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# In the Shadow of an Old Translation From Remembrance of Things Past to In Search of Lost Time

Camille Gippa

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# In the Shadow of an Old Translation

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From

*Remembrance of Things Past*

to

*In Search of Lost Time*

**Nom : GIPPA  
Prénom : Camille**

UFR de LANGUES ETRANGERES

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Mémoire de master 1 recherche - 20 crédits - Mention

Sous la direction de Mme MANIEZ Claire

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## Introduction

Marcel Proust is one of the main authors of French classic literature. Born in 1871, he lived under the third Republic, witnessed La Belle Époque, the Dreyfus Affair and the First World War. He belonged to the higher parts of society and evolved in the high bourgeois and aristocratic circles – worldly experiences which appear on many occasions in his narrative. Influenced by many English and French writers like Carlyle, Emerson and Eliot<sup>1</sup> or Balzac, Flaubert and Baudelaire<sup>2</sup>, he was fascinated by Ruskin and translated some of his works (*The Bible of Amiens – La Bible d’Amiens*, and *Sesame and Lilies – Sesame et les Lys*). As Pierre Piret writes in *Les Lettres Romanes*: ‘Le rôle joué par la traduction [de Ruskin] dans l’itinéraire de Proust est [...] évident’ (1993: 319). Indeed, Proust began to write when he was 24, with the sketches and drafts of the unfinished novel *Jean Santeuil*, and published his first book at the age of 25: *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*. This first publication is a collection of different forms and genres of texts and already contained the main characteristics of his writing: ‘tout en est déjà là, à l’état de semence. [...] L’écrivain a trouvé dès sa jeunesse la manière d’écrire qu’il ne changera pas [...] : par fragments, par morceaux très différents de longueurs, de ton, de contenu.’ (Tadié 1987: xi). However, after his early publication he did not publish anything for a few long years. In 1904 and 1906 he published his translations of Ruskin’s work which helped him to find his own path: ‘En recréant la pensée de Ruskin, il prendra pleinement conscience de la sienne propre, qu’il mettra au jour.’ (Tadié 1987: xxiii). And he used them to build his own personal work, modeling his writing notably on the way Ruskin, in *Sesame and Lilies*, describes and exploits reading. In 1908 Proust published *Pastiches et Mélanges* where he imitated other writings, rewrote the same event under different perspectives, and wrote passionate texts about cathedrals and churches which he discovered through *The Bible of Amiens*. He finally began to write what was to become the real work of his life, first entitled *Les Intermittences du Coeur*, a work which made him famous in his days and survived him until nowadays: *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*.

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<sup>1</sup> See in *Revue d’Histoire Littéraire de la France*: ‘Proust, traducteur de Ruskin, lecteur d’Eliot, Carlyle, Emerson.’ (1994: 363) and in Rogers, Brian G. *The Narrative Techniques of A la Recherche du Temps Perdu : revivied and augmented edition of Proust’s narrative techniques*. Paris : Honoré Champion. 2004: ‘The profound influence of George Eliot on Proust’s narrative techniques is visible in many passages of *La Recherche*.’ (41)

<sup>2</sup> ‘Proust aura encore besoin de Ste Beuve, de Balzac, de Flaubert, avant de lire, donc d’écrire, seul.’ (Jean-Yves Tadié 1987: xxvii)

Often compared to *La Comédie Humaine* by Balzac, the work of Proust did not follow the same pattern: while his predecessor tried to give a perspective of the whole of the society of his time, as a testimony of what France (mostly Paris) was and how it was populated in his time – with some insight in the different layers of society and groups of specialists – Proust only focused on one character, his narrator, and his acquaintances, his sentiments towards them and towards life, his views on the world and society, his inner thoughts about him and others. In this sense, it is a very personal, internal work. But still not an autobiography, as could be understood at first glance: indeed, it may be at some points based on his own experiences (the narrator is even sometimes called ‘Marcel’ in the novel) but they are all fictionalized into imaginative places and names (moreover, a study of the characters would show that many different ‘real’ persons are collapsed into one character). *La Recherche* is also a work of continual rewriting: it was at first only meant to be an essay (entitled *Contre Sainte-Beuve*) but, as Antoine Berman explains for his own book *Pour une Critique des Traductions*, this essay rapidly showed that it *wished to become a book*<sup>3</sup>. It turned into a novel, designed at first for two books (*Le Temps Perdu* and *Le Temps Retrouvé*), then for three and finally ended up being seven books. We can detail this process of extension with the words of Jean-Yves Tadié: ‘en 1919, « le quatrième volume » désigne *Sodome et Gomorrhe II* and *Le Temps Retrouvé*, qui seront divisés par la suite, lorsque *Sodome et Gomorrhe III* deviendra *La Prisonnière*, et *Sodome et Gomorrhe IV*, *La Fugitive* puis *Albertine Disparue*.’ (Tadié 1995: xxxiii). It might even have included more books if Proust had not died of pneumonia in 1922 after having only published four volumes. We still have the following volumes since he had written the end before including a lot of the new scenes and characters that are nowadays a complete part of the story: but what about all he could have added in between these scenes, what about all the characters he may have created, or the ones he may have developed more? Three of the books of *La Recherche* were published only posthumously, their composition being based on his manuscripts and his notebooks, full of reworked passages and of additions inside the linear narratives.

My analysis will be concerned about the second book of *La Recherche du Temps Perdu: A l’Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*, which won the Goncourt prize in 1919 – arousing a lot of controversies since this gay and frivolous title was chosen against serious

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<sup>3</sup> ‘En reprenant le texte de mon séminaire et en cherchant à l’adapter pour ma synthèse, il se passa quelque chose d’imprévu: le chapitre en question se mit à grandir, grandir, jusqu’au moment où il me devint clair que cette partie de la synthèse [...] *désirait devenir un livre*.’ (Berman 1995: 12)

books dealing with the war France and Europe had just experienced<sup>4</sup>. In his review of the critics of the time, Souday describes the story of this second novel in this way: ‘Ce qui donne surtout à ce livre tant d’attrait, c’est l’inquiétude et l’ardeur sentimentales, favorisées sans doute, encore qu’un peu faussées, mais d’une façon encore bien attachante, par de très modernes théories philosophiques. On goûtera cette constante avidité de sortir de soi, de se mêler à d’autres vies, et d’y pénétrer profondément.’ (1927: 27), and reminds us of Loti’s comment : ‘*A l’Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* conte [...] [le tableau des impressions] de sa prime jeunesse.’ (1927: 23). Souday’s critic ends with these praising words: ‘Et c’est ici un livre douloureux comme la plupart des grands livres très humains.’ (1927: 28).

‘In Proust original conception, the book was not split after *The Way by Swann’s*. Grasset, his first publisher required him to make more than one volume of it.’ (Grieve 2002: vii). The first volume designed at first by Proust included, after *Du Côté de chez Swann* as we know it today, the whole first part of *A l’Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*, and a variation on the second part: an episode at the sea-side where he encountered Charlus, St Loup, and Elstir – but no girls. It ended with a third part on the disillusion the narrator faces when reality catches up with his fancies, embodied by what the places, on whose names the narrator dreams, really are. ‘En réduisant le volume à 532 pages, Grasset lui impose une fin abrupte et scinde artificiellement en deux l’histoire de l’épisode amoureux avec Gilberte.’ (Rey 1988 : ix). Therefore, Proust will reinvent a second book, with parts coming directly from his first volume (the first part of the second book was already contained in his first project, and mainly remained the same in the late publication of the second volume), and complete new scenes that he will add to this volume. Since my analysis will deal with a passage in ‘Nom de Pays: le Pays’, I will not look at the genesis of ‘Autour de Mme Swann’.

The second part of the novel deals with the journey of the narrator, and his grandmother, to Balbec, at the sea-side, where he will encounter new characters, some who are going to be main elements of the whole story of *La Recherche*. The girls are only introduced in this moment of the story in late modifications: ‘It was, however, only in 1914 that the novel began to undergo [...] drastic changes [...]: Proust first of all introduced the group of young girls together with the newly invented Albertine, into the first holiday in

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<sup>4</sup> ‘après avoir couronné des livres de guerre pendant cinq ans, l’Académie des Dix a pensé qu’il était peut-être temps de revenir aux œuvres de paix.’ (Souday 1927: 18)

Balbec' (Schmid 2001: 67); they were meant to appear in *Sodome et Ghomorre* where they would have directly embodied sexual desire and homosexual temptation. In the same time, the war was declared and Proust had to postpone his publications: he used this time to rework the whole project, build a new outline, and add scenes, characters and perspectives to his books. Published in the end of November 1918, *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* appeared on the book shelves only in June 1919.

The extract I will especially focus on is when, in Balbec, dreaming about women and their carriages, the narrator foresees the band of girls at the sea-side. The extract deals with his desire to know them, understand them, belong to them and the fascination they exert on him. This moment is decisive for the whole of the rest of the narrative since it is the event that leads him to meet Albertine – the character who will cause and reflect every feeling, experience, action and reaction of the narrator in the five following books. She will, after their meeting, be at the bottom of most of the events and non-events of *La Recherche*. Moreover, this extract shows how Proust used the inner gaze, tainted with personal sensations and emotions, in order to describe scenes and characters: they are not only described but in fact felt inside the own head and heart of the narrator. Finally, this extract also deals with the frontier this inner gaze set up between the narrator's desire and the *Others*, always outside himself. My reasoning will focus on the ways this passage has been translated in English, first by Scott Moncrieff in 1924 and then by James Grieve in 2002.

I think that this study is not only interesting in itself, as an insight to the processes of translation of classic literature – in the beginning of two different centuries – but also by the fact that translation and English are two themes that are present in the author's and the narrator's life. Piret, in his review on the work dealing with *La Recherche* by Edward Bizub (*La Venise Intérieure*), states this relationship between the work and translation clearly:

De la littérature anglaise en particulier [...] il hérite une véritable poétique de la traduction et une « esthétique des brumes » [...]. La présence de l'Angleterre est d'ailleurs évidente dans *La Recherche* : il y a les lectures anglaises, la mode anglaise, en vogue chez les Swann par exemple. Il y a surtout la langue anglaise, que le jeune Marcel ne connaît pas, ce qui lui rend Gilberte impénétrable et donc désirable. Ainsi, il n'est pas jusqu'à la structure du désir érotique qui ne réponde à la figure fondamentale du traducteur, qui « entrevoit l'objet de sa quête au sein d'une nébuleuse qu'il ne parvient pas à déchiffrer ». (Piret 1993: 320)

Therefore, I feel that such a work calls for a translation and a comment on this translation, which has to be deciphered. I will attempt to answer this call as best as possible



and, since Reiss states that 'Every translation is a compromise and an accommodation to the larger context of life' (2000: 47) – i.e. that every translation is an adaptation made by the personality of the translator – I will wonder how each translator translated this work, what are the differences between the two translations and how these differences impact on the work and the reader.

## **PART 1:**

### **History of the Translations and Impact of the New One**

## Chapter 1 – Through the difficulties of translating Proust to English, the work of ‘two’ translators

Before analysing one extract of Proust’s *A l’Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* in details, I would like to look at each translation in a general overview. First of all, I will touch on some problems faced by an English translator working on *La Recherche*, then briefly present the two translators and finally make a review of the critiques that befell on those two translations when the last one came out.

### *Some difficulties encountered in the translation towards English*

The project of translating *La Recherche* is a complex and long one: not only because of the length of the books but also because of its own grammatical and stylistic elaboration. In his article in 2002, Hensher states this difficulty as an impasse in translation:

The single problem facing any translator of Proust is that there is, really, no equivalent of his style in English. He is at once classical and idiosyncratic; the rhythms and proportions of classical French style are followed faithfully in every sentence, and over the whole book.

Indeed, Proust’s work is filled with over-length sentences, using all the French can offer in terms of articulation and broken syntactic means, in order to give a true idea of the unwinding of the thoughts in the mind of the narrator through the reading. This heavy task has been a main obstacle and not many translators have been tempted to follow the path of Proust’s translation: there has been until 2002 only one translation, by Moncrieff, published in the 1920s and slightly modified by Terence Kilmartin and D.J. Enright after several new editions by Pléiade edition.<sup>5</sup> The main reason is that, next to this major stylistic problematic, we find lots of other difficulties, hard to render accurately in English, like the presence of different dialects and idiolects (one of them, not to be underrated, being the narrator’s), and some meaning of French tenses that are hard to convey with English conjugation. All this can frighten a new translator coming across this work:

Another challenge comes from the infuriating habit of languages to fail to provide direct equivalents of words and tenses from other languages. Proust’s work is peppered with untranslatables [sic]. One of the more famous is the French word ‘Maman’ (of critical importance in the novel), which is neither ‘mummy’ nor ‘mother’, but suggests at once the intimacy of the former and the seriousness and maturity of the latter. [...] Then there

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<sup>5</sup> (Botton 2002)

is Proust's distinctive use of the perfect tense, most famously in his first sentence: 'Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure.' Scott Moncrieff went for: 'For a long time I would go to bed early,' Penguin for: 'For a long time, I went to bed early'. (Botton 2002)

These few examples show how every sentence in Proust (every clause even, if we consider that Proust's sentences are sometimes two pages long) can point out translation issues and sometimes even untranslatable objects. Moreover, the fact that the history of the processes of writing *La Recherche* are quite messy, and that blunders and repetitions can appear all along the story (notably blunders in the name of secondary characters during the whole story, or even blunders in a unified episode: 'In the Miss Sacripant episode, the flowers are first roses, then twice (or is it thrice?) carnations.' (Grieve 2002: xii)), gives even more troubles to the translator who does not always know how to understand the episode, how to decode and interpret the words written on the page.

Another issue, underlined in Botton's article is the evolution of language. Indeed, Proust wrote at the beginning of the twentieth century; and one century later we do not use the same vocabulary and expressions. Moreover, it appears that English mutates faster than French. Therefore if reading Proust today in French does not seem completely outdated (at least, it looks like classic literary vocabulary, most of it still in use, notably in academic writing), it is not the same for English and 'As a result, the old Scott Moncrieff translation can on occasion feel very anachronistic.' (Botton 2002). Thus a translator has to wonder, when turning the work into English, which vocabulary to use: the old vocabulary of the period when it was written, with the danger of blurring the message and turning the story into an old fusty piece of writing, or the contemporary vocabulary, with the danger of making a new story from the original work. Surrounded by those different issues and by the exceptional length of the work (around 2400 pages for the whole of the story), the first two persons who worked on its translation (one as a translator, the other as a reviser) have never seen the end of it.

### ***The first translation: Moncrieff's Proust***

The first to translate the work of Proust in English was a Scottish writer who died while translating the last book of *La Recherche*. M. C. Scott Moncrieff, as he was baptized in 1889, published the first volume in English in 1922, under the title of *Swann's Way* and the general title of *Remembrance of Things Past*. He then followed by publishing the translation of each book in 1924 (*Within a Budding Grove*), 1925 (*The Guermantes Way*),

1929 (*Cities of the Plain*, and *The Captive*) and 1930 (*The Sweet Cheat Gone*). For some critics, his work had been a bit over-translated and even Proust argued against his choice for the general title in 1922: ‘Scott Moncrieff’s French was far from perfect and he had a tendency to over-elaborate. [...] Proust hated [his title], and no wonder: his active ‘quest’ was replaced with daydreaming and commemoration.’ (Robb 2002). His translation was even taxed with the will of improving the original text:

Scott Moncrieff, it must be said, had a splendid if somewhat effusive sense of English style [...]. Problems, however, notoriously abound in his translation. For Proust’s elegantly architectonic prose, with its peculiar combination of lyric density and surgical precision, Scott Moncrieff substituted a kind of post-Victorian gingerbread, and he repeatedly was unable to resist the temptation to ‘improve’ Proust. (Alter 2002)

But ‘he knew not to turn Proust’s French into an obstacle course of prepositions and muddy syntax’ (Robb 2002) and did indeed last as THE main *and only* translation of Proust’s work for almost eighty years. We should however remember that he was not the one to translate the last volume and that his translation had to be completed – and has been, but differently in England and in America<sup>6</sup>.

The problem with Moncrieff’s translation is that it is based on the books freshly published, some of them posthumously. But the French text has moved since the death of its author, and scholarly studies have built up a ‘new’ – that is to say a different, supposedly closer to Proust’s wishes – text, based on the studies dealing with the *Cahiers* in which Proust wrote his story and modified them. The French text changed twice, after two major periods of study of Proust’s work. Therefore Moncrieff’s texts have been reworked, by Kilmartin mostly and, after his death, by Enright<sup>7</sup>. But Kilmartin’s work has only been revisions of the translated book, and no real new translation has occurred until 2002, when the Penguin publishing house displayed to the Britannic world a whole new Proust (every book appearing on the market at the same time).

### ***The second translation: Penguin’s Proust***

Boltanski’s first words about the Penguin translation define the new work pretty well: ‘Un Proust à plusieurs voix.’ (2002). Indeed, this version is the result of seven different translators, unified under the direction of Christopher Prendergast, a ‘Professor of

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<sup>6</sup> See Alter 2002 for a reminder

<sup>7</sup> See ‘Love by osmosis’ 2002

French at the University of Cambridge<sup>8</sup>. Boltanski interviewed Christopher Prendergast in 2002, after the publication of the new translation: we can therefore understand the project that underlay this huge work. First of all, Prendergast explains why he thought of using one translator per book:

L'époque héroïque de la traduction par une seule personne est vraisemblablement révolue.

[...] il y a bien sûr une certaine continuité de ton dans la *Recherche* (une « voix » proustienne), mais en même temps il y a aussi une grande variété stylistique, une évolution d'un volume à l'autre. L'atmosphère plutôt bucolique d'*A l'ombre* est très différente de l'ambiance plutôt apocalyptique de *Sodome et Gomorrhe*. J'ai pensé que cet aspect mobile du style de Proust serait plus visible dans une traduction à plusieurs. (Prendergast for Boltanski 2002)

Thus, since Proust had written the book in several period of his life, since every volume represents a different period of the life of the narrator *and* the life of its author, a different hand to translate each of those periods, unified by a common editor, seems quite interesting. The process allowed the translation to be published directly in its entire length: the translators worked all at the same time, each on one volume, and then all volumes were published at the same date. It is the first time that an editor sees the whole of the translation published during his lifetime – thanks to this new way of translating, not by an only man anymore but by a unified set of people. Prendergast also wanted to make clear that this new translation was not a simplification of the original: 'I wouldn't want this to be seen as an attempt to 'update' or 'modernise' Proust, [...]. It is rather an attempt to be faithful to Proust in the terms available to us.' (Tonkin 2002). Even if he wanted to avoid the excess of some over-elevated style that was sometimes used by Proust<sup>9</sup>, he claimed that he did not want to adapt the work: 'Rendre Proust plus «accessible» (plus «reader-friendly», comme on dit en anglais) n'est pas la tâche du traducteur.' (Prendergast in Boltanski 2002). At last he laid down that his project was opposed to one of Kilmartin's aims: he did not fancy an anglicized Proust: 'In any case, [...], I favour the other school of thought, which has it that the readers should always have some sense that what they are reading is a translation.' (Tonkin 2002).

The translator of the second volume is an Australian, James Grieve, who worked as a

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<sup>8</sup> First page of: Grieve, James. *Under the Shadow of Young Girls in Flowers*. In *In Search of Lost Time*, Vol.2. London: Penguin Books. 2002.

<sup>9</sup> See Prendergast for Boltanski 2002

‘Reader in French at the Australian National University’<sup>10</sup>. He translated the first volume of *La Recherche* in 1982, outside any editorial project, and published two novels, in 1987 and in 2001. In his ‘Preface’ to the second volume he first exposes one of the temptations a translator can be faced with during his work: ‘the translator may be (justifiably) tempted to clarify what Proust has left ambiguous and unsatisfactory’ (Grieve 2002: xi). But, even if he acknowledges it as a temptation, he then makes clear that, against what Prendergast claimed, he will edit and sometimes simplify the text: ‘Mme Swann’s white furs, Proust says, are of *zibeline* (‘sable’), which I translate as ‘ermine’, since white furs made from a black animal seem to indicate that here, as occasionally elsewhere, he used the wrong word.’ (Grieve 2002: xii); ‘rather than perplex my reader, I edit. [...] [it] is in French unclear; in English it must, I believe, be clarified.’ (Grieve 2002: xiii). He equally acknowledges his use of a means paralleled to Moncrieff’s, when faced with passages where a word which does not correspond to the situation appears: ‘It is interesting to note that, to this little translator’s dilemma, Scott Moncrieff’s solution, quite defensible, was to quietly omit the words. Here and there, with other some perplexities, I do something similar.’ (Grieve 2002: xiii).

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10 First page of: Grieve, James. *Under the Shadow of Young Girls in Flowers*. In *In Search of Lost Time*, Vol.2. London: Penguin Books. 2002.

## Chapter 2 – Reception in the media: a negative view on the Penguin’s version

This new translation offered by Penguin aroused some critics and launched a swarm of press articles, wondering about the validity of this new way to read *La Recherche*. Some of them were quite categorical, either praising or bringing down the Penguin’s version, but most of them considered both the qualities and the flaws of the different versions, and compared them in order to find which one is the more accurate. I will review the arguments aroused against the Penguin version first, then the arguments for it.

### *A set of translators for a united set of volumes*

The first argument against the second version is the main thing that allowed it to exist: the set of different translators. Indeed, many critics argue that to divide Proust into seven different voices is to mistake the real nature of the work: ‘The novel really is one novel, and not [...] a sequence of novels’ (Hensher 2002) therefore dividing it under different hands may distort its unity. Douglas-Fairhurst decries this process and presents it as a way to facilitate the task of the editor, without being fully faithful to the original. He explains that even if ‘Christopher Prendergast, the general editor, describes [it] as its ‘commitment to the mobile and the multiple’. [...] it ignores the other half of that truth, which is Proust's commitment to describing the sheer variousness [sic] of the world in a voice which is uniquely his own.’ (Douglas-Fairhurst 2002). It is from this ignorance, he says, that ‘often the work of the Penguin translators jars still more awkwardly with Proust's original’ (Douglas-Fairhurst 2002) than Moncrieff’s one. This set of translators is seen as the major obstacle to a true translation of the work, mainly because it gives importance to different subjectivities – through different persons working as translators. Alter is even more direct towards this decision and deconstructs the whole stratagem, attacking the editor by this straightforward ad hominem argument:

Anyone reading through the seven volumes in French comes to sense a unifying Proustian sensibility in the prose even as it shifts gear according to the exigencies of the particular narrative moment. Prendergast's assertion to the contrary looks suspiciously like an excuse for having made no editorial effort to bring the sundry volumes into full stylistic consonance with each other, and this inaction in certain ways compromises the project as a whole. (Alter 2002)



### ***Relation to tradition***

Another argument against Prendergast's project is raised by Hensher, against the assumed wish of the editor to be closer to the original:

This new translation tries to be much closer to Proust than previous translations, arguing that Proust's style is extremely odd in French, and an elegant translation like Kilmartin's doesn't reflect that oddity. That may be so, but it is also true that a very close translation will have a French-flavoured oddity quite different from Proust's oddity. (Hensher 2002)

Thus, in giving a different flavour to the text, and in contorting it in an English sometimes too much Gallicized, the translators add new obstacles that are not in the original writing. Those obstacles will then come between the reader and the meaning and message of the story – and one knows that we don't need any obstacles added to Proust's writing... – and will distort the vision the reader has of the text, mostly in a different way than it should lead him. After having argued this Gallicizing problem, Hensher keeps on piling up flaws: in fact, he is quite hard against the new version Penguin offers to the public and also states that:

There are an alarming number of errors here, some of them extraordinarily elementary [...]

There are some appalling slips in tone. [...]

