation to confuse it when he quoted the latter's remarks on the "condición microscópica" of things in the *Recherche*.

Of course, Proust himself near the end of *Le temps retrouvé* made a careful distinction between these two optical instruments and in doing so implicitly refuted Ortega's idea:

Personne n'y comprit rien. Même ceux qui furent favorables à ma perception des vérités (...) me félicitèrent de les avoir découvertes au "microscope," quand je m'étais au contraire servi d'un télescope pour apercevoir des choses, très petites en effet, mais parce qu'elles étaient situées à une grande distance, et qui étaient chacune un monde (*Le temps retrouvé* 618).

Likewise, the series of involuntary memory experiences described in *Le temps retrouvé*, whose mechanism the narrator came to understand, and which revealed the unity of his personal life and the nature of his literary vocation—he would use his recovery of the past to explain how he became a writer—drew together all of the themes and elements of the *Recherche* into a unified whole. In this way Proust's careful construction became undeniable, and Ortega's idea that this novel did not have a structure was proven to be mistaken.

Such a conclusion must have greatly disappointed Ortega, who abandoned his book on Proust. But also other Spaniards seem to have been affected because, unlike such countries as Chile, Argentina and Mexico, Spain produced relatively little about the *Recherche* in the year following the appearance of its last volume.¹² Andrés Revesz did publish "El fin del viaje con Marcel Proust" in *ABC* on January 4th, 1928, but otherwise I have only found in Spain's national language one review on Proust's book *Chronique* (*Revista de Occidente* V-1928) and another on the study of Proust by Ernst Robert Curtius (*La Gaceta Literaria* 1-X-1928).

In "Marcel Proust et l'Espagne," which appeared in the *Hommage à Marcel Proust* of "Le

¹² In Chile, for example, "Alone" (Hernán Díaz Arrieta) published in *La Nación* of Santiago eight articles on Proust from March to August 1928. Similarly the Mexican authors associated with *Contemporáneos* devoted the November 1928 issue of this magazine to Proust. For a discussion of the beginning and later periods of Proust's reception in other Hispanic countries, see the first chapter of my book *Marcel Proust and Spanish America*.

rouge et le noir" (Paris, 1928), Jean de Joannis suggested that the silence in Spain concerning the *Recherche* was noticed even in France. Because of the Spaniards' early and sustained interest in Proust, French Proustians had expected more from them:

De nombreux critiques... ont, à maintes reprises, parlé de Marcel Proust; mais jusqu'à ce jour aucun travail d'ensemble, aucune étude détaillée, montrant sous toutes ses faces le génie si original et si complexe de Proust, n'a encore été publié en Espagne. Faisons des vœux (...) pour que cette lacune soit bientôt comblée (107).

The publication of such a book on Proust by a Spaniard would, in fact, have to wait more than 20 years, but at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s the *Recherche* still could count on a group of loyal supporters. Although Proust did not have any obvious detractors, as he did in France, echoes of the controversies surrounding his depiction of high society and homosexuality were felt in Spain. One can perceive hints of the latter in one of the articles by López Ballesteros, "Variaciones sobre Proust II" (4-II-1925). Here Paul-Léon Fargue described in very negative terms the effeminate traits of Proust.¹³ But Manuel Bueno's defense of the French novelist, "El amor y el dolor en Marcel Proust" (*ABC* 4-VI-1929), made this controversy more explicit. Bueno denied that Proust had any personal involvement in the "vices" that he described and tried to justify the presence of such elements by saying: "Marcel Proust fue un hipersensible, o dicho de otra suerte, un sensitivo, todo le llegaba y todo lo confundía."

Another defender of Proust was Benjamín Jarnés, who wrote about the French author on at least three other occasions. In December 1930 he reviewed for *Revista de Occidente* a collection of Proust's letters that had been published by Léon Pierre-Quint, and which illustrated the French author's efforts to find a publisher. Jarnés confessed his admiration for this aspect of Proust's character, as well as for the "indiscutible innovador artístico" that he proved himself to be in the *Recherche* (371).

¹³ As Jacques Fressard pointed out years later in "La réception de Proust en Espagne," some of Antonio Marichalar's remarks in *Revista de Occidente* revealed his mistrust of Proust, as well as of Gide. In "Mutaciones" (III-1925), for example, Marichalar suggested that these French writers had initiated what he called an "acendrada obsesión teratológica" (367) in modern French literature.