There are, too, some shocking anachronisms. (Hensher 2002)

When translating a classic, after somebody already translated it, you need either to ascertain your position towards its tradition: '... un traducteur qui retraduit une œuvre déjà maintes fois traduite a avantage à connaître l'histoire de ses traductions, soit pour s'inscrire dans une lignée, soit pour s'inspirer de l'une des traductions de cette lignée, soit pour rompre avec cette lignée.' (Berman 1995: 61). The issue here is that the tradition has been held up during eighty years by only one translation which was seen until the end of the twentieth-century as *the one*, sometimes to be revised but never to be challenged. The Penguin translators chose to deviate from the tradition: they modernized the text and changed the title of each volume: e.g. from *Swann's Way* to *The Way by Swann*, from *Within a Budding Grove* to *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flowers*, and even from *Time Regained* to *Finding Time Again*. Those were mostly radical changes but such changes were not to everyone's taste and they were sometimes seen as unneeded addition to the tradition. Hensher, for instance, complains about the choice of titles made by Prendergast's team, and makes really good points: 'The eccentric titles are often inappropriate —

‘Autour de Mme Swann’ can’t be translated ‘Mme Swann’s Way’ without confusing the whole structure — and sometimes, as in ‘Finding Time Again’, plain wrong.’ (Hensher 2002). Indeed, including a ‘Mme Swann’s Way’ creates a third path in the narrator’s life which is only supposed to contain two ways: the one by Swann’s the other by Guermantes’, symbolizing his two temptations in life and the two manners he can choose to live his life. A third path to follow is indeed ‘confusing the whole structure’ by implying that the narrator could find a third way of living, and introducing a tertiary rhythm is to introduce infinity: if you can find a third way, why not four or five or ... until an infinity of different ways appears – infinity which is contrary to the closed binary opposition felt by the narrator.

### *Discrepancies in excellence*

Moreover, beside this desperate, but understandable strategy of using a set of translators<sup>11</sup>, there is a danger in using this process. Indeed, even if ‘They are all experienced translators of French literature, [...] they [inevitably] do not all reflect the same level of excellence.’ (Alter 2002). Thus the translation will not be reaching the same level of literariness or faithfulness; and then such judgments as Hensher’s can easily arise: ‘Some volumes, I must say, are very much better than others.’ (Hensher 2002). This point of view is supported by Alter, who claims that ‘It is particularly unfortunate that the weakest link in the chain appears in the second volume in the sequence, James Grieve’s translation of *A l’Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*.’ (Alter 2002). Indeed, he argues that this second volume, on which I am going to work, is overfilled with blunders and awkward translations. He states that instead of being clear and highly meaningful, ‘The beautiful long sentences, so poised in the first volume, become syntactically muddy and hard to follow’ (Alter 2002) and that ‘Grieve’s volume abounds in awkward turns of phrase and actual solecisms.’ (Alter 2002). One of the main problems of Grieve’s translation is his treatment of Subjunctives, which appear in many instances under Proust’s pen: according to Alter, ‘he has entirely banished the Subjunctive from Proust.’ To change the mood of some of the verbs throughout the text can sometimes help to render the exact meaning of the French, but to completely erase a mood from all the pages, that is to say to destroy a particular way to explain things – here showing the idea not as a fact but as a projection of

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<sup>11</sup> ‘The idea of entrusting one of the supreme French stylists to seven different English sensibilities is a strategy of desperation, but arguably an understandable one.’ (Alter 2002)

the mind – is a real danger to the rendering of the meaning of the text – which is aimed to be as exact as possible when a translation prides itself on closeness to the original text (as Prendergast claimed). Moreover, Alter argues that it is not a problem that English cannot answer properly but simply a decision made – wrongly – by the translator:

In an English equivalent of [Proust's] prose, the distinction between narrative facts and conditions contrary to fact cries out to be marked formally. Grieve is an Australian, and perhaps the subjunctive has been abolished in his native land, but Lydia Davis punctiliously observes it in the first volume, as do Mark Traherne and the translators who follow him in the line-up. (Alter 2002)

He also deplores that Prendergast accepted some too much modernized expressions in a translation of a twentieth-century text: 'A scrupulous editor would not have allowed Collier to use 'engineer' and 'contact' as verbs in an English style aspiring to simulate the formal propriety of Proust's early twentieth-century French.' (Alter 2002), arguing that it leads the reader into false assumptions about the atmosphere built up in the original text. Andre Aciman also criticized the second volume, but on the title side this time: 'He describes the new title as 'monstrous.' 'Do you know what that means, because I don't,' he says.' (Trachtenberg 2006).

### ***'A job well done' against 'a labour of love'***

To be fair, it is right to follow Hensher in his statement that 'Translations are always going to be judged on their errors, [...]', and that they are also going to be judged in comparison with what we take for granted, i.e. tradition. Listening to Hensher, Alter and Douglas-Fairhurst's advice, we would certainly disregard this new translation as made of blunders, false assumptions and distortions of meaning. Hensher states, at the end of his article: 'In short, there is no point in pretending that this translation doesn't give many occasions for serious concern. There are far too many errors, ranging from minor sins against good taste to evidence of really disgraceful incompetence in French.' (Hensher 2002). But Douglas-Fairhurst is more optimistic about it and ends his article by contrasting this work with Moncrieff's work: 'For the Penguin translators, one feels, this version of Proust is a job well done; for Scott Moncrieff, it was a labour of love.' He implies that any work would in fact have been undermined against the books translated by Moncrieff with love and, ultimately, *until his death*.

## Chapter 3 – Reception in the media: a positive view on the Penguin’s version

Even if many negative arguments have risen, you can also find an important number of praising critics. Most of the time the subject of the critics is an item despised by the negative critics, in which they find more positive than negative aspects. I will make a brief review of the main arguments.

### *Praising the team of translators*

In most promoting critics, the set of seven translators is pushed in front of the readership as the good ‘invention’ of Prendergast and Penguin. They support, contrary to what Douglas-Fairhurst says, a sense of unity between those different translators, a feeling that we still hear Proust’s voice, and at the same time that the different aspects of each book appear more clearly, thanks to these different pens. Botton is the one who praises the set of translators the most:

For a start, Prendergast has picked on a distinguished range of translators, so that even if one ends up with a favourite (mine was James Grieve, who did Volume 2), there’s never a sense of an awkward shift as one moves from book to book. [...]

It is Proust’s voice that one follows; the translators remain self-effacing handmaidens, their task helped by a general editor who has taken care to impose a uniformity of names and other details. (Botton 2002)

Some, like Davis, are more pondered: he only says that he can, ‘though each of the seven volumes is the work of a different translator, [feel] some general tendencies emerg[ing] supporting Prendergast’s contention that the novel is ‘far more robustly hewn’ than is commonly supposed.’ (Davis 2002). Under Alter’s pen, the promotion is mostly for their work on syntax: they, so he says, made a great job in rendering Proust’s sentences as accurately as possible without pushing it into a posh version of the writing. He claims that it sometimes sounds a bit snob under Moncrieff’s pen, but that there: ‘All seven translators, [...] try to be faithful to the semantic contours of Proust’s word-choices, and five of them do a rather good job of conveying his rich lyricism in dignified literary English that does not sound pretentious or overblown.’ (Alter 2002). Another easy mistake would be to render Proust’s prose in a too stylized writing style – a problem due most of the time to an excess of worship (and often described as the main flaw in Moncrieff’s translation). But

for Alter, the Penguin translators keep Proust at his real place: ‘All seven of the new translators firmly reject the Moncrieffian seduction to elevate or hyperbolize Proust.’ (Alter 2002).

### *Proust for everyone*

The different liberties they take are also promoted, notably their use of anachronisms: ‘Several of the translators make judicious use of anachronism to point up the indecorous explicitness of Proust's dissection of sexual desire in general, and the subcultures of male and female homosexuality in particular’ (Davis 2002). These liberties are in keeping with the contemporary current of translating processes; indeed, Trachtenberg in 2006, on an article about translation in general, stated that all new translations have to deal with a different language, a different way to understand and say things: ‘the new editions bring the language up to date, clearing away cobwebs and correcting mistakes in clunky, older texts.’ Penguin’s translators, who tried to render a Proust understandable by everyone, while being faithful to the original style, followed this idea: the vocabulary was therefore a strong area to work on. The idea that Proust would have liked this new translation is raised by Davis on the behalf that Proust wrote, when ill in his bedroom, that ‘my only care is to give my books, through their absorption by other minds, the expansion that is refused me’ (quoted in Davis 2002). The attempts made to modernize the novel (anachronisms, different translators, changes in titles), can be seen as attempts to expand it to a new readership, a process which would have been – so Davis said – what Proust would have wanted: ‘If, in order to get them read, to secure their absorption by the minds of foreign readers, translators have to inflict a measure of structural damage on those books, there are reasons to suppose that Proust would have considered this a necessary evil.’ (Davis 2002).

### *About titles*

Another point discussed by the negative critics was the titles used by Penguin’s translation. If I did not find any counter-argument about the titles of the volumes, I did find an explanation about the change in the title of the whole novel. Indeed, in ‘Love by Osmosis’, the title of the overall novel is claimed as more accurate than Moncrieff’s title:

Scott Moncrieff’s memorable Shakespearian *Remembrance of Things Past* is gone. Proust himself disliked it and everyone appears to agree that *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* implies not only time ‘lost’ but also time

‘wasted’, while ‘à la recherche’ signifies something that is quasi-scientific and experimental, distant from the comfortable English ‘remembering’. So, if one concentrates on the full implications of the words (and with Proust concentration is essential), *In Search of Lost Time* becomes quite acceptable.’ (Love by osmosis 2002)

Indeed, the ‘new’ title is closer to all the ideas that the French title underlies, and renders the ambiguities a bit more strongly than the title chosen by Moncrieff.

### ***Praising James Grieve’s volume***

Unlike Alter who claims that the second volume is the weakest point in the chain, several critics state that the translation by James Grieve, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flowers*, is indeed their favourite<sup>12</sup>. For Davis, Grieve’s volume is the most fluent of all the volumes, but he concedes that ‘his constant and bold grammatical interventions will not be to the taste of purists.’ (Davis 2002). In the article ‘Love by osmosis’, a same promotion of Grieve’s volume is made:

James Grieve, who did volume two, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flowers*, reminds us that Proust's writing can be so slipshod that editing it becomes unavoidable. Yet in seeking to produce something equivalent to the French rather than a version that has been manipulated to make it more comprehensible, the translators have produced something very readable. (Love by Osmosis 2002)

The editing that we looked upon as having a negative impact on the novel seems thus to help give a better view of the text, a better understanding of the meaning, a better hearing of Proust’s voice in the volume. Moreover, Robb, in his article ‘Stripping Proust of prissiness’ also states that ‘It is good to see Proust's *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flowers* literally displayed’ (Robb 2002) – by which he certainly means that we finally get the real title Proust gave to the volume. Indeed, even if some will argue that it does not make sense<sup>13</sup>, it does in fact not make sense in French either and was a neologism supposedly proposed by one of Proust’s friends several years before the volume was born.

### ***A new alternative***

Finally, for several critics, this translation is far better than the one you were able to read until 2002. Contrary to some attacks pointing at a translation full of blunders, and sometimes even wrong, Alain de Botton states that this new translation is to rate at a really

<sup>12</sup> ‘even if one ends up with a favourite (mine was James Grieve, who did Volume 2)’ (Botton 2002)

<sup>13</sup> See Andre Aciman’s statement in Trachtenberg 2006 quoted in chapter 2

high level. Indeed, it was not enough for the translators to have remained ‘self-effacing handmaidens’, they have also rendered the text so well as to let the reader forget that he reads a translation:

It is a measure of how good this translation is that the ordinary reader will not have to spend too long thinking about it. [...]

The greatest praise one could pay this new edition of *In Search of Lost Time* is therefore to say that it allows us to forget both that we are reading the work of many different translators and, for long sections, that we are even reading anything that began in a foreign language at all. Like the best translations, it lets the author speak. (Botton 2002)

There is thus no linguistic obstacle between the reader and the text, nor between the reader and the author: Botton claims that this new translation gives the readers what Proust indeed wrote, as if he had himself been an English man writing in English. Alter also praises this highest level of translation: ‘For long stretches, the new Penguin Proust offers English readers a stylistic experience that is a far better equivalent of the original than what they have had till now.’ (Alter 2002). This new translation allows nowadays readers a choice that they were not offered before. Even if this choice may be quite annoying at one point (‘For readers, more new translations mean more anxiety that they may choose – or have already spent dozens of hours reading – the ‘wrong’ interpretation of Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky.’ (Trachtenberg 2006)), it also allows to see through the novel from two different points of view, which Tonkin shows as being a technical reading of the novel quite close to the pattern of the novel itself: ‘Penguin's polyphonic Proust takes you on that amazing voyage, via an intriguingly different route. Perhaps we ought to remember that the entire novel turns on the idea of two divergent paths with a single destination.’ (Tonkin 2002). And as Robb writes: ‘The word ‘definitive’, on the cover of the old Proust, looks more dubious than ever.’ (Robb 2002).

## **PART 2:**

# **Discrepancies in the Use and Translation of Grammar and Syntax**



## Introduction

I will now turn to the main part of my study, namely the analysis of two translations, by Scott Moncrieff and James Grieve, of the passage when the narrator first sees ‘the girls’. My study will be divided in two different parts, the first mostly dealing with syntax and grammar problems, the second dealing with more lexical issues. During this whole process I will try to show the differences existing between the translations and the impact of those differences on the rendering of the novel.

### *Choice of theoretical terms*

My first insight will look at the different methodological choice made by each translator: indeed, Moncrieff is really close to the French text in words and construction, whereas Grieve version is more on the side of adapting French sentences towards English sentences. In order to be clear with the words I will use during this analysis, I will lean on two different theorists of translation, Nida and Catford, in which I will pick the technical words that seem to me the most accurate for my description. In his book entitled *Towards a Science of Translation*, Nida displays his idea of a staged translating process as such:

An effective way to describe the differences between translations is to set up a series of three stages of translation. The first is a *literal transfer*, which is almost a word-for-word and unit-for-unit ‘transliteration’ of the original into corresponding lexical units in the receptor language. [...] The results of such a transfer are scarcely intelligible. [...] This second stage, which may conveniently be called a *minimal transfer*, represents only those alterations from stage 1 which are necessary if the translation is to conform to the obligatory categories of the receptor language. The third stage may be regarded as a *literary transfer*. [...] the changes from stage 2 to stage 3 are optional, and may thus be quite diverse. [...] (Nida 1964: 184-5)

One year later, Catford wrote a parallel model of translation processes, in which he does not despise what Nida calls ‘literal transfer’, but in fact considers it as a real form of translation:

A *free* translation is always *unbounded* – equivalences shunt up and down the rank scale, but tends to be at the higher ranks – sometimes between larger units than the sentence. *Word-for-word* translation generally means what it says: i.e. is essentially *rank-bound* at word-rank (but may include some morpheme-morpheme equivalences). *Literal* translation lies between these extremes, it may start, as it were, from a word-for-word translation, but make changes in conformity with [Target Language] grammar [...]; this way make it a group-group or clause-clause translation. One notable point, however, is that literal translation, like word-for-word,

tends to remain *lexically* word-for-word, i.e. to use the highest (unconditioned) probability lexical equivalent for each lexical item. (Catford 1965: 25)

I would like to use the two theories to support my own vocabulary: I will describe the unit-for-unit transliteration as **word-for-word** translation (for example when you have such a sentence as ‘Mon chien est dans le jardin.’ translated by ‘My dog is in the garden.’ which shows the same amount of words, with the same meaning, lexical categories and in the same order in the sentence.). I will then use the term **minimal** translation in order to describe a sentence in which only the compulsory grammatical changes occur (for example encountered in a fragment like ‘la maison verte’ translated by ‘the green house’). I will finally call a **literary** translation a translation in which more changes occur than only the compulsory ones.

## Chapter 4 – Discrepancies in the translating process

Skimming through the two translations, one remarks that Moncrieff version is closer to a minimal translation, with even some word-for-word extracts, while Grieve version is more literary. I will first study Moncrieff's minimal processes and show that too much closeness can endanger the grammatical rightness of the work.

### *Moncrieff's minimal translation*

To support my analysis, I will use one particular example:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff
9 <sup>14</sup>	si quelque vieux monsieur dont elles n'admettaient pas l'existence et dont elles repoussaient le contact s'était enfui avec des mouvements craintifs ou furieux, précipités ou risibles	if some old gentleman of whom they did not admit the existence and thrust from them the contact, had fled with a frightened or furious, but a headlong or ludicrous motion

*Figure 1: word-for-word / minimal translation*

These extracts, showed in parallel, display how close Moncrieff's translation can be to the French original: indeed if we take the eleven first words of the French, they are the exact counterpart of the English equivalents chosen, associated in the same way and the same order. It is as if the sentences were mirroring each other. If counting the number of words (29/31), we realize that this is a minimal translation: each word can indeed be related to its equivalent, but sometimes it is made of more than one word (dont - of whom) and can be in a different order in the sentence (for instance the adjectives in the end who obey the grammatical rule of English adjectives). A slight adaptation towards literary translation can be supposed since the translation modifies the plural 'mouvements' into the singular 'motion', but this can also be inferred to the generality of 'motion', which implies several movements in his singular and therefore keeps on being a minimal translation.

### **Grammatical problems: adjective order**

The problem with this minimal process is that at some points, it makes the English grammatically faulty. Moncrieff often uses the backwards order of adjectives allowed by the exceptional rule of adjective placement: if all attribute adjectives are supposed to be placed before the noun, there are some conditions in which adjectives can be placed after

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<sup>14</sup> The page numbers used refer to the pages of the text in the Annex

the noun<sup>15</sup>. This allows the translation to be really close to the French which places most of its adjectives after the noun and gives it a French flavour.

Page	Proust	Moncrieff
7	la nature hardie, frivole et dure	their nature, bold, frivolous and hard

*Figure 2: word-for-word translation*

Here, the use of the comma introduces the adjectives and allows any ambiguities to disappear: the rule is applied in the accurate environment. Moreover, the contrasted nature of the adjectives makes it a good candidate for the exception.

But sometimes, the use of the exception is faulty:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff
7	d'une beauté fluide, collective et mobile.	a beauty fluid, collective and mobile.

*Figure 3: word-for-word translation*

In this example, the problem caused by the adjectives behind the noun is that 'fluid' can either be a noun or an adjective. Therefore there is an ambiguity added to the group of words: is it the beauty which is fluid, collective and mobile, or is it the beauty fluid (i.e. a substance used to enhance beauty for example) which is collective and mobile? I would qualify this as a grammatical mistake since the display of an exceptional rule of grammar (adjectives can be used after a noun in a few cases) leads to misunderstandings and ambiguities.

### **Syntactical problems: Gallicized construction**

This minimal translation can turn English as well into a hard-to-follow prose, highly Gallicized in style and construction. This is a default we can find at several moments in Moncrieff's version, and which is resolved by Grieve in his literary translation. For instance:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
2	Des femmes élégantes, je croyais en apercevoir partout,	Charming women I seemed to see all round me,	Beautifully dressed women seemed to be everywhere,

*Figure 4: Gallicized construction*

If we put aside the issue of the translation of the adjective and of the verb 'apercevoir' and focus our analysis on the construction of the clause, we can see where too minimal a translation can endanger the meaning. Here indeed, the cleft sentence in French is translated directly in English by Moncrieff, with the omission of a comma. English does not grammatically appreciate cleft sentences, and prefers to keep a logical order, the object

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<sup>15</sup> (Berléand-Delépine 2007: 333-334)

after the verb. Cleft sentences are not a non-grammatical construction, but they are rare, and thus may account for ambiguities. In this example, the sentence written by Moncrieff is not a real cleft sentence, but still creates a mist around the lexical category of ‘Charming women’, which may endanger reading. Grieve turns it into a more English way of writing, by transforming the object into a subject: it keeps the emphasis on the women since they are still at the beginning of the sentence but allows the reader an easier reading, more straightforward and less reflexive. (We should note however that Grieve loses the expression of ‘I’, and therefore loses the idea of the narrator present in the middle of these appearances of beautiful women).

Similarly, in those examples:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
3	Une de ces inconnues poussait devant elle, de la main, sa bicyclette ;	One of these strangers was pushing as she came, with one hand, her bicycle;	One of these girls was walking along pushing her bicycle;
22	Avec le plein de l’été	With summer at the full	The midsummer days

Figure 5: minimal translation

In the first one, the apposition in Moncrieff’s translation, following the French appositional pattern, destroys the English syntax and misleads the reader: the three parts of the clause after ‘was pushing’ are all complements of the verb, but since their (prepositional) head is never the same, and since one of those parts includes a verb, the analysis is more difficult. It is only the thorough knowledge of the grammar and language that allows us to understand that the clause is not ‘she came [...] her bicycle’, since the verb ‘come’ cannot be followed by an object as its complement, but she ‘was pushing [...] her bicycle’. And we also know that ‘with one hand’ refers to ‘was pushing’ thanks to a lexical knowledge, even if its position in the sentence would grammatically allow us to believe that it is apposed to the closest verb – i.e. ‘came’. In Grieve version, all is simpler: he got rid of the French apposition and made a sentence in which everything is understandable at first reading.

In the second instance, Moncrieff uses again a minimal process of translation, which gives a strange flavour to his writing, echoing the construction of French, but misleading the reader about the meaning of his translation – if this construction ‘at the full’ exists, it is a restricted expression for the moon (*Gasc* 1928: 633). In Grieve, we witness an adaptation towards a more English meaning, an echo to Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which gives full sense to the expression, and offers the complete meaning of the French expression.

### Lexical problems: faulty use of words

Minimal translation can induce the translator into another mistake: the use of words which sound English but in fact are not, or describe something else. For example:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
23	j'adressai un sourire au directeur	I addressed a smile to the manager	I gave the manager a smile
23	comme dans une cage thoracique mobile	as in a mobile thoracic cage	as though inside a mobile rib-cage
10	cinq minutes, ce qui lui semblait bien long,	five minutes, which seemed long enough to him	brief absences, which he found long

*Figure 6: lexical problem caused by minimal translation*

In the first example, the use of the verb ‘addressed’ in Moncrieff’s translation is not a word belonging to the English vocabulary: indeed, when one searches into the *Gasc*, which is the reference I use for the vocabulary of the 1920’s, one cannot find ‘address’ under the category ‘verb’, but only under the category ‘noun’. On the contrary Grieve uses one of the possible English verbs in collocation with ‘smile’ (‘give’ is the choice of Grieve, we could also have ‘cast’ for instance), and translates the clause more faithfully, and understandably.

In the second example, a few lines later, while in French the association of ‘thoracic’ and ‘cage’ is a common association, and a common compound, in English, using ‘thoracic’ with ‘cage’ is a scientific description of the body, while ribcage (with or without the hyphen) is more common, more used in everyday life. Here, Moncrieff seems to have translated without even understanding the real meaning of it: it is not a scientific view of the elevator, but an analogy with an everyday item, known and felt by everyone. Willing to be too close to the French misleads, in our example, the reading. On the contrary, James Grieve uses the commoner way to talk about this part of the body, and make the analogy more easily felt by the reader.

In the last example, Moncrieff, on trying to translate closely to French turns his sentence into animism – mostly repellent to the English language. In his translation, the ‘five minutes’ are the subject of the clause, following the French sentence in which ‘ce’ embodies the inanimate subject ‘cinq minutes’. It thus creates an inanimate subject while it is preferred, in English sentences, to put animate subject and inanimate object: Grieve’s literary translation uses ‘he’ as the subject of the verb, and ‘brief absences’ as the inanimate object of the sentence.