Following the publication of *El mundo de Guermantes I* (1931), whose translation had been initiated by Pedro Salinas and completed by José María Quiroga Pla, Benjamín Jarnés wrote two reviews. In the first one, "Marcel Proust en España," which was published in *La Nación* of Buenos Aires (10-IX-1931), Jarnés tried to explain why there had been such a delay – from 1922 to 1931 – in completing the publication in Spain of the third volume of *En busca del tiempo perdido*. He considered the factors to be largely economic, and he did not speculate on why Salinas had not persisted in his effort to translate the monumental work.¹⁴

In his other review, "Proust en español," which first appeared in *Crisol* (19-X-1931) before a somewhat modified version was incorporated into *Feria del libro* (1935), Jarnés spoke of three types of heroism: that of Proust to write his ambitious novel, that of the translators and publishers to make it available in Spanish and that of his readers to persist in confronting the challenging text. The author of *El profesor inútil* offered Proust's work as a counterbalance to the easy and furtive heroism of certain Spanish writers of the time, whom he ridiculed. In his opinion, *El mundo de Guermantes* was both social and artistic. Its author penetrated into the psychology of his characters and wrote for men who wished to see clearly into themselves and the persons around them.

Another prose writer of the Generation of 1927, Juan José Domenchina, reviewed the second tome *El mundo de Guermantes II. Sodoma y Gomorra I*, which Quiroga Pla had translated entirely. This review was called "Marcel Proust en 1933" and first appeared in *El Sol* (12-II-1933) but was later included in *Crónicas de "Gerardo Rivera"* (1935). Not only did Domenchina refer to Proust's then already enormous bibliography, one of his lesser works (*Pastiches et mélanges*), and the quality of the translation, but also he dared to discuss what was still a scandalous subject in Spain: the homosexual encounter between Charlus and Jupien at the beginning of *Sodoma y Gomorra I*.

During these years I cannot claim that there were numerous articles on Proust published in Spain in the national language of this country. There was, however, one other very interesting text: "Cuando conocí a Marcel Proust" by El Conde de Gimeno (*ABC* 14-I-1932). Here this

¹⁴ I suspect that the controversy over *Vispera del gozo* was an important factor, but this matter needs to be studied more carefully.

medical doctor and political figure recalls how, during an international health conference in Paris in 1893, he was invited to the home of Dr. Adrien Proust and happened to meet his son Marcel. This young man did not feel well enough to dine with the guests, but he made a special effort to meet the physician from Spain because he wished to ask him some questions about the cathedrals and archeological sites in this country. Gimeno y Cabañas explained: "Le atrajo mi condición de español, y por serlo me hizo blanco de su curiosidad."

In contrast, several articles on Proust were written and published in another language of Spain: Catalan. Unlike his Castillian counterparts, Jaume Bofill i Ferro was fascinated by the end of the *Recherche* and published in February 1928 in *La Nova Revista* his first article, "Marcel Proust." After translating to Catalan part II of the first volume of the *Recherche*, *Un amor de Swann* (Edicions Proa, 1932), Bofill i Ferro published a second article "Proust i els medis socials" in *Revista de Catalunya* (VIII/IX-1934). Similarly Marià Manent commented on various Proustian critics, including Samuel Beckett, in a two-part review for *La Veu de Catalunya* (25-IX and 4-X-1931).¹⁵ But the Catalanian who produced at this time the largest number of articles on the French novelist was Joan Sacs. His texts, which appeared in *Mirador*, were the following: "L'estètica de Marcel Proust" (14 & 21-IX-1933), "El temps perdut de Marcel Proust" (9-XI-1933), "L'espai psicològic de Proust" (4-I-1934) and "Marcel Proust i l'amor" (25-I & 1-III-1934).

I will not attempt to analyze these texts, whose language I can read only with some difficulty, but I will observe that their large number and their dates indicate, that even though the interest in Proust had begun to wane in pre-Civil War Spain among Spanish speakers, a concern for the *Recherche* remained and even grew among Catalanians.

The Civil War itself, which began in July 1936, interrupted numerous intellectual activities, including the critical examination of Proust. In this regard, one case is particularly evident, as Carmen Castro (a daughter of Américo Castro) would later suggest at the beginning of *Marcel Proust o el vivir escribiendo* (1952). Castro had begun this, the first book on Proust to be published in Spain (and which in a sense fulfilled the promise of Ortega), as a doctoral thesis

¹⁵ Both of Bofill i Ferro's articles were reprinted in his collection *Vint-i-cinc anys de crítica* (1959), and those by Manent were later included in his *Notes sobre literatura estrangera* (1992).

in 1935. Although she did not specifically say why she believed that this year was not a good one for her project, we can surmise that she was alluding, at least in part, to the national conflict that was already taking shape. It is even possible to suspect that her delay in returning to this project on Proust was linked to the regime change that ensued, as we shall see.