### Giving a French flavour

But at some points, keeping close to the French can account for nice associations:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
13	en faisant « bande à part »	by making them a ‘band apart’	to be ‘as thick as thieves’

Figure 7: giving a French flavour

In this example, Moncrieff allows his writing to give an English concept, together with keeping a French flavour: if the reader is acquainted with French, he will recognize the French expression underneath and feel the real tone of the passage; on the contrary, if the reader is not acquainted with French he will still perfectly understand the image. Turning to Grieve, his literary translation gives us an English expression which does not remind any French image: the meaning is directly understandable, the image can easily be represented in the reader’s mind, but there is a small loss of meaning, ie. the French reference, in it.

### James Grieve’s literary translation

In the two last examples we see that Grieve uses literary modifications in order to translate the novel, and for this purpose he uses different means. Henry Meschonnic, in his book, *Poétique du Traduire*, accounts for four different defaults in which challenging minimal translation can lead:

Il y a quatre formes de tétatologie en traduction [...] : les *suppressions* ou omissions dans le texte, il manque un mot ou un groupe de mots ; les *ajouts*, parce que la traduction se croit tenue d’explicitier ; les *déplacements* de groupes (l’unité étant le groupe, non le mot) – pour des raisons à jamais mystérieuses, ou encore non élucidées, ce qui était au début se retrouve au milieu ou à la fin de la phrase, [...] – sans aucune contrainte linguistique et sans aucune idée d’une sémantique de position ; enfin, banalement, on observe à la fois une *non-concordance* et une *anti-concordance* : non-concordance quand une même unité de sens est rendue par plusieurs, en défigurant le rythme sémantique, et anti-concordance ou *contre-concordance*, quand inversement plusieurs sont rendues par une seule. (Meschonnic 1999 : 27)

I will study more closely the processes used by Grieve in his translation. I will look first at his use of additions and subtractions, then at the ways he generalises units and at how he moves units inside sentences. I will finally look at his changes in nominal and verbal status, number, and activity.

### Additions for explanation

His main means of taking some liberties in translation is the way he adds words, or even clauses to the main text. In *Towards a Science of Translation*, Nida presents different uses of additions in translation:

Of the many types of additions which may legitimately be incorporated into a translation, the most common and important are: (a) filling out elliptical expressions; (b) obligatory specification; (c) additions required because of grammatical restructuring; (d) amplification from implicit to explicit status; (e) answers to rhetorical questions; (f) classifiers; (g) connectives; (h) categories of the receptor language; and (i) doublets. (Nida 1964: 227)

Most of Grieve's additions are of the (d) character: as he claims in his *Preface*, he wants to clarify the obscure passages in order to help the reader reads more easily. This project of explaining the implicit statement is a key in his project. Instance of explanation would be for example:

Page	Proust	Grieve
2	Difficulties	Obstacles
3	aller retrouver ma grand'mère	go in to sit with my grandmother
4	Ils	the subject of her scrutiny
15	ø dit	she said

Figure 8: Grieve's precisions

In those examples, Grieve translates with precisions. On page 2, he specifies the nature of the difficulties encountered by the narrator; there is no addition in this one, it is a subtle change in words. But in the second example taken a few lines after, instead of only stating, as Moncrieff does, 'join', he explains where ('in' the hotel) and how ('sit') he will join his grandmother. He gives precisions that are implicit in the French text, but which he feels a need to explicit in his translation. In the same spirit, he also makes subjects more explicit so that sentences may be clearer. On pages 4 and 15, Grieve clarifies the exact nature of the subject, the exact person embodied by this subject. He wants his readership to be able to follow the writing really close so that they would not be lost in the middle of a sentence or a paragraph, trying to remember which one is the subject of this verb, who is 'they', etc.

Some of these explanations are really welcomed by the reader who could be lost without them, for instance, in the titles of the people described in the novel:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
4	la femme du premier président	the chief magistrate's wife	the wife of the First President from Caen
14	Péri	peri	Peri

Figure 9: Grieve's precisions



The French is obscure in the presentation on page 4, and Moncrieff decides to keep the obscurity, while Grieve tries to explain for the English reader and give meaning to this apparently meaningless title. In this he extends his task: he does not only change the status from implicit to explicit anymore, but gives meaning to an extract that may not have any – this allows the reader not to wonder who is this ‘premier président’, since it is a question we do not need to ask ourselves because the character is only mentioned in passing.

In the second example either, his clarification is welcomed by the reader: in Moncrieff’s version, the word *peri*, used to describe the girls by Proust, is kept, with no modification, but in Grieve’s, he adds a capital letter to the word: ‘*Peri*’. This capital letter makes the word distinct from a common, normal word and points it out as a particularity of the text. Moreover, he adds a note in which he explains what a *peri* is (from which tradition it comes, where it had been referred to after, where Proust could have made the acquaintance of the myth...). His additions are not only made in the text but also around it, as para-textual notes which help the reader to understand more easily the details of the novel.

In the same spirit he also explains genre since there is no such thing as feminine or masculine adjectives in English. For instance:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
21	Toutes	all	all girls

*Figure 10: Grieve’s precisions*

Indeed, even if ‘all’ is the first obvious translation of the French, part of the information given by ‘toutes’ in French is not contained in ‘all’ in the English language: the presence of the feminine needs to be added some way. Grieve uses a small addition, ‘girls’, to show which kind of group is ‘all’, giving then the genre and the nature of the group – giving precisions in English in order to translate every straightforward information given by the French.

### Clause additions

In some instances, whereas I only showed example of small additions until now, he adds an almost complete clause to the narration:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
17	j’eusse renoncé.	I had renounced.	I had abandoned all hope of ever enjoying.
24	la trace du régime de la domesticité.	every trace of the rule of domesticity.	all reminder of the system of domestic service, to

			which they belong.
--	--	--	--------------------

Figure 11: clause additions

In order to explicit, in the first example, the exact way in which he renounces, James Grieve changes the verb and explains in a long periphrasis. While Moncrieff was able to give the shortness of the French, the idea that the renunciation would have been brief and direct – unchangeable – James Grieve turns it in a reviewing of all the things he would have needed to put aside, to leave behind. It gives a lot more pressure to the renunciation. Here, the explanation gives another focus to the clause.

In the second example, Grieve adds a new apposition to the sentence, in order to explicit the relationship between the words spoken, the domesticity where it comes from and the person who speaks: the lift-man does not use this domestic word because he chooses to use it but because it is part of his own idiolect, dictated by his belonging to a specific class and background.

#### Dangers caused by additions

The problem with this process of addition is that sometimes, Grieve goes too far into the explanation and adds meaning to the original, thus distorting the actual meaning of the sentence or expression. For instance:

Page	Proust	Grieve
8	dont la souffrance même n'eût pu éveiller en elles un sentiment de solidarité	which, even if it was capable of suffering, could not move them to sympathy,

Figure 12: dangers of addition

In French, there is no doubt that those beings can suffer, there is no question about it, nor about the fact that the girls cannot develop sympathy towards the suffering of others: they are facts. In Grieve's translation, however, the addition creates a doubt, adds a feeling of uncertainty face to the possible suffering of these beings. It changes the actual simple straightforward statement (they suffer: they don't mind) to a double-sided comment which has repercussions on the girls themselves. While in French, the example is there to prove the complete difference between the girls and all the *others* around them, in Grieve's English, we encounter an understating of this difference. Indeed, the girls are supposed to be different from the crowd because they cannot feel for this crowd – but if there is a doubt on the possibility for the crowd to suffer, that is, a doubt on their ability to feel, what is the difference between the girls and the crowd? They both do not feel when they are expected to and therefore seem more similar than different. This small addition therefore is creating

a whole new aspect of the gaze on the girls, possibly even melting them into the crowd they are supposed to be disengaging from.

### Subtractions for simplification

Another means used by Grieve to turn towards a literary translation is to subtract elements from the sentence. This can either be by using English grammar for an economy of words, or a simplification of statements; and while adding elements may state the implicit, this process does the opposite and turns explicit elements into implicit ones.

Page	Proust	Grieve
5	et pour cela renoncer à toute activité	and gives up all activities
10	deux yeux verts dans une figure poupine /qui exprimèrent pour cet acte une admiration et une gaieté/ où je crus discerner un peu de timidité <sup>16</sup>	a pair of green eyes in a chubby face /full of admiration, merriment/ and possibly also some slight shyness, <sup>17</sup>
17	cette supposition me paraissait enfermer en elle une contradiction	there was a contradiction

Figure 13: subtraction for simplification

In the first example, Grieve shows his will to turn explicit elements into implicit: the explicit reason of the giving up of activities – i.e. ‘pour cela’: ‘with that object’ as Moncrieff translates it – is erased from Grieve’s translation; he makes it implicit that this part of the sentence is the response to the will of living out of everyone’s sight – stated beforehand. This does not endanger the understanding, but in fact gives a smoother reading of the sentence. This turning into implicit an explicit element of the sentence allows to simplify the reading – indeed, he simplifies a fair number of sentences during our passage.

In the second example, instead of translating the complete expression, Grieve only translates the adjectives, which he incorporates to the ‘pair of green eyes’ by the means of another adjective. Thus the sentence is less long, less heavy, in one word simpler than the French one. He helps the reader to read more easily, as he claimed his aim was in his Preface; but in the mean time the simplification loses an indication about this admiration: the eyes are not commonly ‘full of admiration’ but only face to this bold act performed by the older girl – it is a sudden admiration opposed to the shyness that seems to be always present in those eyes.

As well further on, in the last example: while the meaning is, in the end, the same,

<sup>16</sup> The / are added to symbolise the external limits of the expression I am going to consider

<sup>17</sup> idem

Grieve gives it more straightforwardly, going directly to the main element of the clause: the ‘contradiction’. This contradiction is the object of the sentence, the matter of the end of this paragraph, it is the disillusion of the narrator facing the fact that he cannot be part of the ‘band of girls’, that he is not from their world, and remains still as one among the *others*. Grieve, instead of turning around this revelation goes straight to it and displays it more strongly: ‘there *was* a contradiction’<sup>18</sup>, it was real.

### Subtractions for economy

Another use of subtractions is simply for an economy of words<sup>19</sup>. This process is used by Grieve mostly when it is a grammatical possibility; for example, he elides many instances of ‘que’, compulsory in French but often optional in English:

Page	Proust	Grieve
5	les mouvements qu’elles voulaient	the movements they wished to make
14	aux lieux qu’il <sup>20</sup> connaît	places she <sup>21</sup> knows

Figure 14: subtraction and economy

But he also uses subtraction for economic purposes in more blurry contexts:

Page	Proust	Grieve
8	un sentiment de solidarité	Sympathy
17	la petite bande, noble comme si elle était composée de vierges helléniques	this little group, as noble as though composed of Hellenic virgins

Figure 15: subtraction and economy

In those two examples, Grieve shortens sentences in order to lighten the reading, without modifying the meaning of the text – in our first example, he changes an expression of feeling into a simple noun, which sums up the expression; in the other example he gets rid of the cumbersome construction and elides the auxiliary, using English grammar in order to make things more readable.

### Dangers caused by subtractions

However, as the additions had their drawbacks, subtractions have theirs: in some instances, Grieve, by subtracting elements, loses a part of the meaning conveyed by the French. For instance, in our next example, Grieve puts aside the phrase which is supposed to stand for justification of the clause that follows:

<sup>18</sup> Italics mine

<sup>19</sup> ‘*l’économie*, [...] se traduit par un resserrement de l’énoncé obtenu par la réduction, en nombre ou en étendue, des signes qui le composent.’ (Vinay & Dalbérnet 1977: 184)

<sup>20</sup> ‘cet être’ p.14

<sup>21</sup> ‘the creature’ p.14

Page	Proust	Moncrieff
6	mais à vrai dire, je les voyais depuis si peu d'instants	but I had been looking at them for so few moments

Figure 16: dangers of subtractions

The opposition between the previous information, already given, and the new, which will be given, is still present thanks to the translation of ‘mais’ by ‘but’. But the idea of justification, the subjective comment by the narrator is erased in this translation. We are facing the naked facts, with no evaluation or moderation of them by the mind of the narrator, whereas in French the locution ‘à vrai dire’ allows the narrator to underrate his previous information by justifying his new information about the girls. There is an aspect of the French missing in Grieve’s translation here, because of his over use of subtractions.

Another example of this flaw would be towards the end of our extract, when the narrator smiles to the manager of the hotel:

Page	Proust	Grieve
23	j'adressai un sourire au directeur, et sans l'ombre de dégoût, en recueillis un dans sa figure	I gave the manager a smile and received one in return,

Figure 17: dangers of subtraction

In this example, the idea that there is a difference of social level or of personal individuality between the narrator and the manager is not felt in the translation. In the French, the idea of ‘dégoût’ which is pointed out presents a difference of some kind between the two protagonists and expresses the revolution of this difference into a common ground of shared sympathy: this time, there was no disgust in the face of the manager but a real smile. In Grieve’s translation, none of this is present in the clause: it seems only natural that the manager answers to the narrator’s smile by giving himself a smile back; we lose a certain amount of meaning, implied by the French, and therefore lose a side of the exchange with the loss of the apposition. We therefore see that using too many subtractions in the text can be dangerous for the integrity of the translation.

#### Generalization of elements

Besides additions and subtractions which are his main ways to play with the original and create his literary translation, we can isolate a few other means. Firstly, he has a tendency to either generalize or singularize some elements in the text.

Page	Proust	Grieve
6	elles ne m'étaient connues	they were knowable
6	à l'une des jeunes filles plutôt qu'à l'autre	to any particular girl rather than to some other

Figure 18: generalization of elements

In the first example, he turns a personal, individual knowledge into a general

knowledge: from known by him they turn into being ‘knowable’, as a common knowledge, at reach for anyone. It is mistaking the reality of the French which posits them as only a part of the narrator’s knowledge: we are not supposed to have any idea of what is common, but only of what is personal to the narrator.

Similarly a few lines later with our second example: the idea of the group of girls being singularized from all other girls is in the translation completely erased, they become ‘any’ girl (*italics mine*). We understand from the context that he is talking of the girls he has talked about earlier, but the syntax and lexicon give us a generalization that undermines the real status of the actual girls he is talking about. They seem to be lost in the middle of an ocean of girls, in where they are all the same and all fused into an indiscernible face, whereas the French, with the definite article ‘des’, distinguishes a group of girls inside all the other girls, and then only has troubles distinguishing each girl from the others *inside* this group. The French meaning is distorted in this translation.

#### Movements in sentences

Secondly, he moves units inside the sentences:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
4	C'était l'heure où dames et messieurs venaient tous les jours faire leur tour de digue, exposés aux feux impitoyables du face-à-main que fixait sur eux, comme s'ils eussent été porteurs de quelque tare qu'elle tenait à inspecter dans ses moindres détails, /la femme du premier président /, <sup>22</sup>	It was the hour at which ladies and gentlemen came out every day for a turn on the 'front,' exposed to the merciless fire of the long glasses fastened upon them, as if they had each borne some disfigurement which she felt it her duty to inspect in its minutest details, / by the chief magistrate's wife /, <sup>23</sup>	It was the hour for ladies and gentlemen to take their daily walk along the esplanade, directly into the merciless line of fire of the lorgnette held / by the wife of First President from Caen/, who scrutinized each and every one of them as though they might be tainted with some blemish which she felt bound to inspect in its minutest details <sup>24</sup>

Figure 19: movement of sentences

In this example we see how Grieve moves the agent of the passive verb ‘held by’ from the end of the sentence to the middle of it, right after the verb. The extract from Moncrieff shows that the grammatical rule is not the reason for this displacement because he could have been able to write a grammatical sentence and keep the order of the French sentence in the same process. It seems here that the clause is clearer in Grieve than in Moncrieff, but there is not anymore this sense of circularity – maybe representing the lorgnette – that is present both in French and in Moncrieff and in which the subject of the action, placed in

<sup>22</sup> The / are added to symbolise the external limits of the expression I am going to consider.

<sup>23</sup> Idem

<sup>24</sup> Idem

the end, asks you to reread the sentence in your head in order to form the pattern of action clearly. For Meschonnic, the idea of moving elements in the sentence is a major drawback in a translation: ‘Toute l’organisation de sens est modifiée par le déplacement comme par la substitution des termes et des ensembles.’ (Meschonnic 1999: 368). In our example, the organization of the sentence is indeed deeply modified: the next part of the sentence pictures the wife of the president as being seated next to the bandstand; in French, there is no need of link between the wife and her position, but in Grieve’s version, there is a need to add a verb and a subject: the link between her and her posture is broken by a description of the subjects of her watching. Whereas in the original text she seems to be defined by her title as well as by her straight and proud position in her chair, in Grieve she seems only defined by her title, and her sitting posture seems to add no clue to who she is.

In another example, it is the process of the narrator’s thought which is disturbed by the inversion of two events in one sentence:

Page	Proust	Grieve
17	Je n'avais qu'à me rappeler tant d'inconnues que [...] la voiture s'éloignant à toute vitesse m'avait fait à jamais abandonner.	I needed only to think of all the unknown girls [...] whom I had had to give up as the speeding carriage parted me from them for ever.

*Figure 20: movements of sentences*

In this instance, Grieve interchanges the car image with the abandon image in the order of the sentence: while in the French we see the car speeding away from the narrator and therefore creating this gap in him – it is shown to us in the deductive, chronological way – Grieve version shows the effect – having to give up a dream embedded in an unknown girl – before the cause of the feeling – the car speeding away. It destroys the order of the feeling of the narrator: even if this is a memory, he seems to still need to process it in the chronological order, expressing by it some of the pain he felt at the sight of each of the carriages he had seen leaving away: there is a psychological, emotional side to the order of a sentence that Grieve does not seem to take into account.

#### **Changes in status: nominal / verbal**

Thirdly, we can identify processes, similar to the generalisation process, that put some opposite in balance: changes from singular to plural, from passive to active, from nominal to verbal, and vice versa. First, the change in nominal/verbal status of clauses:

Page	Proust	Grieve
10	le vieil époux à qui elle prodiguait à la fois et dissimulait ses soins	her aged husband, the beneficiary of her close but unobtrusive care

20	assez different	which were sufficiently different from one another
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*Figure 21: nominal/verbal status*

In the first example, the change does not endanger the sentence; in the first clause for example, the verbal expression of the care is turned into adjectival elements, it keeps the binary proposition of give and hide but lightens the sentence into an easier reading; in the second example on the contrary, the small adjectival element of French is turned into a verbal clause which seems likely to resemble the process of addition we talked about earlier: this explains the implicit verb of the implicit clause and gives more syntactical links between the French apposition and the clauses surrounding it.

### Changes in number

Then, the change in number:

Page	Proust	Grieve
7	attitude	attitudes
19	ces jeunes filles	this group of girls

*Figure 22: changes in number*

In those examples, he interchanges the element between singular and plural. This gives a different turn to the sentence: in the first quotation for instance, the passage from a singular to a plural divides the homogeneity of the behaviour of those girls into different attitudes, each particular to one girl. There is no more this sense of a common attitude shared by the whole of them. On the opposite, in the second example, even if ‘girls’ is kept as a plural the fact that these girls are ruled by the ‘group’ that gives the number of the demonstrative implies that they are not differentiated anymore whereas in French, each girl is separated from the other, put in parallel with the many different unknown girls he has encountered before, and each girl creates a separate emotion in the narrator’s self – each emotion ending to be the same, but created each time as a new one by each girl encountered.

### Changes in polarity: active / passive subject

Finally, there is also the change in activity of the subject:

Page	Proust	Grieve
8	que je voyais là, devant la mer,	that met my eye, against the sea,
23	ces caractères [...] que son visage m'avait présentés ce premier jour	the [...] characters printed on this face as I had seen it on our first day

*Figure 23: changes in polarity*

In those examples, he interchanges active and passive subjects. This gives a different



approach to the action referred to.

In the first example, the 'je' is translated by 'my eye' and its presence as subject of the verb is translated into an agent in the sentence. The 'I' is turned into a mere passive 'eye' which sees things passing in front of him: there is no possibility for the 'eye' to act towards those girls, it is itself trapped and turned into a statue like the one the narrator makes a parallel with later in the sentence. But in the French, the 'I' is still active, he is here, he sees the Greek-like scene, the 'I' is the subject of the action: everything is in his hands in order to be modified, there is no definitive passivity for the 'I' of the French sentence.

In the second example, the narrator is passive in its contemplation of the features of the face: it is the object ('m'') of a vision appearing to him, presented to him. James Grieve turns the passivity of the narrator into an active 'I', who remember the sight of the 'characters', as he had seen them before. The vision is thus less powerful: in Grieve's version, the narrator is not subjected to or overpowered by the vision; he masters it, and detaches his person from the vision.

As for the moving of elements inside the sentence, the passage from active to passive subject, as well as the change in number distort the organisation of the sentence and thus modify the overall meaning of sentences.

## Chapter 5 – Tense and Modals

After having displayed the main methods of each translator, I will focus on some aspects where their translations interlink. In a translation from French to English, one of the main issues appears when dealing with verbs. Indeed, a translator has to play with tenses that have no exact counterparts and modals that do not exist in French but which are essential to express thoughts in English. I will study those difficulties and to compare some choices made by the translators.

### *Tense*

There is no perfect equivalence between the type of conjugation showed by the French language and the one displayed by the English language. As we can read in Vinay and Dalbernet:

Si l'on met à part les formes progressive et emphatique, la liste des temps est à peu près identique dans les deux langues, mais la répartition des tâches qui leur sont confiées ne se fait pas de la même façon. [...] L'anglais excelle à marquer le « devenir » ; le français, ici encore fidèle à sa tendance générale, découpe dans le continu du temps des tranches nettement marquées et à l'intérieur desquelles le temps semble s'immobiliser pour passer ensuite à la phrase suivante. (Vinay & Dalbernet 1977: 130)

Thus, translating from a French tense to an English tense demands a complete analysis of the verb in order to convey the same idea, the same principles in two different systems. This issue can be illustrated in our extract by a few choices that differ from one translator to the other.

### **Past Perfect vs. Preterit**

When dealing with the translation of a narration, the main issue is to decide whether to express continuity, simultaneity or gaps. In French, the use of the tenses of past narrative is highly ruled but the system is not exactly equivalent in English. In our extract, the ambivalence between Pluperfect and Preterit through the comparison of the translations illustrates this issue:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
2	avaient paru	had seemed	seemed
13	m'avait-elle vu au moment où le rayon noir émané de ses yeux m'avait rencontré ?	had she seen me at the moment in which the dark ray emanating from her eyes had fallen on me?	did she see me, at the moment when the black ray from her eyes encountered me?
23	Était	was	had been

Figure 24: Pluperfect vs. Preterit

In the first example, Moncrieff uses a Past Perfect in order to clarify the sequence of events detailed in the two first paragraphs of our extract: the narrator has been looking at the ladies at some point in the day, until his eyes finally met the girls ('when, [...], I saw coming towards me five or six young girls,' (Moncrieff p.2)), and this impression, made on him by women alighting from carriages, dictates what he feels when seeing the girls: 'young girls, as different in appearance and manner from all the people whom one was accustomed to see at Balbec as could have been.' (Moncrieff p.2). Since the narration is in the past, the moment when the narrator sees the girls is in the past and, in order to describe what happened before this past, he has to use the Past Perfect to support the seeing of women<sup>25</sup>. Grieve, on the other hand, has decided to translate the first verb of the sentence by using the modal 'could', he does not describe the sequence of events, but underlining the importance of the moment when he is looking at women – importance that is supported by the whole end of the paragraph, and the beginning of the following one: it was a time when he was in quest for beauty, and looked for it in women in order to fill his thirst for love. Therefore, he uses the Preterit in the end of the sentence to make it clear that it is a feeling and a quest which belong to the narrator's past, to a circumscribed period of the narrator's life that has come to an end now that he is writing<sup>26</sup>.