Before moving on to that discussion, I would like to mention one final pre-Civil War Spanish text on Proust and to comment on some of the narrative works from 1920 to 1936 that seem to be related to the *Recherche*.

I am first of all referring to the remarks by Antonio Machado on Proust. This professor of French, as well as great poet, had studied in Paris with Henri Bergson and shared Proust's fascination for the themes of time and memory.¹⁶ It is thus not surprising that he speculated on what his fictional professor, Juan de Mairena, might have thought of the *Recherche* had he lived to read it. These remarks appeared just before the outbreak of the war in 1936 in *Juan de Mairena: sentencias, donaires, apuntes y recuerdos de un profesor apócrifo*, rather than in later notes "by Mairena" which were published in a magazine of the Republican cause, *Hora de España* (1937-1938).¹⁷

According to Machado, even though Mairena died before World War I and most of the *Recherche* was published after it, he would have considered this novel to be the last great work of the nineteenth century. Its protagonist was still "l'enfant du siècle" but "pocho y destefido, perdida ya toda aquella alegría napoleónica de burguesía con zapatos nuevos y toda la nostalgia romántica que en él pusieron Balzac y Stendhal, Lamartine y Musset" (101). This view of Proust is, indeed, debatable, particularly because it came from the pen of a contemporary of his who could not easily observe the innovations of the *Recherche* in the same way as a writer from a more recent generation. Just the same, Machado realized that Proust had a deep connection with the subjectivity of romanticism, and he built upon this and other aspects of nineteenth century literature.

Concerning the general impact of the *Recherche* upon the Spanish novel of the pre-Civil

¹⁶ Antonio Machado, in fact, felt so close to Proust that he dared to claim that "todo cuanto dice M. Proust sobre la memoria y las intermitencias del corazón" was already implicit in his own poem dated 1907 "Elegía de un madrigal." See "Nota [sobre Marcel Proust]."

¹⁷ Because of certain bibliographical references, I suspect that this commentary appeared earlier in *El Diario de Madrid*, but I have not been able to find it.

War period, there has only been one major study: "Proust y la novela española de los años 30: ensayo de interpretación" by Simone Bosveuil. According to this French scholar, the Proustian legacy was most apparent in Spanish narrative in the following ways: the poetization of the novel, the extensive use of metaphor, the evocation of a personal past, an inquiry into the self, an intentional vagueness and an emphasis on style. Also she noted that some of these elements were related to the lyricism that Salinas perceived in the prose of this time and to the theories on the modern novel that Ortega y Gasset had delineated in *La deshumanización del arte*.

Unfortunately Bosveuil only commented specifically on two works, *Estación. Ida y vuelta* (1930) by Rosa Chacel and *Alicia al pie de los laureles* (1940) by Claudio de la Torre, but her remarks were very pertinent. In the first case, the French scholar emphasized an important difference between Chacel and Proust. Although Chacel's narrator evoked characters and events that evolved over time, this narrator, unlike Proust's, was cold and distant, and he made no attempt to understand or to look for general patterns behind the events. In the second case, Bosveuil perceived a greater affinity between de la Torre and Proust. In both texts the evocation is poetized and the principal female character evoked becomes associated with the landscape. I do not disagree with these remarks and prefer to consider here other cases, in particular those that have already been examined by scholars or critics.

A few scholars, such as Jacqueline van Praag-Chantraine, have noted similarities between the *Recherche* and certain novels by Gabriel Miró: *Libro de Sigüenza* (1917), *El humo dormido* (1919) and *Años y leguas* (1928). However, most of these parallels are more easily attributed to a common source than to the actual influence of Proust, especially given the early date involved and the lack of evidence concerning personal knowledge of the *Recherche*. Conceivably Miró could have read *Du côté de chez Swann* (1913) before Proust received the Prix Goncourt in 1919, but the memory passages in these Spanish novels are quite brief and are not developed in the manner of the author of the *Recherche*.¹⁸

I find the case of *El caballero inactual* (1928, first called *Félix Vargas*) by Azorín much more credible, in part because of this author's essay on Proust in 1925. The U. S. professor

¹⁸ Other possible sources for Miró may have been Pierre Loti in *Le roman d'un enfant* (1890) or Gabriele D'Annunzio in *Il trionfo della morte* (1894), both of whom showed the effects of spontaneous memory before Proust but did not attempt to analyze this phenomenon.