In the second example, the opposition between Past Perfect and Preterit seems to show a different matter than the previous example: it is as if the tenses allow different points of view to enter the scene. The use of the Preterit in the latest version seems to make us enter the thoughts of the exterior narrator – as if, now that he is writing, he asks himself 'did she see me?' The use of the Preterit allows to ask this question dealing with a precise past action, a precise past event<sup>27</sup> and it enables the narrator to make a clear distinction with the present – i.e. the time of enunciation. But this voice of the narrator is always

<sup>25</sup> 'Novels and short stories are often written in the past tense. In this context, events that precede those being described in the story line are usually related in past perfect.' (Berk 1999: 112)

<sup>26</sup> '*Le preterite (past tense)* exprime une *action terminée, précise, que l'on relate* en se reportant en arrière par la pensée. C'est le temps de la *narration*.' (Berland-Delèpine 2000: 120)

<sup>27</sup> See Berland-Delèpine 2000: 121.

blurry during the novel: we don't know when the narrator considers himself as a grown-up, that is when he assumes his role of narrator, and when he melts with the character of his story, that is, himself while staying in Balbec several years before the time of writing. And a translation using the Past Perfect here opposed to a Preterit deals exactly with this issue: a narrator embedded in the present of the action would use the Perfect to express such an interrogation. Indeed, it has just happened to him, it is a recent past, and it may also have consequences in his future – since if she saw him, she may want to talk to him one day and then would be able to link him with their lives – both of these being characteristics of the Perfect<sup>28</sup>. Since the whole story is narrated in the past, a past tense has to be used: the Past Perfect is the choice to make. And therefore a different point of view is drawn between the two tenses from a same French sentence: one looking from the narrator-writer's side, the other from the narrator-character's side.

In the third example, the verb deals directly with the opposition between the face and features displayed by the manager of the hotel when the narrator first arrived in the hotel and the actual features of his: the first sight of him seems to the narrator to have been a caricature of what the manager actually is. The ambivalence between Past Perfect and Preterit can be understood under the ambivalence of the French: the narrator has been used to the features of the manager's face and is then able to see the harmony and the pattern of these features. Thus, does he see the old features as an error in perception that has no impact on his new vision of the manager, or does he see them as a first acknowledgement of the face, acknowledgement that has evolved slowly towards a true understanding and sight of the manager's face? Indeed, if this is considered as a mistaken judgement of the face that is circumscribed in the past and linked to the only day of the arrival, the use of the Preterit would be accurate. But if this is considered as a process, from the first sight to the final picture of the face, and if the narrator is drawing an assessment of the process that has lead him to recognize the manager's face, then the Past Perfect would be accurate.

#### **Passive vs. Active voice**

A second issue about tenses I am going to study is when some active or passive voice has been translated in the other voice: it seems at first sight that such a disruption in voice would produce a modification in the meaning showed by the original.

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<sup>28</sup> See in Berk 1999 : 112

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
2	avait été obligé d'aller	had been obliged to go	had had to go

Figure 25: *between Passive and Active voice*

In this instance, whereas the actual form of the verb moves from Passive to Active, the meaning is in fact not modified: indeed, the modal 'have to' is a way to create an external obligation without using the Passive, therefore the meaning of an obligation imposed on St Loup (i.e. to go to Doncières every day), present in the French and clearly stated as well in Moncrieff's minimal translation, is preserved by the modal in Grieve version.

But in some other instances, the change of voice has an actual impact on the sentence:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
21	l'expérience de ce que nous offre de plus mystérieux la beauté qu'on désire	the most mysterious thing that is offered to us by the beauty which we desire	the profound mystery to be found in the beauty one has longed for
23	Aussi les grandes fenêtres vitrées et à coulisses restaient-elles ouvertes	And so the great sliding windows were kept open	And as the tall sliding glass-doors [...] stayed wide open

Figure 26: *Passive and Active voice*

In the first example, the two translations change the voice of the verb; Moncrieff keeps the same verb but moves from Active to Passive, trying to make sense of the inversion of the subject in French. It is a common disruption in French, but still increases the intensity of the subject by changing the natural order of the sentence. Therefore, by using the Passive, which most of the time does not need an object, Moncrieff tries to increase the role of 'the beauty'. The intensity of 'the beauty' is reinforced by this Passive. In Grieve however, there is a change of voice but also a change of verb: indeed, there is a modification from 'offer' to 'find', which involves the 'we' (object) and 'the beauty' (subject) in a complete different manner. While in the French, the mystery comes from 'the beauty' and is given to us, in Grieve 'the beauty' means that there is a mystery and we need to look for it – it creates a difference of meaning in the verb used and therefore destroys the idea of a 'we' subjected to 'the beauty'. Moreover, the absence of a clear object of the Passive verb ('to be found', by who?) puts emphasis on 'the mystery' which is supposed, in French, to be subjected to 'the experience'. In Grieve's version, 'the experience' and 'the mystery' are separated by a long apposition which breaks there straightforward link: 'the mystery' seems to absorb the intensity of the extract instead of 'the beauty'. While Moncrieff tries to render the intensity of the French subject, Grieve modifies the whole sentence and its impact is lowered, through the change of voice and

verb.

In the second example, both French and Grieve's version have the windows as a passive subject: they have been acted on – they have been opened by someone – and are not the agent subject of their verb. In the book about English syntax written by Berk, we can read that 'most patient subjects co-occur with verbs that describe a change of state' (Berk 1999: 19); but in our example, it does not describe a change of state but a remaining state: they 'stayed wide open'. The French has no trouble having a patient subject of a non-dynamic verb, but the English language is not really used to it: an object seems unable to perform an action; it seems to only be able to perform a change of state. Therefore the translation by Moncrieff is understandable: by using the Passive, he describes the same scene, open windows, but instead of giving them the volition to *stay* open, he involves an unknown animate subject that has been acting on the windows to open them and keep them open. While in Grieve it seems that the windows stay open by their own will, as if no one had any influence on them, in Moncrieff they are under the influence of the will of an animate subject that decide to let them open or to close them at any point. Therefore, we see that changing voices is an ambiguous work: it can disrupt the meaning of a sentence, or help giving it its complete force.

### ***Modals***

The problem with conjugation is also that some tenses of the French language are not translatable to English as simple forms: you have to use what they call 'modal auxiliaries'<sup>29</sup> in order to convey the nuances conveyed by some French Subjunctives and Conditionals. Indeed, those moods are the main issue when dealing with modals in our extract: since Proust uses many instances of them, the translators cannot avoid their translation and must decide in which way they will render it. Whereas modals are used to render a few indicative tenses, I will only focus here on the use of modals in the translation of Conditional and Subjunctive moods.

#### **Translate the Conditional: a will to be meaningful**

The Present and the Perfect Conditional tenses have been used in our extract. Their translation is quite regular in Moncrieff's work: indeed, in the six instances where

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<sup>29</sup> 'A closed set of auxiliary verbs, all of which have unconventional morphology and all of which share a relatively small set of meanings.' (Berk 1999: 297)

translation of Conditional differs in our extract, five of them have been translated by Moncrieff with the modal ‘should’. But Grieve never uses the modal ‘should’ in those instances: he hesitates between ‘could’ and ‘would’ and on the last examples – where Moncrieff uses ‘would’ – he translates with ‘might’.

A closer look is needed:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
3	J’aurais aimé	I should have liked	I wished I could

Figure 27: an example of Conditional Perfect.

First we can see that ‘aimé’ has been translated in two different manners, with ‘like’ in a word-for-word translation in Moncrieff, with ‘wish’ in Grieve – a new way of saying it which increases its improbability. Indeed, the French does not recognize it as a wish but more as a want and does not let any pessimism filter out of the verb itself, it is only the tense which gives the idea of unlikelihood, while ‘wish’ already points it out as unlikely. Two different modals have been used in this example; but only one is here to support the mood: ‘should’ is a modal that convey conditional, among its other meanings: ‘[le conditional perfect] est construit avec *should/would* + *have* + *participe passé*. Il s’emploie généralement dans les mêmes cas que notre conditionnel passé, obéissant aux mêmes règles de la concordance des temps.’ (Berland Delépine 2000: 167). The use of ‘could’ can be related to the Conditional<sup>30</sup>, but it seems here that the mood actually depends on the verb ‘wish’ used in the clause: Grieve has not been concentrating on the mood of the French verb but on the implicit meaning of the verb; ‘j’aurais aimé’ expresses a wish which, if we consider ourselves at the time of the Balbec trip, could still possibly be realized, it is a potential event. Therefore the use of ‘wished’ linked to ‘could’ conveys all of the meaning:

‘Après le verbe to wish, [...] le potentiel exprime *un souhait* [...]

(3) *potentiel*: les souhaits encore réalisables s’expriment de deux façons:

I wish he would answer [...]

*I wish he could understand*’ (Berland-Delépine 2000: 178)

Therefore, the modal auxiliary has not been chosen in regards to the mood but to the meaning of the verb.

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<sup>30</sup> See Berland-Delépine 2000: 32

Another example follows this logic:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
8	je n'aurais pu préciser	I should not have found it easy to define	I could not define with any degree of precision

Figure 28: *Conditional Perfect*

Here, Moncrieff translates the mood before the meaning as well, while Grieve uses the idea of possibility embedded in 'pu' (Past Participle of 'pouvoir') in order to translate the extract: he uses the past form of 'can', a modal expressing possibility, so that he may render the complete meaning *and* the Past Time. But there is still a small loss of meaning in this translation: indeed, the French uses the Conditional in order to make readers wonder what the 'if' is. There is no subordinate if-clause expressed in the text, but a reader who knows the story can understand that this Conditional is defined by a 'if I had not known them after it' that the narrator-writer expresses while writing this episode. Therefore a translation that focuses only on the meaning of the verb and not on the meaning of the mood loses here some part of the insinuation. Even if 'could' might here be used as a Conditional, it is easier and faster to understand it as the past of 'can'...<sup>31</sup>

#### Translate the Conditional: a difference in belief

The third Conditional Perfect of the extract to be investigated can be linked to examples of Present Conditional:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
3	J'aurais osé	I should have had the courage	I would have been brave enough
14	nous ne serions pas avides	we should not be athirst	we would not be eager
16	il me serait plus facile	it would be easier	it might prove easier

Figure 29: *examples of Conditional*

The first two examples make an opposition between the modals 'should' and 'would' – indeed, in English grammar, the two are considered as conveyor of the Conditional ('les prétérites *should* et *would* servent à former des périphrases à valeur de conditionnel' (Berland-Delépine 2000: 165)) but they have different nuances inside their conditional meaning. We could invoke the nationality of the translators to explain the difference, indeed, '*A la première personne, would* est l'auxiliaire unique en Amérique, en Irlande et en Ecosse. En Angleterre il est préférable de l'employer s'il y a une idée de volonté, de consentement.' (Berland-Delépine 2000: 165). It is true that there is no mention made of

<sup>31</sup> Another example could be added to this opposition should/could with 'Je ne posséderais pas' on page 13



what an Australian might use, but such an explanation could be accurate. A second argument could be the date of publication: ‘shall’, and its Preterit ‘should’, is not used as much as in the beginning of the twentieth century anymore, and even have a tendency to disappear from people’s speech. In a modernised version it seems therefore accurate to witness its disappearance from the written text as well. Finally, using ‘should’ instead of ‘would’ ties the choice to a difference of intensity in the modal identity. The Conditional in French expresses a possibility, linked to the fact that the speaker believes in this possibility<sup>32</sup>; both ‘should’ and ‘would’ also express a belief in possibility<sup>33</sup> but in the two examples ‘would’ believe in this picture more than ‘should’ and assess the possibility with more certainty<sup>34</sup>.

In the last example, none of the translators have chosen any of the modals he was used to use to translate a Conditional. But what seems different at first sight is, on Moncrieff’s side, just an adjustment to the rule: he still follows the rule of Conditional here since we can read in Berland-Delépine: ‘*A la 2<sup>ème</sup> et 3<sup>ème</sup> personnes l’auxiliaire est **would**.*’ (2000: 166). Here, Grieve uses again a modal of belief, but this time, instead of increasing the percentage of certainty of his belief as he did before, he decreases it.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, ‘might’ presents a fairly improbable image: in our example, the Conditional is added to the hope of the character – this is completely annexed to the belief system of the character and proves highly questionable on the level of certainty. Thus we can see that the use of different modals allows the translator to establish more nuances to the image, thus creating a more precise view on the meaning of the verbs.

### Translate the Subjunctive

Looking at the different Subjunctives used by Proust and translated in different ways by the translators, we can find two tenses: le *subjonctif imparfait* and le *plus-que-parfait du subjonctif*. Like the Conditional, the Subjunctive is used many times by Proust; this creates a big issue for translators since the Subjunctive is not used as much in English. The three forms of English Subjunctive seem to have been used to translate the two tenses of the French Subjunctive: the Subjunctive and the Preterit modal, as well as the indicative,

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<sup>32</sup> the possibility that the narrator might enter the dance room if accompanied by his friend in the first example or that ‘we’ might not fall in love with a woman if ‘we’ truly know what her eyes actually are in the second example

<sup>33</sup> ‘should’ and ‘would’ belong both to ‘belief modality’, also called ‘epistemic modality’

<sup>34</sup> See the gradation in Jacobs 1995: 237 and note 2 about label on page 241

<sup>35</sup> See the gradation. Ibid.

translating the *subjonctif imparfait* and the Past Perfect modal translating the *plus-que-parfait du subjonctif*.

### *Plus-que-parfait du subjonctif*

If we study the instances of *plus-que-parfait du subjonctif*, we find that where the translations differ from one another is when the instances are already ambiguous in the French text: they are instances of Subjunctives that have a meaning of Conditional. Therefore, the translators sometimes translate them by Subjunctives and some other times by Conditionals as shown in those two examples:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
14	m'eût entraîné	would have drawn me	might have pedalled, drawing me
21	j'eusse choisi	I should have chosen	I would have preferred

Figure 30: instances of *plus-que-parfait du subjonctif* and their translations

Where Moncrieff chose to use 'would', Grieve chose another modal, and vice-versa. It seems that the examples indicates an hesitation between Past Perfect Subjunctive ('might' and 'should'<sup>36</sup>) and Past Perfect Conditional ('would'), which reveals the double meaning of the French verbs.

### *Subjonctif imparfait*

When turning to *subjonctif imparfait* however, there is no pattern to be found: indeed, a lot of different translations are found:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
7	elles pussent	they were able to	they could
10	[il] eût l'impression	should have the impression	could have the feeling
12	[elles] fussent	would	might
21	qu'il ne fût	that it was	That there would have been
24	l'hôtel fermât	could be shut up	would close

Figure 31: instances of *subjonctif imparfait* and their translations.

There are some indicatives used by Moncrieff: on page 21, it seems that he based his analysis on the phrase opening the sentence, 'Sans doute', that he translated by 'No doubt' and understood in a literal meaning. Indeed, if there is not even one doubt, there is no use

<sup>36</sup> Les auxiliaires de modalités *may/might* et *shall/should* (parfois aussi *can/could*) servent à conjuguer des tournures à valeur de subjonctif (exprimant diverses nuances de modalité dans des subordonnées), parfois parallèlement à des constructions à l'indicatif ou au subjonctif sans auxiliaire. (Berland-Delépine 2000: 175)

for a Subjunctive and we have to express certainty: thus he can use the Indicative. But the French is less categorical with this phrase and, most of the time, it means that there remains some doubts in the proposition, and that it may never be proved certain. The use of a mode of the unreal is completely in keeping with the meaning of the phrase, therefore the translation by Grieve with the Conditional modal ‘would’ seems appropriate – his use of the Perfect concurring with the Past Tense.

Seemingly, the translation by Grieve with ‘could’ in our first example seems accurate since it translates as well the meaning of the verb (possibility, capability) and the Subjunctive mood. Moncrieff’s translation on the other hand is ambiguous: did he translate minimally with a Subjunctive – since the Preterit modal of the verb ‘be’ is ‘were’ for every person<sup>37</sup> – or did he translate in a literary process and adapt the sentence towards an Indicative? This ambiguity is interesting since it allows the reader to wonder if it is the narrator-character who imagines the behaviour of the girls – which requires a Subjunctive – or if it is the narrator-writer who delivers his knowledge after having known the girls – thus, it would be true and would require an Indicative. However, the French does not express this ambiguity: if there is any truth about this passage we don’t know it, we don’t know anything about the accuracy of the picture imagined by the narrator-character. Moncrieff, by using the verb ‘to be’ with no indicator of tense, added some possible meaning, and, at least, an ambiguity to the passage.

For the other examples, the same opposition as for the *plus-que-parfait du subjonctif* is made between Subjunctive and Conditional modals. The main difference being that the Subjunctive modals are not followed by a Perfect but by an Infinitive, concurring with the Preterit modal.

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<sup>37</sup> See Berland-Delépine 2000: 177.

## **PART 3:**

### **Discrepancies in the Use and Translation of Lexis**

## Chapter 6 – Synonyms, ambiguities and mistranslations

The grammatical study of differences between the translations has to be completed by a lexical study. In this chapter I will focus on several issues: first, I will look at synonymy and wonder why does one use this word and the other another; then I will study the way each of them translate ambiguous words or expressions of the French; and will finally look into mistranslations, happening either in word-for-word, minimal or literary translations.

### *Synonymy*

While comparing the two translations, we can find some extracts where the translators use the same process, and translate in the same way, or some extracts, as shown before, which differ completely from each other, but we can also find some extracts grammatically similar but differing in the choice of one or more words. Synonyms are used by the translators all along the work, for different aims fitted to different situations.

#### **French generality vs. English synonyms**

As Vinay and Dalbernet states in their work: ‘On peut considérer que très souvent le mot français sert de dénominateur commun à des séries de synonymes anglais dont le terme générique fait défaut.’ (Vinay & Dalbernet 1977: 59). Therefore, the French word cannot be translated as such and needs to be clarified in the English translation.

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
11	teint	complexion	colouring
12	d’ailleurs	besides	moreover

*Figure 32: synonymy*

In the first example, the two translated words are given as translation for ‘teint’ in *Le Robert & Collins 2008*, on page 965, as long as the ‘teint’ in question is a permanent colour of the skin. As well with the second example: both are actual translations of the locution, and are to be found side by side in *Le Robert & Collins 2008*, on page 24. In those examples, there is not only one way to say in English what the French can express in a general word, but several English translations for the same French word. It is a matter of different viewing of reality which may endanger the accuracy of a translation – things are less categorical when you have several way to describe or name what is singularised as only one characteristic or object in the other language. Thus, in our first example,

‘complexion’ describes more a texture, a grain of skin than ‘colouring’ which points only towards the colours presented by the face.

### Synonymy and modernization

Secondly, using synonyms is a way to modernize the text. Indeed, between 1924 and 2002, the English language has evolved towards a new contextualisation of words – making some more common, others more archaic or even belonging to slang.

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
6	membres	members	limbs
16	impitoyable	pitiless	ruthless
24	Fermât	be shut up	close

Figure 33: synonymy and modernization

The first instance exemplifies the way the translators follow the language of their time. Indeed, if you look up into the *OED*, the definition for ‘member’ is given as such: ‘archaic a part of the body, especially a limb’ (*OED* 2008: 890) while ‘limb’ is in use today as a common word, as well as ‘membres’ in French was and still is common in the language. This can account for an actualisation of language.

Again with the second example, if the *OED* does not give any insight about the age of the word, when you look for the translation of ‘impitoyable’ on the *Gasc*, the first word you find is ‘pitiless’ (*Gasc* 1928: 239) while in *Le Robert & Collins*, it is completely absent: you can only find ‘merciless’ and ‘ruthless’ (*Le Robert & Collins* 2008: 495). This shows that even if the word ‘pitiless’ may still be in use, it is less common than in 1928, and translating by ‘ruthless’ instead is more in keeping with the actual meaning of the word ‘impitoyable’ nowadays.

In the last example, the second translation actualises the speech: the verb ‘shut up’ nowadays is seen as a colloquial way to ask someone to stop talking by closing one’s mouth, as the *OED* clearly states: ‘**5 (shut up or shut someone up)** informal stop or cause someone to stop talking.’ (*OED* 2008: 1337). This phrasal verb could not be used in a literary context, outside an instance of direct speech anymore (and even if the paragraph sometimes displays instances of direct reported speech, this ‘fermât’ is not a part of it). The use of ‘close’ as a neutral word for nowadays’ language is therefore the best way to translate the verb.

### Synonymy and accuracy

Thirdly, the use of synonyms can lead to a different reading of the word written in

the French text.

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
5	principe	primary cause	Basis

Figure 34: synonymy and accuracy

A straightforward translation of this example would give ‘principe’ as an equivalent – both French and English words being defined equally: ‘principe: Littéraire. Ce qui est à l’origine de quelque chose, qui en est la cause première’ (*Larousse*<sup>38</sup>); ‘principle: a fundamental source or basis of something.’ (*OED* 2008: 1141). However, while the French definition is the first, evident meaning; in English, it is the third definition of the word – the first expressing the fundamental basis of belief, the second a general law of nature or scientific theorem. Therefore, the meaningful translation may not be obvious as such in the English word ‘principle’ and the translator is left to decide which word would be closer to the actual meaning. Since here ‘principe’ is used for ‘origine’, it is fair to translate as ‘primary cause’, which holds the idea of a series of developments of effects and causes following this ‘primary cause’ (the love of the crowd being followed by the thirst for admiration, itself followed by the reclusion) – the adjective ‘primary’ imposing it as the first and original cause of all. The other translation is also quite accurate, but undergoes a slightly different vision of the process: on the ‘basis’, you build new things. It is still the origin but it is not the object that *causes* the following events, it is the object on which you construct your surroundings, i.e. the reclusion in the house walls for our extract: there, the recluse *decides* to stay inside whereas in the first translation he *is caused* to stay inside by the reality of his feelings towards the crowd. The two translations are giving the actual meaning of the French word ‘principe’, that is, the original object under scrutiny, but they imply a different reality depending on them.

This decision to use synonyms in order to be closer to the French meaning is also found in the translation of ‘conscience’ all along the text:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
13	conscience	consciousness	sense
15	conscience	consciousness	knowledge
28	conscience	cognisance	aware

Figure 35: synonymy and accuracy

The *Larousse* dictionary defines ‘conscience’ as:

Connaissance, intuitive ou réflexive immédiate, que chacun a de son existence et de celle du monde extérieur.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/principe/63971> 22/04/2012

Représentation mentale claire de l'existence, de la réalité de telle ou telle chose. (*Larousse*)<sup>39</sup>

In both the *Gasc* and the *Robert & Collins*, one of the first translations for 'conscience' is indeed 'consciousness' as Moncrieff translates it, and the definition given by the *OED* is congruent with the French definition (*OED* 2008: 304). Therefore, why change this noun for another?

In the first instance, the word 'conscience' is used to express the self-awareness of each girls to each other inside the group, as an intimate feeling of belonging to the same group. The choice of Moncrieff is a word-for-word choice but it also makes sense in the way that they create a world of their own and it is their consciousness of this world that gives it life and existence: it is their 'awareness by [their] mind of [...] [their] world' (*OED* 2008: 304). Grieve uses the word 'sense': according to the *OED*, the noun 'sense' has different meanings, one of which is really close to the awareness embodied by 'consciousness' – 'an awareness of something or feeling that something is the case' (*OED* 2008: 1310). This meaning of 'sense' allows the girls to turn a feeling into a reality, a truth: their own group, their own world.

In the second instance, 'conscience' is used to disclose the acknowledged blindness of the narrator face with this group of girls and the characteristics that bind their group and lead them to act, all together, this way or another. Moncrieff uses again the word 'consciousness', leaning towards a word-for-word translation as well, and expressing thereby the second definition of 'consciousness' given by the *OED*: 'one's awareness or perception of something'. It is not self-reflexive as in the first use of the word but deals with the narrator's awareness that he does not have a clue to understand the outsider, i.e. the girls. The use of 'knowledge' by Grieve is ironically accurate in the way that he *knows* he does *not know* anything about them – an opposition that he states clearly between 'the knowledge' and 'there was not one iota [...] that was known to me.' (Grieve, p. 14<sup>40</sup>). In this example, Grieve makes the meaning transparent to all readers, and enhances the opposition between his acknowledgment and the actual vacuity of his knowledge.

For the last example, it is not in fact the lonely 'conscience' but the verb 'prendre conscience' which is to study. In Moncrieff, it is translated as 'take cognisance', which is slightly different from the real meaning of the French verb; while in French it means 'se

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/conscience> 22/04/2012

<sup>40</sup> The page is numbered from the annexe.



rendre compte de quelque chose'<sup>41</sup>, i.e. to understand it, the English means either take 'knowledge' (if considered it as a verb + object), i.e. learn something, or (if we consider it as a phrasal verb) 'attend to' or 'take account of' and is strictly used nowadays in a formal tone (*OED* 2008: 278). It is not exactly what is conveyed by the French, and the translation by Grieve is here more accurate with his 'had appeared aware' since the translation of 'prendre conscience' in the *Robert & Collins* is: 'to become aware of something [...] he was suddenly aware [...] it made him aware' (*Le Robert & Collins* 2008: 206). The use of the word 'aware' seems to show more fully the process of thoughts from unawareness to recognition, here taking place into Miss Simonet's mind, and related to the glance of the narrator. Therefore, we can see that using the exact translation may sometimes be a bit misleading (for example between the two meanings of 'consciousness' used by Moncrieff) and that a synonym can be used to clarify the sentence or to be closer to the actual meaning of the original sentence.

### ***Ambiguities***

Opposed to synonymy, there are some examples where the difference in translation is to infer to an ambiguity on the French side. When a French word is ambiguous and could mean several things, even in the original language, it is even harder to translate it. Two languages cannot be in complete symmetry to each other and you can sometimes be faced with a dilemma between two (or more) English words which translate only one of the several meanings implied by the French word. For Tyler in the beginning of the twentieth century:

Where the sense of an author is doubtful, and where more than one meaning can be given to the same passage or expression [...] the translator is called upon to exercise his judgment, and to select that meaning which is most consonant to the train of thought in the whole passage, or to the author's usual way of thinking and of expressing himself. (Tyler, A.F. 1907: 17-18)

This logic presumes that we should find the same word in the two translations when faced to this kind of situation, but it is actually not the case: what is leading each translator to such or such translation, and which is closer to the French word?

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/prendre/18331/locution#153507> 22/01/2012

### Ambiguities: translating what is implied in the word

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
4	elle tenait à inspecter	she felt it her duty to inspect	she felt bound to inspect

Figure 36: ambiguities and implications

In the *Larousse*, ‘tenait à’ is defined as: ‘avoir la ferme volonté de faire quelque chose, que quelque chose soit fait.’<sup>42</sup> Neither of the translations is an exact rendering of the verb; in the first translation, there is an instance of moral force behind the inspection, a ‘duty’ that she has to perform; while in the second translation it seems that she is unable to do otherwise: she is ‘bound to’ do it, and cannot escape her fate (in the *OED* 2008, on page 164, sense 4 part 2 we can read: ‘obliged to do something’). In both instances it is an external force that is pushing the woman to inspect her fellow-walkers, either moral or fate. But, in French, there is no external force at stake: it is an internal wish, an instance of will coming from the inside of this woman; SHE *wants* to do it. There is no exact translation of this verb, but I would argue that an accurate translation should stick to an inside feeling, and work out something like ‘she insisted on inspecting’, making it come from the character’s mind.

### Ambiguities: playing with different meanings

A few times in our extract, the word ‘devant’ is used by the narrator. The translations are most of the time different from each other but I will focus on two instances in the beginning of our work.

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
3	devant le Grand-Hôtel	in front of the Grand Hotel	outside the Grand-Hôtel
4	devant le kiosque de musique	with her back to the bandstand	in front of the bandstand

Figure 37: ambiguities

The preposition ‘devant’ has different meanings defined by the situation and the passage: ‘en face, vis à vis, du côté antérieur (de), en avant (de)’<sup>43</sup> and as Reiss says in her book on translation: ‘it is not enough to know the words – it is necessary to know what the words are about.’ (Reiss 2000: 70) Thus, in order to find the accurate translation for each instance of ‘devant’, you have to understand what kind of information is given in the extract, what

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/tenir/77302#76387> 24/04/2012

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/devant/24936#24820> 24/04/2012

kind of image the word is building – ‘devant’ being a preposition expressing position it is actually easier to picture it in one’s mind, to ‘see’ the scene and then be able to translate it as accurately as possible.

In the first instance, the narrator is simply staying outside and next to the hotel, waiting for the time when he is supposed to meet his grandmother inside the hotel. The choices made by the translators have been different in this instance: Moncrieff decided to use ‘in front of’, a word-for-word translation which can be misleading since the narrator seems here to be facing the hotel, instead of being somewhere on the outside perimeter of the hotel: the position seems more precise in Moncrieff than in Proust. Grieve on the other hand decided to keep the blurry position: he used ‘outside’, which puts emphasis on the idea that the narrator is in the open air; the position near the hotel is implied, but still somewhat understandable by the fact that ‘outside’ is defined in relation with the hotel: ‘By myself, I was standing about outside the Grand-Hôtel’ (Grieve page 2). If he was only anywhere outside, there would be no need to explain that it was outside the hotel: This precision is here to define the location, it gives a clue about your closeness to this building.

In the second instance, the narrator is describing a scene, in which a woman is sitting ‘devant le kiosque à musique’: if you picture it, the woman can either be sitting before it with her back leaning on the stand, or before it and looking at it, or even just randomly in the area which is in the anterior part of the stand. From the passage, you can understand that she is not looking at it directly since she is scrutinizing the people walking in front of her; she has to have a clear view of them. But then, the two translators have made different choices again; Moncrieff decided to describe her position towards the stand: ‘with her back to the band-stand’ as for the first instance, he specified the position. Grieve decided to be vaguer about it, like the French, and gave only the area of her seat: ‘in front of the bandstand’. This is a different way to handle the problem of what is actually the position of this lady. Moncrieff is clarifying any ambiguity and gives us a way to picture the scene in a unique way, but it is not what Proust does: in his description, he gives us a blurry picture of people moving, reeling around the lady sitting next to a bandstand, probably, but not certainly, with her back at it to see this people. Grieve is more accurate these time, giving a blurry image with the phrase ‘in front of’ that only gives an area, not a position or an exact image of the scene, as the French lets us play with a plurality of meanings.

#### **Ambiguities: when the context does not help**

As in the second instance of ‘devant’, sometimes even the context cannot help us to

define what the word really means:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
14	pelouses des hippodromes	the turf of racecourses	the paddocks at race-courses

Figure 38: ambiguities

For the *Larousse*, ‘pelouses’ in specified vocabulary can be defined as ‘Une des trois enceintes d’un champ de courses, située au centre des pistes.’<sup>44</sup>; but if Proust was not acquainted with horse-riding technicalities, the ‘pelouses’ may also be any grass area in and around a race-course. Therefore the ambiguity between ‘turf’ which displays either a common general meaning (‘grass and the surface layer of earth held together by its roots’ (*OED* 2008, 1554)), or an equestrian general meaning (‘2 (the turf) horse racing or racecourses generally.’ (*OED* 2008, 1554)) and ‘paddocks’ which is only horse related (‘1 a small field or enclosure where horses are kept or exercised. 2 an enclosure adjoining a racecourse or track where horses or cars are gathered before a race.’ (*OED* 2008: 1027)) remains an unanswered issue. Indeed, does the ‘pelouses’ mean the area where horses wait and/or exercise inside the racecourse, aside the tracks – following which ‘paddock’ would be an accurate translation – or does it mean any grassy area of the racecourse – following which ‘the turf’ would be accurate – or even a place where spectators stand – following which ‘turf’ would be accurate again?

Parallel to this, another moment when the translators are faced to a blurry context is when dealing with the expression ‘un jour’; indeed, is it ‘un’ as *some* day, with no particular distinction or *one* particular day to remember? The expression is used twice in our extract:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
16	un jour	some day	one day
16	un jour	some day	one day

Figure 39: ambiguities

Both are used in the same sentence and related to a fantasized day in which the narrator would be linked with the girls. It is clearly identified as a fantasy by the use of ‘la supposition’ adjoined with the subjunctive and the fall of the sentence: ‘cette supposition me paraissait enfermer en elle une contradiction [...] insoluble’ (p.15) and therefore accounts for the two different points of view showed by the translators. Indeed, if you look at it from the rational side of the narrator’s mind it is a non-event, an impossible day; therefore it will be ‘some’ day, a day that may and will certainly never come, ‘an unknown

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/pelouse> 03/05/2012

or unspecified' day<sup>45</sup>. It could thus be any or even no day. But if you look at it from the other side, i.e. inside the fantasy, then it is *the* day, the one and only when he becomes a part of their group, a part of their world. It is *the* day when he accomplishes what he wants so badly in the real world: therefore, the use of 'one' day would be as accurate as the use of 'some' day on the side of rational thinking. And the use of 'un' in French does not help us to determine the point of view since, if the reader emphasizes 'un jour' while reading, it seems that the whole beginning of the sentence, until the dash, is showing the course of his mind through the unreal dream of their encounter; but if you read it flatly, you may just see the impossibility of such a dream implied in the lines preceding the dash. There are two French readings of the sentence which account for two different translations on the behalf of the translators since they cannot show the two views on this 'day' in English.

### ***Mistranslations***

Between synonymy and ambiguities, where the right translation is difficult to assess, there are some extracts where errors have been made by one or the other of our translators: either from minimal or literary translations, mistranslations may unfortunately appear. I will study a few examples to understand what may be the source of such errors.

#### **Mistranslations: choose the wrong meaning**

It seems that a first trouble encountered by the translators is to understand the actual meaning of words, in the context:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
11	grande	big	tall
11	petite	little	small

*Figure 40: mistranslation of adjectives*

Only Grieve deals with human size here: Moncrieff seems to have translated in terms of age and weight. Indeed, a 'big' girl is firstly thought as a girl with over-weight, and a 'little' girl seems to be a young girl. The two French adjectives can be translated as Moncrieff translated them, but in a different context. By translating with size, Grieve understands that Proust uses size to individualize the girls: Grieve's translation with 'the tall one' and 'the small one' is an accurate contextualization of the adjectives.

A similar example can be found a few pages before with the translation of 's'installer' by 'establish' in Moncrieff's translation on page 4. In this example,

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<sup>45</sup> definition of 'some' in *OED* 2008: 1374

‘s’installer’ is not used in its first nor second but in its third meaning:

Prendre possession d’un logement pour un certain temps. [...]

S’établir, s’implanter quelque part. [...]

Se mettre à un emplacement déterminé, en particulier dans une position confortable. (*Larousse*)<sup>46</sup>

Moncrieff did not understand the actual meaning of the word in context: he uses the second meaning of the word to translate and therefore come out with ‘establish’: ‘set up on a firm and permanent basis.’ (*OED* 2008: 488). It would be a possible translation for the verb under scrutiny in another context, but here it does not fit in the sentence. His will to keep closer to a word-for-word translation seems to have led him into an error which might be due to an inattentive study of the context. Indeed, a better translation would have been ‘to seat’ as found in the *Gasc* under the entry ‘installer’ on page 249 or the one Grieve uses: ‘sit’.

#### Mistranslations: when the word is not completely understood

Other examples, where it is not a mistake made between the different meanings of the word but a complete mistake on the word itself, can be found:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
10	tribune	platform	floor
9	en riant	smiled	burst out laughing
12	en riant	smiled	laughs

Figure 41: ambiguities

In the first example, while every ‘tribune’ has indeed a floor for people to walk on, the height of this floor is supposed to be higher than the common ground, in the extract, it is there to show musicians and to make them be seen by everyone. This ‘tribune’ fits the fourth definition given by the *Larousse*: ‘Galerie ou plate-forme élevée, à usage varié, dans un lieu public, une grande salle, un édifice culturel.’<sup>47</sup> Therefore the use of ‘floor’ by Grieve is not accurately translating the actual meaning and does not give the complete image proposed by the French. On the other hand, Moncrieff gives an accurate translation for this extract since the word is defined as ‘a raised level surface on which people or things can stand [...] a raised floor or stage used by public speakers or performers.’ (*OED* 2008: 1098).

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/s%20installer/43413#43315> 03/05/2012

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/tribune> 03/05/2012

The second and third examples are similar to the first: even if the translation still gives an idea of joy, the difference between a smile and laughter is high: laughter implies noise and complicity while a smile is silent and may not be shared. Moreover, in a public place, laughter seems to point out irreverence, young age or carelessness of supposedly correct public behaviour. To smile, on the other hand, is the proper behaviour counterpart to well-mannered people in public. The translation by Moncrieff is not exposing the actual meaning of ‘en riant’: it is not only the joy that is conveyed by this verb, it is all the impropriety of the group of girls, their building of their own world with their own rules, their disrespect for a society of ‘others’, that is decried by the use of ‘en riant’. In this, the 1924 translation is a mistranslation, and the modification made by Grieve in 2002 is a lot more accurate, allowing the implicit comments made by the French verb.

### **Mistranslations: playing with adverbs and adjectives**

Another mistake is often found in Grieve’s version in his modification of adjective order:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
8	produit naturellement, et en abondance, de beaux corps	produces naturally and in abundance fine bodies	produces naturally an abundance of beautiful bodies
13	une liaison invisible, mais harmonieuse	a bond invisible but harmonious	linked [...] into an invisible harmony

*Figure 42: mistranslations and word order*

The problem, in the first example, is caused by the different status assumed by the two words in French and in English. While the French displays two equal notions, ‘naturellement’ on one hand and ‘en abondance’ on the other, Grieve’s English version shows a difference of level in the two words: the adverb seems to relate to the noun, and it is not anymore the bodies which are produced naturally and which are produced in abundance, but the abundant production of bodies which is natural. This different ordering of adjectives accounts for a slightly different meaning of the extract and therefore creates a small mistranslation.

In the second example however, the mistranslation is stronger. First, the noun ‘liaison’ has been turned into a verb which accounts for small disruptions in the meaning, but the main issue is that, by suppressing the opposition between ‘invisible’ and ‘harmony’, Grieve has played with the actual meaning. Indeed, the opposition was there to state the invisible status of the link, but to remind its harmonious shades. In the translation,

it is not the link that is invisible anymore but the harmony, and it is the harmony and not the invisibility that represents the link: everything is upside down in this translation. On the other hand, Moncrieff translated following his word-for-word process; it allows the translation to be closer to the French meaning and therefore to display more of the information.



## Chapter 7 – A Study of Recurrences and Themes

For the last chapter of my study, I will focus on some particulars, on some precise words that are used several times in the extract and translated either differently throughout the same translation or differently between the two translations. This will lead me to study the translation of ‘digue’, ‘êtres’ and ‘on’ as particulars of French writing.

### *Translating the noun ‘digue’*

The central location of our extract, on which the narrator sees the girls evolving in their own world, is what Proust calls ‘la digue’ – the word is used ten times through the whole extract, from page 3 to page 26 and means, following the first definition of the *Larousse*, ‘ouvrage continu sur une certaine longueur, destiné à contenir les eaux ou à protéger contre leurs effets, ou encore à guider leur écoulement.’<sup>48</sup>. Even if this is a central spot of the story, it does not seem to be clearly translatable to English: indeed, even if each translation sticks to its supposedly equivalent choice for each occurrence (except for Moncrieff on page 23), they chose different ways to translate it.

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
3	la digue	the paved ‘front’	the esplanade
4, 9, 11, 22, 26	la digue	the ‘front’	the esplanade

Figure 43: translation of ‘digue’

Neither of those translations is found in either the *Robert & Collins* or the *Gasc*: both those dictionaries, with a century of difference, translate ‘digue’ as ‘dike’ or ‘dyke’ first and make no mention of the choices made by the translators in the entry. Why did they choose a different translation, and how can it be closer to the original French meaning than the straightforward translation?

After having read the definition of the French word, we can picture it as an artificial construction made to stop and protect the land and the people from the water of the sea. In our context, as explained by the narrator, it is also built as a path on which passers-by can walk, above the sea. I will first examine James Grieve’s choice: ‘esplanade’. In the *OED*, it is defined as: ‘a long, open, level area, typically beside the sea, along which people may walk for pleasure.’ (*OED* 2008: 487). It seems that the definition shows a picture quite close to what Proust describes as a ‘digue’: a place for people to walk next to the water, but protected from it. It is not presented as a barrier against the sea anymore: the area has

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/digue> 22/05/2012

changed from a safety-working area to a leisure area – a change that is not expressed by the choice of words but through its description in the French version. Thus – even if Proust could have himself written ‘esplanade’ if he had wanted to be straightforward, which therefore draws attention to the fact that he did not and remained neutral with his use of ‘digue’, which is the first function and use of such esplanades – the word chosen seems to be congruent with the picture drawn.

Moncrieff’s choice, on the other hand, is more questionable: the use of the inverted commas around ‘front’ seems to create a displacement, to put emphasis on the word, as if it was special. The problem is, there is no definition of ‘front’ that could match the word ‘digue’ or its picture in the text: all its meanings are conveying the idea of *in front of* or of *military operation*<sup>49</sup>. Therefore the inverted commas must be there to indicate the reader that the word is here for something else, and stands for a meaning that is not complete with the word alone: but is it supposed to mean ‘waterfront’ (‘a part of a town or city alongside a body of water’ (OED 2008: 1631)), ‘seafront’ (‘the part of a coastal town next to and directly facing the sea.’ (OED 2008: 1296)) or could it even be ‘front de mer’ (‘large avenue, large voie en bordure de mer’ *Larousse*<sup>50</sup>) – using thus the inverted commas to suggest a change of language? The translation by Moncrieff is unclear<sup>51</sup> and even if the one chosen by Grieve is not an exact equivalent of the French, at least it gives a straightforward idea of the word and pictures the scene better.

### ***Translating the noun ‘être’***

Another example I would like to study is the translation of the noun ‘être’,

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
8	êtres d’une autre race	creatures of another race	beings of another species
14	cet être	the creature	she
17	Êtres	persons	brief strangers
18	Êtres	the people	other people
19	un être	a person	a creature
27	l’être	the person	the one

Figure 44: translations of the noun ‘être’, as a singular or a plural

In the *Larousse*, the noun ‘être’ has three different definitions:

<sup>49</sup> See OED 2008 : 570 or Gasc 1924 : 632

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/front/35399/locution#155865> 22/05/2012

<sup>51</sup> When I asked two different native English speakers, their answers were first ‘I don’t know this word’, and then followed by ‘do you mean ‘water-front?’’

Tout ce qui vit et, spécialement, individu d'une espèce animale; créature :  
*les être vivants.*

Personne, individu : *la mort d'un être cher.*

Nature profonde de quelqu'un : il était bouleversé jusqu'au fond de l'être. (Larousse<sup>52</sup>)

The straightforward counterpart given by both the *Gasc* and the *Robert & Collins*, 'being', has been chosen only once by only one of the translators. The *OED* defines 'being' as: '1 existence. > living; being alive. 2 the nature or essence of a person. 3 a real or imaginary living creature: *alien beings.*' (*OED* 2008: 123). The definition of the French and the English counterparts seem to correspond; however, by their choices, the translators seem to think that it does not translate accurately the meaning of 'être'. Why do they think other translations might be closer?

'Creature', either in the singular or the plural, has been chosen twice by Moncrieff and once by Grieve. While the first occurrence expresses the idea of a total differentiation, of some 'thing' that does not belong to our human race, the two others express a lack of understanding inside the same species: it is not a different race but a different sex, which troubles the narrator and makes him unable to understand this being's behaviour. 'Creature' is defined in the *OED* as: '1. an animal, as distinct from a human being. ► an animal or person. ► archaic anything living or existing. 2. A person or organization under the complete control of another' (*OED* 2008: 335). It seems that in the first occurrence Moncrieff chose an accurate way to translate 'êtres' by emphasising the difference, since 'creature' in its first sense expresses a difference from humanity. The use of 'beings' by Grieve is plain and straightforward; but Moncrieff underlines the difference in a more powerful way: there are not only other 'beings', they are completely different 'creatures', from another race, another species, a different type of life. In the two other occurrences however, to use 'creature' seems to create a bigger gap of meaning than there actually is; even if 'creature' can be defined as 'person' or as 'anything living', it is first understood as 'animal', as 'distinct from human', and the emphasis it puts on the difference seems too much here. Of course, the timeline has to be considered, and in the 1920's, 'creatures' is less differentiated from human than nowadays since it describes 'anything living', but it is still more pejorative than the straightforward 'being'.

On the other hand, when Moncrieff uses 'creature' on page 14, Grieve translates with 'she': even if the relation is accurate – the subject is actually a girl – 'she' does not express

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/être/31550#31484> (18/06/2012)

the boundary that the narrator feels between him and this girl. There is a loss of meaning in this second translation: using 'être' in French allows the reader to feel that there is some distance between the two characters, that they do not behave or exist on the same level and that something is creating a gap in their relation to each other. Using 'she' destroys this understatement, if she is simply a 'she', she is on the same level as 'he' and therefore does not convey questions or differences.

In the third example, when Grieve chose 'creature', Moncrieff chose to translate by 'person'. This translation may be more accurate than 'creature' since the French expresses the idea of a passing woman, a being that the narrator saw quite furtively and that he has not been able to discern fully; from a few aspects of its body he tries to create a whole form: this is an actual person, an actual human body that he is trying to apprehend through his memory. There is no real difference invoked here, but the idea of furtivity that prevented the narrator from seeing, and the attempt of memory to build up what the eyes did not catch.

'Person' has been chosen two other times by Moncrieff in his translation of 'être'. On page 17, 'person' is an anticipation of the one we already looked at on page 19: it concerns the passing women, and the fleeting impression they left on the character. The translation given by Grieve, 'brief strangers', gives the idea of speed and movement as well as the idea that they are completely unknown to the narrator and thus adds a boundary between them and the narrator that is felt by the use of 'êtres' in French. The translation by Grieve, even if it adds many words and the concept of external diversity ('strangers'), seems in fact the best of the two because it expresses the implications of the French word. Indeed, they are 'persons', but they are more than that: they are fleeting and external to the narrator's life, they are persons that only come in for a few seconds and then get out of his life, but they still give him an unending feeling of mystery that he enjoys and develops – they are not simple 'persons'.

On page 27, 'être' is the answer to a name, heard somewhere and repeated to himself by the narrator. It is a name that is full of mystery and of unanswered questions; and if, in the case of the narrator, it is a name of a girl, the paragraph deals with a general approach to this kind of haunting name: it could be anyone, it could be anything living. The translation by Moncrieff seems therefore a bit restrictive, while the translation by Grieve seems larger and therefore more appropriate to the general aim of the sentence – a sense of formal generality is felt through 'the one' but less through 'the person'.

A last way to translate 'êtres' has been to choose 'people': on page 18, both

Moncrieff and Grieve use it. These two translations are accurate in this context since ‘êtres’ is there to express the many wealthy or advantaged persons that live in Balbec and other seaside towns. They are the seaside counterpart of the urban high society in which the narrator evolve when he stays in Paris, the ‘people’ whom the narrator mixes with.

### ***Translating the pronoun ‘on’***

The last of our French specific words I will study is the pronoun ‘on’: indeed, there is no straightforward translation of ‘on’ in English for the simple reason that even in French it means several different things and is, in context, either singular or plural – the *Larousse* gives eight different definitions of ‘on’<sup>53</sup>. ‘There are three possible direct equivalents in English: in descending order of formality, ‘one’, ‘we’, and ‘you’.’ (Davis 2002); therefore, the translators have to decide which translations fit the best the context. But we will see that they, in fact, chose a larger range of translations, using different processes in order to translate the French pronoun. If sometimes the two translators agree on the translation of the pronoun (on page 18, 20 or 28), they, most of the time, translate in a different way.