Lawrence D. Joiner carefully examined various aspects of the relation between Proust and this and other narrative texts by Azorín in a series of six articles that appeared in journals in the United States and that were collected into Joiner's book *Studies of Azorín* (1982). This scholar compared, in particular, the protagonists, the portrayal of the artist, the treatment of time, religious imagery and novelistic theory. For the most part, I find Joiner's argumentation convincing, but I would add that he did not yet exhaust this literary relation. In my own reading of *El caballero actual*, I perceived, for example, an interesting similarity between chapter XIII "Desde el fondo del tiempo" and the labor of the subconscious that Azorín described in his essay "El arte de Proust." Although the presence of the woman in the Proustian text examined by Azorín was much briefer, in both cases we can see in detail the psychological process of crystalization through which a man falls in love with a woman.

I will not attempt to summarize here the discussion concerning the relation between Proust and *Vispera del gozo* (1926) by Salinas because it still continues.¹⁹ In spite of the apparent contradiction between the two remarks by Corpus Barga—that one of the texts from *Vispera del gozo* was "legítimamente proustiana y admirable" and that Proust was not the greatest French influence upon this series of narrative texts—I will affirm that Barga was essentially correct. Being the first translator of the *Recherche*, Salinas knew very well the early volumes of this innovative work and took advantage of that knowledge for the creation of his own. It is not that the Spanish poet imitated Proust or plagiarized him, as Giménez Caballero charged. Instead, as Angel del Río once suggested, Salinas allowed himself to be inspired by Proust.²⁰

An example of this type of Proustian inspiration can be observed in the text originally cited by Barga: "Entrada en Sevilla." Because of its impressionistic description of riding in an automobile, this story brings to mind the famous passage from "Combray" where Proust's protagonist, due to the movement of Dr. Percepied's vehicle, has the impression that the bell towers of Martinville are changing their relative positions. Like Proust, Salinas used numerous similes, with the explicit preposition of comparison ("comme" "como") to translate the various sensations involved. Nonetheless, because of the urban setting in Sevilla and the glimpses of

¹⁹ In *Poesía y narrativa de Pedro Salinas* (2000), Carlos Feal Deibe approached this subject again (86-90).

²⁰ See "Pedro Salinas: Vida y obra" by Angel del Río 13.

houses and variegated colors that whiz by –all of which contrast sharply with the open countryside near Combray– "Entrada de Sevilla" seems to be very different from the Proustian passage and quite original.

As we have seen through four of his critical texts, Benjamín Jarnés had a special interest in Proust. Although he had a strong affinity for Jean Giraudoux (even greater than that of Salinas), Jarnés recognized the importance of Proust, whom he considered the initiator of the new French novel and a forerunner of Giraudoux and Paul Morand.²¹ To my knowledge, no one has considered in detail a possible relation between Proust and Jarnés, perhaps because it is quite subtle. Nonetheless, I have found in *Paula y Paulita* (1929) at least a few curious parallels or echoes. The trip of the protagonist-narrator by train and his visit to the health spa are vaguely reminiscent of the second half of *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, where the Proustian protagonist-narrator travels to and stays at an English Channel resort, Balbec. The situation of both characters who wait for the train, look out the window of their room and eat in the hotel restaurant are similar. I would even note that (as in the case of the novels by the Mexican *Contemporáneos*, which Guillermo Sheridan associated directly with the second volume of the *Recherche*), like Proust's protagonist, the one of Jarnés feels obliged to choose between two women, those that are named in the title.²² Nonetheless, and despite the constant use of metaphors by both authors, the style, content and impression left by *Paula y Paulita* are very different from those of *A l'ombre des jeunes filles*. Jarnés did not attempt, like Proust, to enter the mind of his other characters through psychological analysis, and therefore he appears more superficial and frivolous, somewhat like Giraudoux.

Probably the most Proustian of any of the Spanish novels of this period was *Puerto de sombra* (1928) by Juan Chabás. As Javier Pérez Bazo explained in his introduction to the recent republication of this novel (in 1998, along with *Agor sin fin*), not only did the protagonist Adolfo Aprile evoke moments of his personal past, but also at times he recalled these involuntarily through a memory mechanism similar to Proust's, whereby a sensation in the present brought to

²¹ See the review by Jarnés of Eduardo Mallea's book *Cuentos para una inglesa desesperada*.