In some instances, the sentence is translated either in a passive or in an active voice, in order not to translate the pronoun:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
2	on aurait toujours besoin de lui	he would be on duty	his presence was required
22	on mettait le couvert	the tables were being laid	the tables were being laid
26	à qui on apprenait	to whom she gave this information	the person being told

*Figure 45: translations of ‘on’*

In the first example, Moncrieff turns the object of the French sentence into the subject of the English sentence; thus, there is no need any more for a translation of ‘on’. In the two last examples, the object of the French sentence being turned into the subject, there is no need for the pronoun to be translated. Those ways allow the author not to choose which word-for-word translation suits ‘on’ the best in this context, but can sometimes differ from the idea of an external force behind those actions – idea that may be implied by the pronoun (in the first example, the idea that Saint Loup is needed there by the garrison is no longer expressed).

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.Larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/on> 26/05/2012

On other instances, ‘on’ has been translated by nouns:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
17	on a vu	the reader has seen	as has been seen
22	on déjeunait une heure plus tôt	we used to have luncheon an hour earlier	lunch was one hour early

Figure 46: translations of ‘on’

In the first example, Moncrieff expresses the understatement conveyed by ‘on’ in the sentence; in the second example, Grieve turns the French verb into the English subject, he simplifies the sentence and gives it a more direct structure.

But the main translation is still the use of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘one’, written twelve times by Moncrieff<sup>54</sup> and six times by Grieve<sup>55</sup> in the extract, and straightforward translations of the French pronoun in English. If in four instances, they chose the same pronoun, they make different choices twice:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
2	Qu'un seul trait réel – le peu qu'on distingue d'une femme	Let but a single real feature – the little that one distinguishes of a woman	We need only to see in passing a single real feature of a woman
9	cette jeunesse qu'on a si grand besoin de dépenser même quand on est triste ou souffrant,	that youth which we need so urgently to spend that even when we are unhappy or unwell,	the youthfulness which must expend itself, which even, when one is sad or unwell

Figure 47: translations of ‘on’

In these examples, it seems that ‘on’ is an expression of a generality, including everyone in a common way of distinguishing a passing woman or of spending youth. Therefore, in each sentence the pronoun ‘one’ can be used:

TRADUCTION DE ‘ON’ [...]

Le pronom indéfini *one*, dans un style soigné, quand il s’agit de vérités générales, d’expressions proverbiales.

(Berland-Delépine 2008: 218)

But on the other hand, if the narrator wants to include himself in the sentence, and create an easier tone, less strict and sententious, ‘we’ is accurate. There, the ambiguity of the French pronoun is emphasized: when an only pronoun can mean both sententious generality and colloquial inclusion, the English has to make a choice, which might not be easy sometimes. In those examples, the generalisation can be chosen, but ‘on’ can also mean ‘I as well as everyone’, which would be best translated by ‘we’ as the two translators do in their turn.

<sup>54</sup> 7 ‘we’; 5 ‘one’

<sup>55</sup> 3 ‘we’; 3 ‘one’

A last translation has to be noted:

Page	Proust	Moncrieff	Grieve
26	Et aussitôt on avait senti	And immediately she had detected	I was instantly aware

*Figure 48: translations of 'on'*

This is a surprising translation since a general, unknown person is turned into a definite sex and person – and even more confusing, a different sex and person in the two translations. The discrepancy points to the mistranslation: indeed, since the translator has ‘to know what the words are about’ (Reiss 2000: 70), there is a supposition that every translator will understand the same from an extract, and translate in the same way, except from some vocabulary that may differ from their nationality or background. Here the change is disturbing: an unknown someone is given an identity, a personality, a presence in the text that is absent from the original. In Moncrieff, the ‘on’ is represented by a woman, ‘she’, which can be linked to the lady that speaks; however there is no proof that the ‘on’ is her, a single person, the crowd around, or even the group of people in the conversation, etc. On the other hand, Grieve includes the narrator, ‘I’, as a witness in the scene, and the only witness since no one else except for ‘I’ is ‘aware of the look of curiosity on the face of the person being told this’ (Grieve: 26), there is a disappearance of every other person included in the perception of emotion and the narrator is the only one to get the power of understanding the face of the person. Both are wrong in their translations: there is no simplification to an only person in the French: it is a general ‘on’, with no exact meaning, no exact being, a fleeting generality.

Thus we see that a pronoun, as well as some nouns, that seem common and easy in the French language can create troubles for the English translators because of their multiple ranges of meanings.

## Conclusion

‘Une traduction [...] est une désécriture.’<sup>56</sup> says Henry Meschonnic in his work *Poétique du traduire*: I think my study gave some proofs in favour of that argument. Indeed, whether you translate in a word-for-word manner or a literary manner, my study showed that there are always misunderstandings, infelicity and even inventions. The original text is distorted into a different one, not only different by the language used but also by the required changes made to concur with the culture and way of seeing and expressing the world through that language. Moreover, the text is not only a different one when translated: it has been dissected, studied, explored in its smallest recesses in order for the translator to come up with the best translation of its sentiments and implications: it has been unwritten, cut out in order to be written again. Unfortunately, this process does not seem to have created a mirroring effect: the two translations are not complete reflections of the text, there have been some changes made: some additions or subtractions as shown in chapter 4, section 2; some slippery uses of words like the use of ‘establish’ by Moncrieff, studied in Chapter 6, section 3; some troubles when choosing the appropriate tense as shown in Chapter 5, section 1... All these differences between the two translations, but also between each translation and the original, create a different text in the end, a text that is not the one written by the original author; it has been, as Meschonnic says it, ‘unwritten’, somewhat destroyed in its total originality. Of course, my study was attached to the differences between the two translations and not to the similarities, either between the translations or between translation and original, because, following Meschonnic, I thought that it was not what was the most interesting<sup>57</sup>: indeed, the similarities might help to understand the links between the languages but the differences are what points towards a good, not so good or even bad level of translation, they are what decides the status of a text; and even if these are good translations of the original book, the amount of errors in the two works creates a gap between the actual text written by Proust in French and the texts read by the common English reader.

A study of the changes in intensity and of the passages in direct speech in the extract could have been added to this study. Indeed, there are some sentences in the original that are the centre of the intensity of a paragraph and that somehow disappeared in the

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<sup>56</sup> Meschonnic 1999 : 322

<sup>57</sup> ‘Je n’ai pas relevé les ressemblances, parce qu’elles n’enseignaient rien. Je me suis attaché aux différences.’ Meschonnic 1999: 399. (Speaking of his analysis of the translations of *Чайка*, *La Mouette* by Tchekhov)



translations, or some that are not important in the original and that gained power, force and intensity in the translation, therefore changing the reader's feelings towards a passage. On the other hand, a study of speech would have shown that the choices made by the translators differed in the tone, accent and register, notably because a regional French accent has no real counterpart in the regional English accents available, but also because in the course of one century, what is a regional accent, or a social background linguistic clue has completely changed in the English language – while the French may have undergone no fewer changes.

When I began this study, I was naively thinking that it was a pity English people could not read Proust in the original – I was so touched by the feeling and world vision showed in it, I thought everyone should have a possibility to feel them through this book. After working on their translation for almost a year, I consider that this judgement, even if a bit naive, was not completely foolish: English readers can read beautiful translations of this impressive French work, yes, but they will never be the exact sentences and feelings displayed by the French books. However, what I understand now, is that through translation you can still encounter beautiful writing and show of feelings, they are only going to be found in different places, inside different images or paragraphs, but these differences are conveyed more by the state of mind of the translator and the reader, who grew up in a different country and culture, than by the words used and the translation proposed. A study of translation helps to realise that different words, different languages are not only physically different, but create a distinct world, a distinct reality and somewhat build a different mind.

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**MOTS-CLÉS** : Traduction, Proust, Moncrieff, Grieve, word-for-word / minimal / literary translation.

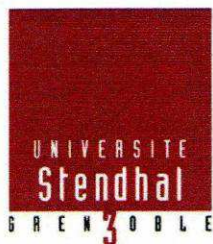
### **RÉSUMÉ**

Ceci est une étude comparative des deux traductions anglaises de *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Basée sur un extrait d'une vingtaine de pages, cette étude compare les méthodes utilisées par les deux traducteurs, ainsi que la justesse de leur choix, notamment en matière de conjugaison et de vocabulaire. Elle est précédée d'une rapide revue de la réception de ces deux traductions dans les médias et d'un rapide historique de ces traductions. Cette étude suit la méthode de Henry Meschonnic qui préconise de s'attarder uniquement sur les passages qui diffèrent d'un texte à l'autre car ce sont eux qui nous en apprennent le plus sur le passage étudié.

**KEYWORDS** : Proust, Moncrieff, Grieve, word-for-word / minimal / literary translation.

### **ABSTRACT**

This is a comparative study of the translations of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Based on a small extract of around twenty pages, this work compares the methods used by the translators – Moncrieff's version being closer to a word-for-word translation than Grieve's who favours literary translations – and the accuracy of the choices made by the translators, in the translation of tenses and the use of vocabulary for instance. These comparisons are preceded by a study of the reception of those translations in the Media and a small review of the history of the translations. Following Meschonnic method, only the differences between the two translations have been compared and the author tried to expose the defaults and the qualities of the two texts.



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*A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*

Marcel Proust

In *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, Vol.2.

Paris : GF Flammarion. 1987.

*Within a Budding Grove*

Scott Moncrieff

In *Remembrance of Things Past*, Vol.2.

Great Britain: Chatto & Windus. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

October 1924.

*Under the Shadow of Young Girls in Flowers*

James Grieve

In *In Search of Lost Time*, Vol.2. London:

Penguin Books. 2002.

Ce jour-là, comme les précédents, Saint-Loup **avait été obligé d'aller** à Doncières où, en attendant qu'il y rentrât d'une manière définitive, **on aurait toujours besoin de lui** maintenant jusqu'à la fin de l'après-midi. Je regrettais qu'il ne fût pas à Balbec. J'avais vu descendre de voiture et entrer, les unes dans la salle de danse du Casino, les autres chez le glacier, des jeunes femmes qui, de loin, **m'avaient paru** ravissantes. J'étais dans une de ces périodes de la jeunesse, dépourvues d'un amour particulier, vacantes, où partout – comme un amoureux la femme dont il est épris – on désire, on cherche, on voit la beauté. **Qu'un seul trait réel – le peu qu'on distingue d'une femme** vue de loin, ou de dos – nous permette de projeter la Beauté devant nous, nous nous figurons l'avoir reconnue, notre cœur bat, nous pressons le pas, et nous resterons toujours à demi persuadés que c'était elle, pourvu que la femme ait disparu : ce n'est que si nous pouvons la rattraper que nous comprenons notre erreur.

D'ailleurs, de plus en plus souffrant, j'étais tenté de surfaire les plaisirs les plus simples à cause des **difficultés** mêmes qu'il y avait pour moi à les atteindre. **Des femmes élégantes, je croyais en apercevoir partout**, parce que j'étais trop fatigué si c'était sur la plage, trop timide si c'était au

That day, as for some days past, Saint-Loup **had been obliged to go** to Doncières, where, until his leave finally expired, **he would be on duty** now until late every afternoon. I was sorry that he was not at Balbec. I had seen alight from carriages and pass, some into the ball-room of the Casino, others into the ice-cream shop, young women who at a distance **had seemed** to me lovely. I was passing through one of those periods of our youth, unprovided with any one definite love, vacant, in which at all times and in all places--as a lover the woman by whose charms he is smitten--we desire, we seek, we see Beauty. **Let but a single real feature--the little that one distinguishes of a woman** seen from afar or from behind--enable us to project the form of beauty before our eyes, we imagine that we have seen her before, our heart beats, we hasten in pursuit, and will always remain half-persuaded that it was she, provided that the woman has vanished: it is only if we manage to overtake her that we realise our mistake.

Besides, as I grew more and more delicate, I was inclined to overrate the simplest pleasures because of the difficulties that sprang up in the way of my attaining them. **Charming women I seemed to see all round me**, because I was too tired, if it was on the beach, too shy if it was in

That day, as on the preceding days, Saint-Loup **had had to go** to Doncières, where **his presence was required** until late each afternoon and where he would soon have to return full-time. I missed him in Balbec. I could see young women alighting from carriages, some of them going into the ballroom at the Casino, some into the ice-cream parlour, and from a distance they **seemed** lovely. I was at one of those times of youth when the idle heart, unoccupied by love for a particular person, lies in wait for Beauty, seeking it everywhere, as the man in love sees and desires in all things the woman he cherishes. **We need only to see in passing a single real feature of a woman**, a glimpse of her at a distance or from behind, which can be enough for us to project Beauty on to her, and we imagine we have found it at last: the heart beats faster, we lengthen our stride and, on condition that she disappears, we may be left with the certainty of having set eyes upon it – it is only when we succeed in catching up with her that we discover our mistake.

Also, my health was going from bad to worse, and I was inclined to magnify the simplest pleasures because of the **obstacles** that lay between me and the possibility of enjoying them. **Beautifully dressed women seemed to be everywhere**, because I was unable to approach them, either being too weary if I saw them

Casino ou dans une pâtisserie pour les approcher nulle part. Pourtant, si je devais bientôt mourir, **j'aurais aimé** savoir comment étaient faites de près, en réalité, les plus jolies jeunes filles que la vie pût offrir, quand même c'eût été un autre que moi, ou même personne, qui dût profiter de cette offre (je ne me rendais pas compte, en effet, qu'il y avait un désir de possession à l'origine de ma curiosité). **J'aurais osé** entrer dans la salle de bal, si Saint-Loup avait été avec moi. Seul, je restai simplement **devant le Grand-Hôtel** à attendre le moment **d'aller retrouver ma grand'mère**, quand, presque encore à l'extrémité de **la digue** où elles faisaient mouvoir une tache singulière, je vis s'avancer cinq ou six fillettes, aussi différentes, par l'aspect et par les façons, de toutes les personnes auxquelles on était accoutumé à Balbec, qu'aurait pu l'être, débarquée on ne sait d'où, une bande de mouettes qui exécute à pas comptés sur la plage, – les retardataires rattrapant les autres en voletant – une promenade dont le but semble aussi obscur aux baigneurs qu'elles ne paraissent pas voir, que clairement déterminé pour leur esprit d'oiseaux.

**Une de ces inconnues poussait devant elle, de la main, sa bicyclette** ; deux autres tenaient des « clubs » de golf ; et leur

the Casino or at a pastry-cook's, to go anywhere near them. And yet if I was soon to die **I should have liked** first to know the appearance at close quarters, in reality of the prettiest girls that life had to offer, even although it should be another than myself or no one at all who was to take advantage of the offer. (I did not, in fact, appreciate the desire for possession that underlay my curiosity.) **I should have had the courage** to enter the ballroom if Saint-Loup had been with me. Left by myself, I was simply hanging about **in front of the Grand Hotel** until it was time for me to join my grandmother, when, still almost at the far end of **the paved 'front'** along which they projected in a discordant spot of colour, I saw coming towards me five or six young girls, as different in appearance and manner from all the people whom one was accustomed to see at Balbec as could have been, landed there none knew whence, a flight of gulls which performed with measured steps upon the sands--the dawdlers using their wings to overtake the rest--a movement the purpose of which seems as obscure to the human bathers, whom they do not appear to see, as it is clearly determined in their own birdish minds.

**One of these strangers was pushing as she came, with one hand, her bicycle**; two others carried golf-clubs; and their

on the beach, or too diffident if I saw them in the Casino or in a cake-shop. If I was fated to die young, **I wished I could** first find out for myself what real life had to offer in the persons of the prettiest girls, even if someone other than me, or possibly no one, was ultimately to enjoy them (I did not recognize that, underlying my curiosity about them, there was a desire for possession). **I would have been brave enough** to walk into the ballroom, if only Saint-Loup had been with me. By myself, I was standing about **outside the Grand-Hôtel**, waiting for the moment when I would **go in to sit with my grandmother**; and there, still far away along **the esplanade**, where they made a strange mass of moving colours, I saw five or six young girls, as different in their appearance and ways from all the other people one was used to seeing in Balbec as the off gaggle of seagulls which turns up out of the blue to strut along the beach, the stragglers flapping their wings to catch up with the leaders, in a procession which seems as obscure in its purpose to the bathers, whom they seem not to see as it is clear to their bird-minds.

**One of these girls was walking along pushing her bicycle**; two others carried golf-clubs; and their

accoutrement tranchait sur celui des autres jeunes filles de Balbec, parmi lesquelles quelques-unes il est vrai, se livraient aux sports, mais sans adopter pour cela une tenue spéciale.

C'était l'heure où dames et messieurs venaient tous les jours faire leur tour de digue, exposés aux feux impitoyables du face-à-main que fixait sur eux, comme s'ils eussent été porteurs de quelque tare qu'elle tenait à inspecter dans ses moindres détails, la femme du premier président, fièrement assise devant le kiosque de musique, au milieu de cette rangée de chaises redoutée où eux-mêmes tout à l'heure, d'acteurs devenus critiques, viendraient s'installer pour juger à leur tour ceux qui défileraient devant eux. Tous ces gens qui longeaient la digue en tanguant aussi fort que si elle avait été le pont d'un bateau (car ils ne savaient pas lever une jambe sans du même coup remuer le bras, tourner les yeux, remettre d'aplomb leurs épaules, compenser par un mouvement balancé du côté opposé le mouvement qu'ils venaient de faire de l'autre côté, et congestionner leur face), et qui, faisant semblant de ne pas voir pour faire croire qu'ils ne se souciaient pas d'elles, mais regardant à la dérobée pour ne pas risquer de les heurter les personnes qui marchaient à leurs côtés ou venaient en sens inverse, butaient

attire generally was in contrast to that of the other girls at Balbec, some of whom, it was true, went in for games, but without adopting any special outfit.

It was the hour at which ladies and gentlemen came out every day for a turn on the 'front,' exposed to the merciless fire of the long glasses fastened upon them, as if they had each borne some disfigurement which she felt it her duty to inspect in its minutest details, by the chief magistrate's wife, proudly seated there with her back to the band-stand, in the middle of that dread line of chairs on which presently they too, actors turned critics, would come and establish themselves, to scrutinise in their turn those others who would then be filing past them. All these people who paced up and down the 'front', tacking as violently as if it had been the deck of a ship (for they could not lift a leg without at the same time waving their arms, turning their heads and eyes, settling their shoulders, compensating by a balancing movement on one side for the movement they had just made on the other, and puffing out their faces), and who, pretending not to see so as to let it be thought that they were not interested, but covertly watching, for fear of running against the people who were walking beside or coming towards them, did, in fact, butt

accoutrements made a flagrant contrast with the appearance of other young girls in Balbec, for even those who practised certain sports did not walk about dressed in a particular way.

It was the hour for ladies and gentlemen to take their daily walk along the esplanade, directly into the merciless line of fire of the lorgnette held by the wife of First President from Caen, who scrutinized each and every one of them as though they might be tainted with some blemish which she felt bound to inspect in its minutest details, as she sat in her proud posture in front of the bandstand, midway along the redoubtable row of chairs in which the subjects of her scrutiny would themselves to the task of examining all the other people strolling past. All these esplanade walkers were pitching about as though stepping along the deck of a ship (for they could not take a stride without also swinging an arm, shifting their glance, setting their shoulders straight, counterbalancing on one side of their body the movement they had just made on the other, and becoming flushed about the face), and thought they pretended not to see the other strollers walking beside them or coming in the other direction, so as to let it be thought they had no interest in them, while actually glancing at them surreptitiously so as to avoid colliding with them, they collided with them nonetheless,

au contraire contre elles, s'accrochaient à elles, parce qu'ils avaient été réciproquement de leur part l'objet de la même attention secrète, cachée sous le même dédain apparent ; l'amour – par conséquent la crainte – de la foule étant un des plus puissants mobiles chez tous les hommes, soit qu'ils cherchent à plaire aux autres ou à les étonner, soit à leur montrer qu'ils les méprisent. Chez le solitaire, la claustration même absolue et durant jusqu'à la fin de la vie a souvent pour **principe** un amour déréglé de la foule qui l'emporte tellement sur tout autre sentiment, que, ne pouvant obtenir quand il sort l'admiration de la concierge, des passants, du cocher arrêté, il préfère n'être jamais vu d'eux, **et pour cela renoncer à toute activité** qui rendrait nécessaire de sortir.

Au milieu de tous ces gens dont quelques-uns poursuivaient une pensée, mais en trahissaient alors la mobilité par une saccade de gestes, une divagation de regards, aussi peu harmonieuses que la circonspecte titubation de leurs voisins, les fillettes que j'avais aperçues, avec la maîtrise de gestes que donne un parfait assouplissement de son propre corps et un mépris sincère du reste de l'humanité, venaient droit devant elles, sans hésitation ni raideur, exécutant exactement **les mouvements qu'elles voulaient**, dans une

into them, became entangled with them, because each was mutually the object of the same secret attention veiled beneath the same apparent disdain; their love—and consequently their fear—of the crowd being one of the most powerful motives in all men, whether they seek to please other people or to astonish them, or to shew them that they despise them. In the case of the solitary, his seclusion, even when it is absolute and ends only with life itself, has often as its **primary cause** a disordered love of the crowd, which so far overrules every other feeling that, not being able to win, when he goes out, the admiration of his hall-porter, of the passers-by, of the cabman whom he hails, he prefers not to be seen by them at all, and with that object abandons every activity that would oblige him to go out of doors.

Among all these people, some of whom were pursuing a train of thought, but if so betrayed its instability by spasmodic gestures, a roving gaze as little in keeping as the circumspect titubation of their neighbours, the girls whom I had noticed, with that mastery over their limbs which comes from perfect bodily condition and a sincere contempt for the rest of humanity, were advancing straight ahead, without hesitation or stiffness, performing exactly the movements that they wished to perform,

or jostled them, because all of them had been furtively looking at each other, their attention concealed behind the same apparent disdain for everyone else; for love, hence fear, of the crowd is one of the most powerful motives in all individuals, whether they wish to please others, astonish them or show that they despise them. In a recluse, the most irrevocable, lifelong rejection of the world often has at its **basis** an uncontrolled passion for the crowd, of such force that, finding when he does go out that he cannot win the admiration of a concierge, passers-by or even the coachman halted at the corner, he prefers to spend his life out of their sight, **and gives up all activities** which would make it necessary for him to leave the house.