²² According to Guillermo Sheridan, the similar choice between two women in *Margarita de niebla* by Jaime Torres Bodet, *Dama de corazones* by Xavier Villaurrutia and *Novela como nube* by Gilberto Owen can be attributed to the reading of *A l'ombre des jeunes filles* by these three *Contemporáneos*. See *Los Contemporáneos ayer* 306-308.

mind a similar one from an earlier time. Indeed Aprile's reconstruction of the past was often semi-conscious or even conscious, and it did not involve writing, as had been the case of the Proustian protagonist. Nonetheless, we find in it a similar type of life trajectory, albeit one that was more fragmentary and doomed to failure. Aprile did, in fact, write a thesis on the influence of Ovid, but, just as he did not find satisfaction in love and he was never able to overcome his sense of fear, he failed to discover the meaning of his life or personal vocation. Even more than Proust's character, Aprile was a decadent *enfant du siècle* (in the sense of Machado's term), who only found consolation in recalling moments of the past when he could have been happy.

In the years immediately before the Spanish Civil War, the more politicized environment seems to have resulted in a reduced interest in Proust, even though, as we have seen, some Catalanians still published articles on the *Recherche* until nearly the eve of the conflict. It is, of course, not surprising that little appeared on Proust from 1936 to 1939 due to the sheer horror of the war. But unfortunately this silence continued after the establishment of peace, in part because the triumphant regime of Francisco Franco considered pernicious Proust's novel, and in particular the volume *Sodoma y Gomorra*.

It is difficult to find specific evidence of the Falangist's treatment of Proust besides the small number of articles on the *Recherche* that appeared during the 1940s. Another indication, however, is that when the Catalan-Spanish writer Maurici Serrahima tried to publish soon after 1940 an anthology of Proust in Catalan, the government censor would not allow it.²³ Part of the problem, was of course, the language itself which was repressed during the time of Franco, but the only publication in Spanish of any of Proust's work during these years was the very uncontroversial "Retratos de pintores y de músicos" (1945), which consisted of the eight poems found in *Les plaisirs et les jours*.

As late as 1950 in an article by Rafael Sánchez Masas in the Falangist magazine *Arriba*, we can observe the very negative attitude toward Proust of this supporter of the regime. In "1900-1950 'la donna è mobile'," the author not only condemned what he considered the demasculinization of Occidental culture, but he also specifically blamed the work of Proust for this phenomenon. He called it "la crónica procesal más grande y aguda de este proceso de feminización del mundo.civil, entre 1880 y 1919" (7). In his opinion, the only "sensibilidad

²³ See the article by Joaquim Molas "Proust a Catalunya" 86.

sobria, escueta y viril" in the entire *Recherche* was not even attributed to a male character, but rather to the old cook Française.

In 1952 Carmen Castro was able to publish her book *Marcel Proust o el vivir escribiendo*, and once again an interest in the *Recherche* began to grow in Spain. José Janés of Barcelona hired at that time a new translator for the last four volumes of *En busca del tiempo perdido*, Fernando Gutiérrez, and thus published the first complete edition of Proust's novel in Spain.²⁴ But the Franquista censors did not allow the second volume, which contained *Sodoma y Gomorra*, to be sold for several years.²⁵

To the apparent dismay of the regime, a relaxation of controls meant a resurgence of the interest in Proust, especially after the publication by Alianza of the second complete Spanish edition of *En busca del tiempo perdido* from 1966 to 1969. This included the time-honored translations by Pedro Salinas and José María Quiroga Pla of the first three volumes, but the last four were retranslated by Consuelo Berges. At the time of the Proust Centennial in 1971 interest was so high that there appeared several homages in the periodicals of Spain, most notably the ones found in *Destino*, *Informaciones* and *El Urogallo*.

These homages, which were the first collective manifestation of support for Proust's novel since the 1930s, have been largely forgotten but ought to be studied, as well as the period leading up to them. Hopefully, another scholar or I can examine in detail the critical and literary relation between Proust and Spain since the Civil War because this country also experienced another very fruitful period after 1988. But at least I have outlined here the first Proustian wave from 1920 to 1936.

²⁴ The Argentine publisher Santiago Rueda, however, had provided for his country a complete edition of *En busca del tiempo perdido* several years earlier, from 1944 to 1946.

²⁵ See "Album" by Rafael Conte and Arturo Ramoneda (48), found at the end of the deluxe edition by Alianza of *Por el camino de Swann* (1996).

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