Amid all these people, some of whom were following a train of thought, but who revealed its mobility through restless gesturing or wandering looks, all of which made them look just as uncoordinated as the others with their circumspect lurching, the girl I had seen, with the confidence of gesture which comes from the perfect mastery of a supple body and sincere contempt for the rest of the humanity, strode straight on, without hesitation or stiffness, making exactly **the movements they wished to make**,

pleine indépendance de chacun de leurs **membres** par rapport aux autres, la plus grande partie de leur corps gardant cette immobilité si remarquable chez les bonnes valseuses. Elles n'étaient plus loin de moi. Quoique chacune fût un type absolument différent des autres, elles avaient toutes de la beauté ; **mais à vrai dire, je les voyais depuis si peu d'instant**s et sans oser les regarder fixement que je n'avais encore individualisé aucune d'elles. Sauf une, que son nez droit, sa peau brune mettait en contraste au milieu des autres comme, dans quelque tableau de la Renaissance, un roi Mage de type arabe, **elles ne m'étaient connues**, l'une que par une paire d'yeux durs, butés et rieurs ; une autre que par des joues où le rose avait cette teinte cuivrée qui évoque l'idée de géranium ; et même ces traits je n'avais encore indissolublement attaché aucun d'entre eux **à l'une des jeunes filles plutôt qu'à l'autre** ; et quand (selon l'ordre dans lequel se déroulait cet ensemble merveilleux parce qu'y voisinaient les aspects les plus différents, que toutes les gammes de couleurs y étaient rapprochées, mais qui était confus comme une musique où je n'aurais pas su isoler et reconnaître au moment de leur passage les phrases, distinguées mais oubliées aussitôt après) je voyais émerger un ovale blanc, des yeux noirs,

each of their **members** in full independence of all the rest, the greater part of their bodies preserving that immobility which is so noticeable in a good waltzer. They were now quite near me. Although each was a type absolutely different from the others, they all had beauty; but to tell the truth I had seen them for so short a time, and without venturing to look them straight in the face, that I had not yet individualised any of them. Save one, whom her straight nose, her dark complexion pointed in contrast among the rest, like (in a renaissance picture of the Epiphany) a king of Arab cast, they were known to me only, one by a pair of eyes, hard, set and mocking; another by cheeks in which the pink had that coppery tint which makes one think of geraniums; and even of these points I had not yet indissolubly attached any one to one of these girls rather than to another; and when (according to the order in which their series met the eye, marvellous because the most different aspects came next one another, because all scales of colours were combined in it, but confused as a piece of music in which I should not have been able to isolate and identify at the moment of their passage the successive phrases, no sooner distinguished than forgotten) I saw emerge a pallid oval, black eyes,

each of their **limbs** in complete independence from all the others, while most of their body retained the poise which is so remarkable in good waltzers. They were now not far from me. Though each of them was of a type quite different from the others, all of them were beautiful; **but I had been looking at them for so few moments**, and was so far from daring to stare at them, that I had not yet been able to individualize any of them. With the exception of one, whose straight nose and darker complexion marked her out among the rest, as a king of Arabian looks may stand out in a Renaissance painting of the Magi, **they were knowable** only as a pair of hard, stubborn, laughing eyes in one of the faces; as two cheeks of that pink touched by coppery tones suggesting geraniums in another; and none of these features had I yet inseparably attached **to any particular girl rather than to some other**; and when (given the order in which I saw their complex whole unfold before me, wonderful because the most dissimilar aspects were mixed into it and all shades of colour were juxtaposed, but also as confused as a piece of music in which one cannot isolate and identify the phrases as they form, which once heard are as soon forgotten) I noticed the emergence of a pale oval, of two green eyes, or black ones,



des yeux verts, je ne savais pas si c'était les mêmes qui m'avaient déjà apporté du charme tout à l'heure, je ne pouvais pas les rapporter à telle jeune fille que j'eusse séparée des autres et reconnue. Et cette absence, dans ma vision, des démarcations que j'établirais bientôt entre elles, propageait à travers leur groupe un flottement harmonieux, la translation continue **d'une beauté fluide, collective et mobile**. Ce n'était peut-être pas, dans la vie, le hasard seul qui, pour réunir ces amies les avait toutes choisies si belles ; peut-être ces filles (dont l'**attitude** suffisait à révéler **la nature hardie, frivole et dure**), extrêmement sensibles à tout ridicule et à toute laideur, incapables de subir un attrait d'ordre intellectuel ou moral, s'étaient-elles naturellement trouvées, parmi les camarades de leur âge, éprouver de la répulsion pour toutes celles chez qui des dispositions pensives ou sensibles se trahissaient par de la timidité, de la gêne, de la gaucherie, par ce qu'elles devaient appeler « un genre antipathique », et les avaient-elles tenues à l'écart ; tandis qu'elles s'étaient liées au contraire avec d'autres vers qui les attiraient un certain mélange de grâce, de souplesse et d'élégance physique, seule forme sous laquelle **elles pussent** se représenter la franchise d'un caractère séduisant et la

green eyes, I knew not if these were the same that had already charmed me a moment ago, I could not bring them home to any one girl whom I might thereby have set apart from the rest and so identified. And this want, in my vision, of the demarcations which I should presently establish between them sent flooding over the group a wave of harmony, the continuous transfusion of **a beauty fluid, collective and mobile**. It was not perhaps, in this life of ours, mere chance that had, in forming this group of friends, chosen them all of such beauty; perhaps these girls (whose attitude was enough to reveal **their nature, bold, frivolous and hard**), extremely sensitive to everything that was ludicrous or ugly, incapable of yielding to an intellectual or moral attraction, had naturally felt themselves, among companions of their own age, repelled by all those in whom a pensive or sensitive disposition was betrayed by shyness, awkwardness, constraint, by what, they would say, 'didn't appeal' to them, and from such had held aloof; while they attached themselves, on the other hand, to others to whom they were drawn by a certain blend of grace, suppleness, and physical neatness, the only form in which **they were able to** picture the frankness of a seductive character and the

I had no idea whether they were those whose charm had struck me a moment before, in my inability to single out and recognize one or other of these girls and allot them to her. The fact that my view of them was devoid of demarcations, which I was soon to draw among them, sent a ripple of harmonious imprecision through their group, the uninterrupted flow of a shared, unstable and elusive beauty.

It may not have been mere fortuitousness which, in bringing all these girls together, had managed to choose only beautiful ones; the girls themselves (whose **attitudes** sufficed to show their tough, daring and frivolous nature), by their excessive sensitivity to anything ridiculous or ugly, their inability to feel an attraction of an intellectual or moral sort, may have naturally coincided in feeling repelled by any of their coevals whose pensive or sensitive dispositions were revealed by shyness, embarrassment or awkwardness, by girls whom they probably saw as 'horrid' and whom they had ruled out as possible friends; and they may have taken up with others to whom they felt drawn by a blend of gracefulness, ease and bodily elegance, the only appearance through which **they could** conceive of candour and attractiveness in a character,

promesse de bonnes heures à passer ensemble. Peut-être aussi la classe à laquelle elles appartenaient et que **je n'aurais pu préciser**, était-elle à ce point de son évolution où, soit grâce à l'enrichissement et au loisir, soit grâce aux habitudes nouvelles de sport, répandues même dans certains milieux populaires, et d'une culture physique à laquelle ne s'est pas encore ajoutée celle de l'intelligence, un milieu social pareil aux écoles de sculpture harmonieuses et fécondes qui, ne recherchant pas encore l'expression tourmentée, **produit naturellement, et en abondance, de beaux corps** aux belles jambes, aux belles hanches, aux visages sains et reposés, avec un air d'agilité et de ruse. Et n'étaient-ce pas de nobles et calmes modèles de beauté humaine **que je voyais là, devant la mer**, comme des statues exposées au soleil sur un rivage de la Grèce ?

Telles que si, du sein de leur bande qui progressait le long de **la digue** comme une lumineuse comète, elles eussent jugé que la foule environnante était composée des **êtres d'une autre race** et **dont la souffrance même n'eût pu éveiller en elles un sentiment de solidarité**, elles ne paraissaient pas la voir, forçaient les personnes arrêtées à s'écarter ainsi que sur le passage d'une machine qui eût été lâchée

promise of pleasant hours in one another's company. Perhaps, too, the class to which they belonged, a class which **I should not have found it easy to define**, was at that point in its evolution at which, whether thanks to its growing wealth and leisure, or thanks to new athletic habits, extended now even to certain plebeian elements, and a habit of physical culture to which had not yet been added the culture of the mind, a social atmosphere, comparable to that of smooth and prolific schools of sculpture, which have not yet gone in for tortured expressions, **produces naturally and in abundance fine bodies** with fine legs, fine hips, wholesome and reposeful faces, with an air of agility and guile. And were they not noble and calm models of human beauty that I beheld there, outlined against the sea, like statues exposed to the sunlight upon a Grecian shore?

Just as if, in the heart of their band, which progressed along **the 'front'** like a luminous comet, they had decided that the surrounding crowd was composed of **creatures of another race** whose sufferings even could not awaken in them any sense of fellowship, they appeared not to see them, forced those who had stopped to talk to step aside, as though from the path of a machine that had been set going by itself,

offering a promise of good times together. It may have been too that the social class to which they belonged, and **which I could not define with any degree of precision**, had reached a stage in its evolution where – by reason of growing prosperity and leisure, or because of the new interest in sports, spreading now even among the working classes, and in physical training without any concomitant training of the mind – a social environment similar to that of certain schools of sculpture, in which harmony of line and prolific creativity aspire as yet to no over-elaboration or distortions, **produces naturally an abundance of beautiful bodies** with lovely limbs and handsome hips, with lusty, unperturbed faces and an air of sprightly cunning. For surely these were noble and tranquil models of human beauty **that met my eye, against the sea**, like statues in the sun along a shore in Greece.

As though with a single mind, this gang of girls, making its way along **the esplanade** like a shining comet, seemed to think the crowd of people all about them was composed of **beings of another species which, even if it was capable of suffering, could not move them to sympathy**, as they advanced seemingly oblivious to it, forcing everyone who stood in their way to move aside, to give way as though to a locomotive bearing down

et dont il ne fallait pas attendre qu'elle évitât les piétons, et se contentaient tout au plus, **si quelque vieux monsieur dont elles n'admettaient pas l'existence et dont elles repoussaient le contact s'était enfui avec des mouvements craintifs ou furieux, précipités ou risibles**, de se regarder entre elles **en riant**. Elles n'avaient à l'égard de ce qui n'était pas de leur groupe aucune affectation de mépris, leur mépris sincère suffisait. Mais elles ne pouvaient voir un obstacle sans s'amuser à le franchir en prenant leur élan ou à pieds joints, parce qu'elles étaient toutes remplies, exubérantes, de **cette jeunesse qu'on a si grand besoin de dépenser même quand on est triste ou souffrant**, obéissant plus aux nécessités de l'âge qu'à l'humeur de la journée, qu'on ne laisse jamais passer une occasion de saut ou de glissade sans s'y livrer consciencieusement, interrompant, semant sa marche lente – comme Chopin la phrase la plus mélancolique – de gracieux détours où le caprice se mêle à la virtuosité. La femme d'un vieux banquier, après avoir hésité pour son mari entre diverses expositions, l'avait assis, sur un pliant, face à **la digue**, abrité du vent et du soleil par le kiosque des musiciens. Le voyant bien installé, elle venait de le quitter pour aller lui acheter un journal

so that it was no good waiting for it to get out of their way, their utmost sign of consciousness being when, **if some old gentleman of whom they did not admit the existence and thrust from them the contact, had fled with a frightened or furious, but a headlong or ludicrous motion**, they looked at one another and **smiled**. They had, for whatever did not form part of their group, no affectation of contempt; their genuine contempt was sufficient. But they could not set eyes on an obstacle without amusing themselves by crossing it, either in a running jump or with both feet together, because they were all filled to the brim, exuberant with **that youth which we need so urgently to spend that even when we are unhappy or unwell**, obedient rather to the necessities of our age than to the mood of the day, we can never pass anything that can be jumped over or slid down without indulging ourselves conscientiously, interrupting, interspersing our slow progress—as Chopin his most melancholy phrase—with graceful deviations in which caprice is blended with virtuosity. The wife of an elderly banker, after hesitating between various possible exposures for her husband, had settled him on a folding chair, facing **the 'front'**, sheltered from wind and sun by the band-stand. Having seen him comfortably installed there, she had gone to buy a newspaper

upon them without the slightest likelihood that it would avoid pedestrians; and their only reaction, if some fearful or furious old gentleman, of manifestly negligible existence, whom they swept aside as they passed, hobbled urgently or ludicrously out of their path, was to exchange a look amongst themselves and **burst out laughing**. For anyone or anything outside their group they affected no scorn; their sincere scorn was enough. They could not see an obstacle without taking pleasure in jumping over it, either by running at it or from the standing position, because they were full to overflowing with **the youthfulness which must expend itself, which even, when one is sad or unwell** makes one obey the needs of age rather than the mood of the day, so that one can never come upon the possibility of leaping or sliding without making a point of leaping or sliding, and deliberately punctuating one's slow progress, as Chopin does with even the most melancholy of his phrases, with serial detours full of grace, impulsiveness and virtuosity. The wife of an old banker, after having indecisively tried several different places for her husband to sit, had eventually settled him in his deck-chair facing **the esplanade**, where he was sheltered from the wind and the sun by the band-stand. Once he was comfortable, she went off to buy a newspaper,

qu'elle lui lirait et qui le distrairait, petites absences pendant lesquelles elle le laissait seul et qu'elle ne prolongeait jamais au delà de **cinq minutes, ce qui lui semblait bien long**, mais qu'elle renouvelait assez fréquemment pour que **le vieil époux à qui elle prodiguait à la fois et dissimulait ses soins eût l'impression** qu'il était encore en état de vivre comme tout le monde et n'avait nul besoin de protection. La **tribune** des musiciens formait au-dessus de lui un tremplin naturel et tentant sur lequel sans une hésitation l'aînée de la petite bande se mit à courir : elle sauta par-dessus le vieillard épouvanté, dont la casquette marine fut effleurée par les pieds agiles, au grand amusement des autres jeunes filles, surtout de **deux yeux verts dans une figure poupine qui exprimèrent pour cet acte une admiration et une gaieté où je crus discerner un peu de timidité**, d'une timidité honteuse et fanfaronne, qui n'existait pas chez les autres. « C'pauvre vieux y m'fait d'la peine, il a l'air à moitié crevé », dit l'une de ces filles d'une voix rogommeuse et avec un accent à demi ironique. Elles firent quelques pas encore, puis s'arrêtèrent un moment au milieu du chemin sans s'occuper d'arrêter la circulation des passants, en un conciliabule, un agrégat de forme irrégulière, compact, insolite et

which she would read aloud to him, to distract him—one of her little absences which she never prolonged for more than **five minutes, which seemed long enough to him** but which she repeated at frequent intervals so that this old husband on whom she lavished an attention that she took care to conceal, **should have the impression** that he was still quite alive and like other people and was in no need of protection. The **platform** of the band-stand provided, above his head, a natural and tempting springboard, across which, without a moment's hesitation, the eldest of the little band began to run; she jumped over the terrified old man, whose yachting cap was brushed by the nimble feet, to the great delight of the other girls, especially of a pair of green eyes in a 'dashing' face, which expressed, for that bold act, an admiration and a merriment in which I seemed to discern a trace of timidity, a shamefaced and blustering timidity which did not exist in the others. "Oh, the poor old man; he makes me sick; he looks half dead;" said a girl with a croaking voice, but with more sarcasm than sympathy. They walked on a little way, then stopped for a moment in the middle of the road, with no thought whether they were impeding the passage of other people, and held a council, a solid body of irregular shape, compact, unusual

so as to read to him and keep him amused, never being away for more than five minutes at a time, while he sat by himself during her **brief absences, which he found long** but which she repeated, in the hope that **her aged husband, the beneficiary of her close but unobtrusive care, could have the feeling** that he was still capable of living a normal life and did not require help and support from anybody. The **floor** of the band-stand jutted out above the old man's head, forming a natural springboard so tempting that the eldest of the little gang of girls, without the slightest hesitation dashed across and jumped off the edge, sailing right over him: he was terrified by a pair of nimble feet grazing his nautical cap, to the great amusement of the other girls, and especially of **a pair of green eyes in a chubby face full of admiration, merriment and possibly also some slight shyness**, or rather a sort of bare-faced bashfulness, which was not apparent in other's expressions. 'Oh, wot a poor old bloke! He'd break your heart, so he would – he's got one foot in the grave!' said one of them in a broad, husky accent that was half-ironic. They all walked on a few paces, before halting for a moment right in the middle of the promenade, unconcerned about holding up the procession of strollers, forming a dense, shapeless, untoward mass,

piailant, comme des oiseaux qui s'assemblent au moment de s'envoler ; puis elles reprirent leur lente promenade le long de **la digue**, au-dessus de la mer.

Maintenant, leurs traits charmants n'étaient plus indistincts et mêlés. Je les avais répartis et agglomérés (à défaut du nom de chacune, que j'ignorais) autour de la **grande** qui avait sauté par dessus le vieux banquier ; de la **petite** qui détachait sur l'horizon de la mer ses joues bouffies et roses, ses yeux verts ; de celle au **teint** bruni, au nez droit, qui tranchait au milieu des autres ; d'une autre, au visage blanc comme un œuf dans lequel un petit nez faisait un arc de cercle comme un bec de poussin, visage comme en ont certains très jeunes gens ; d'une autre encore, grande, couverte d'une pèlerine (qui lui donnait un aspect si pauvre et démentait tellement sa tournure élégante que l'explication qui se présentait à l'esprit était que cette jeune fille devait avoir des parents assez brillants et plaçant leur amour-propre assez au-dessus des baigneurs de Balbec et de l'élégance vestimentaire de leurs propres enfants pour qu'il leur fût absolument égal de la laisser se promener sur **la digue** dans une tenue que de petites gens eussent jugée trop modeste) ;

and shrill, like birds that gather on the ground at the moment of flight; then they resumed their leisurely stroll along **the 'front'** against a background of sea.

By this time their charming features had ceased to be indistinct and impersonal. I had dealt them like cards into so many heaps to compose (failing their names, of which I was still ignorant) the **big** one who had jumped over the old banker; the **little** one who stood out against the horizon of sea with her plump and rosy cheeks, her green eyes; the one with the straight nose and dark **complexion**, in such contrast to all the rest; another, with a white face like an egg on which a tiny nose described an arc of a circle like a chicken's beak; yet another, wearing a hooded cape (which gave her so poverty-stricken an appearance, and so contradicted the smartness of the figure beneath that the explanation which suggested itself was that this girl must have parents of high position who valued their self-esteem so far above the visitors to Balbec and the sartorial elegance of their own children that it was a matter of the utmost indifference to them that their daughter should stroll on **the 'front'** dressed in a way which humbler people would have considered too modest);

loud with squawking, like a prattle of birds that gather just before flying off; and then they took up again their own slow stroll along **the esplanade**, above the sea.

By now, their charm was not blended into undifferentiated features. I could separate these from one another and apportion them to individual girls (in lieu of their names, which I had no knowledge of), such as the **tall** one who had jumped over the old banker; the **small** one who set off her plump pink cheeks and her green eyes against the horizon of the sea; the one whose darker **colouring** and straight nose made her look so different from the others; another one with a face as white as an egg, on which a little nose, like a chick's beak, drew an arc of circle, a face reminiscent of some very young men's; the other one who was tall and wearing a hooded cape, which made her look so poor, and was in such contrast with the rest of her elegant outfit that my idea of her was that she must have parents whose brilliance and pride-in-self, drawn from things well above the heads of Balbec and its bathers, things utterly divorced from considerations of the elegance or otherwise of their own offspring, enabled them to be totally indifferent to the fact that this daughter of theirs went walking along **the esplanade** wearing something that people of the lower classes would have deemed too unprepossessing;

d'une fille aux yeux brillants, rieurs, aux grosses joues mates, sous un « polo » noir, enfoncé sur sa tête, qui poussait une bicyclette avec un dandinement de hanches si dégingandé, en employant des termes d'argot si voyous et criés si fort, quand je passai auprès d'elle (parmi lesquels je distinguai cependant la phrase fâcheuse de « vivre sa vie ») qu'abandonnant l'hypothèse que la pèlerine de sa camarade m'avait fait échafauder, je conclus plutôt que toutes ces filles appartenaient à la population qui fréquente les vélodromes, et devaient être les très jeunes maîtresses de coureurs cyclistes. En tous cas, dans aucune de mes suppositions, ne figurait celle qu'elles eussent pu être vertueuses. À première vue – dans la manière dont elles se regardaient **en riant**, dans le regard insistant de celle aux joues mates – j'avais compris qu'elles ne l'étaient pas. **D'ailleurs**, ma grand-mère avait toujours veillé sur moi avec une délicatesse trop timorée pour que je ne crusse pas que l'ensemble des choses qu'on ne doit pas faire est indivisible et que des jeunes filles qui manquent de respect à la vieillesse **fussent** tout d'un coup arrêtées par des scrupules quand il s'agit de plaisirs plus tentateurs que de sauter par-dessus un octogénaire.

Individualisées maintenant pourtant, la réplique que se donnaient

a girl with brilliant, laughing eyes and plump, colourless cheeks, a black polo-cap pulled down over her face, who was pushing a bicycle with so exaggerated a movement of her hips, with an air borne out by her language, which was so typically of the gutter and was being shouted so loud, when I passed her (although among her expressions I caught that irritating 'live my own life') that, abandoning the hypothesis which her friend's hooded cape had made me construct, I concluded instead that all these girls belonged to the population which frequents the racing-tracks, and must be the very juvenile mistresses of professional bicyclists. In any event, in none of my suppositions was there any possibility of their being virtuous. At first sight—in the way in which they looked at one another and **smiled**, in the insistent stare of the one with the dull cheeks—I had grasped that they were not. **Besides**, my grandmother had always watched over me with a delicacy too timorous for me not to believe that the sum total of the things one ought not to do was indivisible or that girls who were lacking in respect for their elders **would** suddenly be stopped short by scruples when there were pleasures at stake more tempting than that of jumping over an octogenarian.

Though they were now separately identifiable, still the mutual response which they gave

a girl with shining, laughing eyes and full, matt-complexioned cheeks, a little black toque pulled right down, who was pushing a bicycle along and swinging her hips so freely, while using slang words which were so strong, and which she shouted out so loud as I passed close by (among which I distinctly heard the unladylike expression 'She's no better than she should be'), that I had to replace the hypothesis I had built on the hood and cape of her friend by another more plausible one: every one of these girls belonged to the crowds who frequent velodromes, and must be the extremely youthful girl-friends of racing cyclist. Certainly, in none of my conjectures did I entertain the possibility that they might be chaste. I had known as much at a glance: I saw it in the way they kept exchanging looks and **laughs**, and in the insistent stare of the one with the cheeks and the matt complexion. **Moreover**, my grandmother's concern for me had always been so over-scrupulous that I had come to believe that the things one must not do are a single indivisible set, and that young girls who are prepared to be rude to old age **might** well have a few qualms about infringing other prohibitions, in which the pleasures to be enjoyed are more tempting than just jumping over an octogenarian.

Though the girls were now individualized, the connivance in the glowing glances they kept

les uns aux autres leurs regards animés de suffisance et d'esprit de camaraderie, et dans lesquels se rallumaient d'instant en instant tantôt l'intérêt, tantôt l'insolente indifférence dont brillait chacune, selon qu'il s'agissait de l'une de ses amies ou des passants, cette **conscience** aussi de se connaître entre elles assez intimement pour se promener toujours ensemble, **en faisant « bande à part »**, mettaient entre leurs corps indépendants et séparés, tandis qu'ils s'avançaient lentement, **une liaison invisible, mais harmonieuse** comme une même ombre chaude, une même atmosphère, faisant d'eux un tout aussi homogène en ses parties qu'il était différent de la foule au milieu de laquelle se déroulait lentement leur cortège.

Un instant, tandis que je passais à côté de la brune aux grosses joues qui poussait une bicyclette, je croisai ses regards obliques et rieurs, dirigés du fond de ce monde inhumain qui enferme la vie de cette petite tribu, inaccessible inconnu où l'idée de ce que j'étais ne pouvait certainement ni parvenir ni trouver place. Toute occupée à ce que disaient ses camarades, cette jeune fille coiffée d'un polo qui descendait très bas sur son front **m'avait-elle vu au moment où le rayon noir émané de ses yeux m'avait rencontré ?**

one another with eyes animated by self-sufficiency and the spirit of comradeship, in which were kindled at every moment now the interest now the insolent indifference with which each of them sparkled according as her glance fell on one of her friends or on passing strangers, that **consciousness**, moreover, of knowing one another intimately enough always to go about together, **by making them a 'band apart'** established between their independent and separate bodies, as slowly they advanced, **a bond invisible but harmonious**, like a single warm shadow, a single atmosphere making of them a whole as homogeneous in its parts as it was different from the crowd through which their procession gradually wound.

For an instant, as I passed the dark one with the fat cheeks who was wheeling a bicycle, I caught her smiling, sidelong glance, aimed from the centre of that inhuman world which enclosed the life of this little tribe, an inaccessible, unknown world to which the idea of what I was could certainly never attain nor find a place in it. Wholly occupied with what her companions were saying, this young girl in her polo-cap, pulled down very low over her brow, **had she seen me at the moment in which the dark ray emanating from her eyes had fallen on me?**

exchanging, bright with conceit and their joy in being the little clique they were, flashing with self-interest or insolent indifference, depending on whether they were looking at each other or at people passing, as well as their **sense** of knowing one another closely enough to be always out together, **to be 'as thick as thieves'**, linked their separate and independent bodies **into an invisible harmony**, as though they shared the same warm shade, walked within a separate atmosphere, which made of them an entity as alike in its parts as it was unlike the throng through which their closed little company wended its slow way.

For an instant, as I passed close to the brunette with the full cheeks and the bicycle, I glimpsed her oblique, laughing glance, looking out from the inhumane world which circumscribed the life of their little tribe, an accessible *terra incognita*, obviously incapable of harbouring or offering a home to any notion of who or what I was. With her toque pulled down low on her brow, entirely engrossed in what her companions were saying, **did she see me, at the moment when the black ray from her eyes encountered me?**

Si elle m'avait vu, qu'avais-je pu lui représenter ? Du sein de quel univers me distinguait-elle ? **Il m'eût été** aussi difficile de le dire que, lorsque certaines particularités nous apparaissent grâce au télescope, dans un astre voisin, il est malaisé de conclure d'elles que des humains y habitent, qu'ils nous voient, et quelles idées cette vue a pu éveiller en eux.

Si nous pensions que les yeux d'une telle fille ne sont qu'une brillante rondelle de mica, **nous ne serions pas avides** de connaître et d'unir à nous sa vie. Mais nous sentons que ce qui luit dans ce disque réfléchissant n'est pas dû uniquement à sa composition matérielle ; que ce sont, inconnues de nous, les noires ombres des idées que **cet être** se fait, relativement aux gens et **aux lieux qu'il connaît** – **pelouses des hippodromes**, sable des chemins où, pédalant à travers champs et bois, **m'eût entraîné** cette petite **péri**, plus séduisante pour moi que celle du paradis persan, – les ombres aussi de la maison où elle va rentrer, des projets qu'elle forme ou qu'on a formés pour elle ; et surtout que c'est elle, avec ses désirs, ses sympathies, ses répulsions, son obscure et incessante volonté. Je savais que je ne posséderais pas cette jeune cycliste si je ne possédais aussi ce qu'il y avait dans ses yeux.

In the heart of what universe did she distinguish me? **It would have been** as hard for me to say as, when certain peculiarities are made visible, thanks to the telescope, in a neighbouring planet, it is difficult to arrive at the conclusion that human beings inhabit it, that they can see us, or to say what ideas the sight of us can have aroused in their minds.

If we thought that the eyes of a girl like that were merely two glittering sequins of mica, **we should not be athirst** to know her and to unite her life to ours. But we feel that what shines in those reflecting discs is not due solely to their material composition; that it is, unknown to us, the dark shadows of the ideas that **the creature** is conceiving, relative to the people and places that she knows–**the turf of racecourses**, the sand of cycling tracks over which, pedaling on past fields and woods, she **would have drawn me** after her, that little **peri**, more seductive to me than she of the Persian paradise–the shadows, too, of the home to which she will presently return, of the plans that she is forming or that others have formed for her; and above all that it is she, with her desires, her sympathies, her revulsions, her obscure and incessant will. I knew that I should never possess this young cyclist if I did not possess also what there was in her eyes.

If so, what must I have seemed like to her? What sort of world was the one from which she was looking at me? **I could not** tell, any more than one can tell from the few details which a telescope enables us to descry on a neighbouring planet whether it is inhabited by human beings, whether or not they can see us, or whether their view of us has inspired any reflections in them.

If we believed that the eyes of such a girl were nothing but shiny little discs of mica, **we would not be eager** to enter her life and link it to our own. But we are well aware that whatever it is that shines in those reflective discs is not reducible to their material composition; that flitting about behind them are the black incognizable shadows of the ideas **she** forms about the people and **places she knows** – **the paddocks at race-courses**, the sandy paths along which she **might have pedalled, drawing me** after her, over hill and meadow, like a little **Peri** more seductive than the sprite from the Persian paradise – the dimness of the house into which she will disappear, her own impenetrable projects and the designs of others upon her; and what we are most aware of is that she herself lies behind them, with her desires, her likes and dislikes, the power of her inscrutable and inexhaustible will. I knew I could never possess the young cyclist, unless I could also possess what lay behind her eyes.



Et c'était par conséquent toute sa vie qui m'inspirait du désir ; désir douloureux, parce que je le sentais irréalisable, mais enivrant, parce que ce qui avait été jusque-là ma vie ayant brusquement cessé d'être ma vie totale, n'étant plus qu'une petite partie de l'espace étendu devant moi que je brûlais de couvrir, et qui était fait de la vie de ces jeunes filles, m'offrait ce prolongement, cette multiplication possible de soi-même, qui est le bonheur. Et, sans doute, qu'il n'y eût entre nous aucune habitude – comme aucune idée – communes, devait me rendre plus difficile de me lier avec elles et de leur plaire. Mais peut-être aussi c'était grâce à ces différences, à la **conscience** qu'il n'entraînait pas, dans la composition de la nature et des actions de ces filles, un seul élément que je connusse ou possédasse, que venait en moi de succéder à la satiété, la soif – pareille à celle dont brûle une terre altérée – d'une vie que mon âme, parce qu'elle n'en avait jamais reçu jusqu'ici une seule goutte, absorberait d'autant plus avidement, à longs traits, dans une plus parfaite imbibition.

J'avais tant regardé cette cycliste aux yeux brillants qu'elle parut s'en apercevoir et **dit** à la plus grande un mot que je n'entendis pas, mais qui fit rire celle-ci. À vrai dire, cette brune n'était pas celle

And it was consequently her whole life that filled me with desire; a sorrowful desire because I felt that it was not to be realised, but exhilarating, because what had hitherto been my life, having ceased of a sudden to be my whole life, being no more now than a little part of the space stretching out before me, which I was burning to cover and which was composed of the lives of these girls, offered me that prolongation, that possible multiplication of oneself which is happiness. And no doubt the fact that we had, these girls and I, not one habit--as we had not one idea--in common, was to make it more difficult for me to make friends with them and to please them. But perhaps, also, it was thanks to those differences, to my **consciousness** that there did not enter into the composition of the nature and actions of these girls a single element that I knew or possessed, that there came in place of my satiety a thirst--like that with which a dry land burns--for a life which my soul, because it had never until now received one drop of it, would absorb all the more greedily in long draughts, with a more perfect imbibition.

I had looked so closely at the dark cyclist with the bright eyes that she seemed to notice my attention, and said to the biggest of the girls something that I could not hear. To be honest, this dark one was not the one

My desire for her was desire for her whole life: a desire that was full of pain, because I sensed it was unattainable, but also full of heady excitement, because what had been my life up to that moment had suddenly ceased to be all of life, had turned into a small corner of a great space opening up for me, which I longed to explore and which was composed of the lives led by these young girls, because what was laid out now before my eyes was that extension and potential multiplication of self which we know as happiness. The fact that they and I shared nothing, no habit, no idea, was surely bound to make it more difficult for me to make their acquaintance and meet with their approval. But perhaps it was my very awareness of these differences between us, my **knowledge** that, in the nature of the girls as in their every action, there was not one iota of an element that was known to me or that I could have access to, which had replaced my satiety of life which my soul, having gone for ever without a single drop of it, would now absorb in great greedy draughts, letting it soak me to the roots.

I had been staring so much at the bright-eyed cyclist that she seemed to notice it: **she said** something to the tallest girl, which I did not catch but which made her laugh. This bicycling brunette was not in fact the one

qui me plaisait le plus, justement parce qu'elle était brune, et que (depuis le jour où dans le petit raidillon de Tansonville, j'avais vu Gilberte) une jeune fille rousse à la peau dorée était restée pour moi l'idéal inaccessible. Mais Gilberte elle-même, ne l'avais-je pas aimée surtout parce qu'elle m'était apparue nimbée par cette auréole d'être l'amie de Bergotte, d'aller visiter avec lui les cathédrales. Et de la même façon ne pouvais-je me réjouir d'avoir vu cette brune me regarder (ce qui me faisait espérer qu'il me serait plus facile d'entrer en relations avec elle d'abord), car elle me présenterait aux autres, à l'impitoyable qui avait sauté par-dessus le vieillard, à la cruelle qui avait dit : « Il me fait de la peine, ce pauvre vieux » ; à toutes successivement, desquelles elle avait d'ailleurs le prestige d'être l'inséparable compagne. Et cependant, la supposition que je pourrais **un jour** être l'ami de telle ou telle de ces jeunes filles, que ces yeux, dont les regards inconnus me frappaient parfois en jouant sur moi sans le savoir comme un effet de soleil sur un mur, pourraient jamais par une alchimie miraculeuse laisser transpénétrer entre leurs parcelles ineffables l'idée de mon existence, quelque amitié pour ma personne, que moi-même je pourrais **un jour** prendre place entre elles, dans la théorie qu'elles déroulaient

that pleased me most, simply because she was dark and because (since the day on which, from the little path by Tansonville, I had seen Gilberte) a girl with reddish hair and a golden skin had remained for me the inaccessible ideal. But Gilberte herself, had I not loved her principally because she had appeared to me haloed with that aureole of being the friend of Bergotte, of going with him to look at old cathedrals? And in the same way could I not rejoice at having seen this dark girl look at me (which made me hope that **it would be easier** for me to get to know her first), for she would introduce me to the others, to the **pitiless** one who had jumped over the old man's head, to the cruel one who had said "He makes me sick, poor old man!"--to all of them in turn, among whom, moreover, she had the distinction of being their inseparable companion? And yet the supposition that I might **some day** be the friend of one or other of these girls, that their eyes, whose incomprehensible gaze struck me now and again, playing upon me unawares, like the play of sunlight upon a wall, might ever, by a miraculous alchemy, allow to interpenetrate among their ineffable particles the idea of my existence, some affection for my person, that I myself might **some day** take my place among them in the evolution of their course by

I liked best, for the very reason that she was a brunette: for me, the unattainable ideal, ever since the day I had caught sight of Gilberte from the steep little lane by Tansonville, had been a golden-skinned girl with fairish ginger hair. But then, had I not also fallen in love with Gilberte because she had appeared to me surrounded by the halo of glory conferred upon her by being the friend of Bergotte, by going with him to look at cathedrals? In the same way, was it not promising that I had seen the brunette look at me (which made me hope **it might prove easier** to get to know her first), since she would be able to introduce me to the others, to the **ruthless** one who had jumped over the old man's head, to the heartless one who had said 'Oh, wot a poor old bloke!' and then all of them one after the other, in her capacity, and her prestige, as their inseparable companion? And yet in the assumption that I might **one day** be a friend of one or other of those girls, that the eyes which passed their unknown glances over me, as unaware of me as a touch of sun on a wall, might ever undergo the miraculous alchemy which would enable a notion of my existence, or friendship for my person, to merge with the inexpressible minutiae of their minds, that I myself might **one day** be a member of their bevy as it roamed

le long de la mer – **cette supposition me paraissait enfermer en elle une contradiction** aussi insoluble que si, devant quelque frise attique ou quelque fresque figurant un cortège, j'avais cru possible, moi spectateur, de prendre place, aimé d'elles, entre les divines processionnaires.

Le bonheur de connaître ces jeunes filles était-il donc irréalisable ? Certes ce n'eût pas été le premier de ce genre auquel j'eusse renoncé. **Je n'avais qu'à me rappeler tant d'inconnues que**, même à Balbec, **la voiture s'éloignant à toute vitesse m'avait fait à jamais abandonner**. Et même le plaisir que me donnait **la petite bande, noble comme si elle était composée de vierges helléniques**, venait de ce qu'elle avait quelque chose de la fuite des passantes sur la route. Cette fugacité des êtres qui ne sont pas connus de nous, qui nous forcent à démarrer de la vie habituelle où les femmes que nous fréquentons finissent par dévoiler leurs tares, nous met dans cet état de poursuite où rien n'arrête plus l'imagination. Or dépouiller d'elle nos plaisirs, c'est les réduire à eux-mêmes, à rien. Offertes chez une de ces entremetteuses que, par ailleurs, **on a vu** que je ne méprisais pas,

the sea's edge—that supposition appeared to me to contain within it a contradiction as insoluble as if, standing before some classical frieze or a fresco representing a procession, I had believed it possible for me, the spectator, to take my place, beloved of them, among the godlike hierophants.

The happiness of knowing these girls was, then, not to be realised. Certainly it would not have been the first of its kind that **I had renounced**. I had only to recall the numberless strangers whom, even at Balbec, the carriage bowling away from them at full speed had forced me for ever to abandon. And indeed the pleasure that was given me by the little band, as noble as if it had been composed of Hellenic virgins, came from some suggestion that there was in it of the flight of passing figures along a road. This fleetingness of **persons** who are not known to us, who force us to put out from the harbour of life, in which the women whose society we frequent have all, in course of time, laid bare their blemishes, urges us into that state of pursuit in which there is no longer anything to arrest the imagination. But to strip our pleasures of imagination is to reduce them to their own dimensions, that is to say to nothing. Offered me by one of those procuresses (whose good offices, all the same, **the reader** has seen that I by no means scorned),

along the sea-front, **there was a contradiction** as insoluble as though I had thought it possible not just to stand and admire the parading figures in an ancient frieze or fresco, but to be admired in return and step up to join in their divine progress.

Was the happiness of knowing these young girls really unattainable? It would certainly not have been the first happiness of that sort which **I had abandoned all hope of ever enjoying**. **I needed only to think of all the unknown girls**, even on the roads round Balbec, **whom I had had to give up as the speeding carriage parted me from them for ever**. Even the joy I derived from **this little group, as noble as though composed of Hellenic virgins**, had something in it akin to the feeling I got from those fleeting passers-by on the road. The transience of **brief strangers** who enter our life and force us out of the normality in which all the women we are used to will eventually reveal their blemishes, puts us into a state of readiness to pursue them, in which nothing inhibits the imagination. For a pleasure divested of imagination is a pleasure reduced to itself, to nothing. If they had been offered to me by a madam – in the sort of house which, **as has been seen**, I did not disdain –

retirées de l'élément qui leur donnait tant de nuances et de vague, ces jeunes filles m'eussent moins enchanté. Il faut que l'imagination, éveillée par l'incertitude de pouvoir atteindre son objet, crée un but qui nous cache l'autre, et en substituant au plaisir sensuel l'idée de pénétrer dans une vie, nous empêche de reconnaître ce plaisir, d'éprouver son goût véritable, de le restreindre à sa portée.

Il faut qu'entre nous et le poisson qui si nous le voyions pour la première fois servi sur une table ne paraîtrait pas valoir les mille ruses et détours nécessaires pour nous emparer de lui, s'interpose, pendant les après-midi de pêche, le remous à la surface duquel viennent affleurer, sans que nous sachions bien ce que nous voulons en faire, le poli d'une chair, l'indécision d'une forme, dans la fluidité d'un transparent et mobile azur.

Ces jeunes filles bénéficiaient aussi de ce changement des proportions sociales caractéristiques de la vie des bains de mer. Tous les avantages qui dans notre milieu habituel nous prolongent, nous agrandissent, se trouvent là devenus invisibles, en fait supprimés ; en revanche les **êtres** à qui on suppose indûment de tels avantages ne s'avancent qu'amplifiés d'une étendue postiche.

withdrawn from the element which gave them so many fine shades and such vagueness, these girls would have enchanted me less. We must have imagination, awakened by the uncertainty of being able to attain our object, to create a goal which hides our other goal from us, and by substituting for sensual pleasures the idea of penetrating into a life prevents us from recognising that pleasure, from tasting its true savour, from restricting it to its own range.

There must be, between us and the fish which, if we saw it for the first time cooked and served on a table, would not appear worth the endless trouble, craft and stratagem that are necessary if we are to catch it, interposed, during our afternoons with the rod, the ripple to whose surface come wavering, without our quite knowing what we intend to do with them, the burnished gleam of flesh, the indefiniteness of a form, in the fluidity of a transparent and flowing azure.

These girls benefited also by that alteration of social values characteristic of seaside life. All the advantages which, in our ordinary environment, extend and magnify our importance, we there find to have become invisible, in fact to be eliminated; while on the other hand **the people** whom we suppose, without reason, to enjoy similar advantages appear to us amplified to artificial dimensions.

divorced from the element which lent them so many colours and such attractive imprecision, they would have been less enchanting. The imagination, aroused by the possibility that it will not achieve its aim, is obliged to mask it with another, and by replacing sensual pleasure with the idea of penetrating someone's life, makes sure we neither recognize that pleasure, experience its true flavour nor restrict it to its dimension of mere pleasure. If we were to set eyes on a fish for the first time as it might be served on a dinner table, it would hardly appear to be worth the countless ruses and devious tricks required to land it, unless between us and it there were afternoons spent fishing, eddies through which glimpses barely caught of fleshy gleams and an imprecise shape ruffle the surface of our indecision about what to do with them, in the blue fluidity of a transparent and mobile medium.

The girls benefited also from the alteration in social proportions which is characteristic of holiday life at the seaside. All the ways in which our usual environment confers advantages on us, extending and inflating our importance, become invisible there, indeed are abolished, while **other people** in whom we imagine such advantages, which may be non-existent, move in a world enriched for us by this same fictitious density.

Elle rendait plus aisé que des inconnues, et ce jour-là **ces jeunes filles**, prissent à mes yeux une importance énorme, et impossible de leur faire connaître celle que je pouvais avoir.

Mais si la promenade de la petite bande avait pour elle de n'être qu'un extrait de la fuite innombrable de passantes, laquelle m'avait toujours troublé, cette fuite était ici ramenée à un mouvement tellement lent qu'il se rapprochait de l'immobilité. Or, précisément, que dans une phase aussi peu rapide, les visages non plus emportés dans un tourbillon, mais calmes et distincts, me parussent encore beaux, cela m'empêchait de croire, comme je l'avais fait si souvent quand m'emportait la voiture de Mme de Villeparisis, que, de plus près, si je me fusse arrêté un instant, tels détails, une peau grêlée, un défaut dans les ailes du nez, un regard benêt, la grimace du sourire, une vilaine taille, **eussent remplacé** dans le visage et dans le corps de la femme ceux que j'avais sans doute imaginés ; car il avait suffi d'une jolie ligne de corps, d'un teint frais entrevu, pour que de très bonne foi j'y eusse ajouté quelque ravissante épaule, quelque regard délicieux dont je portais toujours en moi le souvenir ou l'idée préconçue, ces déchiffrages rapides **d'un être** qu'on voit à la volée nous exposant ainsi aux mêmes erreurs

This made it easy for strange women generally, and to-day for these girls in particular, to acquire an enormous importance in my eyes, and impossible to make them aware of such importance as I might myself possess.

But if there was this to be said for the excursion of the little band, that it was but an excerpt from the innumerable flight of passing women, which had always disturbed me, their flight was here reduced to a movement so slow as to approach immobility. Now, precisely because, in a phase so far from rapid, faces no longer swept past me in a whirlwind, but calm and distinct still appeared beautiful, I was prevented from thinking as I had so often thought when Mme. De Villeparisis's carriage bore me away that, at closer quarters, if I had stopped for a moment, certain details, a pitted skin, drooping nostrils, a silly gape, a grimace of a smile, an ugly figure **might have been substituted**, in the face and body of the woman, for those that I had doubtless imagined; for there had sufficed a pretty outline, a glimpse of a fresh complexion, for me to add, in entire good faith, a fascinating shoulder, a delicious glance of which I carried in my mind for ever a memory or a preconceived idea, these rapid decipherings of **a person** whom we see in motion exposing us thus to the same errors as

It was this which made it easy for unknown women, as on that day **this group of girls**, to assume enormous significance in my eyes, while making it impossible for me to give them any indication of my own significance.

Though this little sauntering gang of girls was an example of the countless occasions when young passers-by had escaped my grasp, a failure which had always irked me, this time the escapers had slowed their pace almost to the point of immobility. That faces, instead of dashing past, should make a slow enough disappearance for their features to be set and distinct, yet still appear beautiful, prevented me from believing, as I had so often believed when Mme de Villeparisis's carriage was whisking me further and further away from a young woman, that at a close range, if I had been able to pause for a moment, certain details of her face or body – a pock-marked complexion, an imperfection in the nostrils, a dull look, a crude smile, a graceless waist – **would have supplanted** those which my imagination had seen in her; for often I had needed no more than a pretty contour of a body, a glimpse of a cool complexion, to create in all good faith a lovely shoulder to go with it, or a look from delightful eyes, memories or preconceptions which I carried about with me at all times; and such cursory decipherings of **a creature** seen in a fleeting glimpse expose us to the same misconceptions

que ces lectures trop rapides où, sur une seule syllabe et sans prendre le temps d'identifier les autres, on met à la place du mot qui est écrit un tout différent que nous fournit notre mémoire. Il ne pouvait en être ainsi maintenant. J'avais bien regardé leurs visages ; chacun d'eux je l'avais vu, non pas dans tous ses profils, et rarement de face, mais tout de même selon deux ou trois aspects **assez différents** pour que je pusse faire soit la rectification, soit la vérification et la « preuve » des différentes suppositions de lignes et de couleurs que hasarde la première vue, et pour voir subsister en eux, à travers les expressions successives, quelque chose d'inaltérablement matériel. Aussi, je pouvais me dire avec certitude que, ni à Paris, ni à Balbec, dans les hypothèses les plus favorables de ce qu'auraient pu être, même si j'avais pu rester à causer avec elles, les passantes qui avaient arrêté mes yeux, il n'y en avait jamais eu dont l'apparition, puis la disparition sans que je les eusse connues, m'eussent laissé plus de regrets que ne feraient celles-ci, m'eussent donné l'idée que leur amitié pût être une telle ivresse. Ni parmi les actrices, ou les paysannes, ou les demoiselles du pensionnat religieux, je n'avais rien vu d'aussi beau, imprégné d'autant d'inconnu, aussi inestimablement précieux,

those too rapid readings in which, on a single syllable and without waiting to identify the rest, we base instead of the word that is in the text a wholly different word with which our memory supplies us. It could not be so with me now. I had looked well at them all; each of them I had seen, not from every angle and rarely in full face, but all the same in two or three aspects different enough to enable me to make either the correction or the verification, to take a 'proof of the different possibilities of line and colour that are hazarded at first sight, and to see persist in them, through a series of expressions, something unalterably material. I could say to myself with conviction that neither in Paris nor at Balbec, in the most favourable hypotheses of what might have happened, even if I had been able to stop and talk to them, the passing women who had caught my eye, had there ever been one whose appearance, followed by her disappearance without my having managed to know her, had left me with more regret than would these, had given me the idea that her friendship might be a thing so intoxicating. Never, among actresses nor among peasants nor among girls from a convent school had I beheld anything so beautiful, impregnated with so much that was unknown, so inestimably precious,

as hasty readings of a txt, whereby, on the faith of a single syllable, and without pausing to identify the others, we replace the word printed by another quite different word proffered by memory. But this occasion had to be different: I had been able to have a close look at each of their faces; and though I had been unable to see any of them from both sides, and few of them in full face, I had still managed to sketch two or three aspects of them **which were sufficiently different from one another** for me to be able to make either the necessary adjustments to their different hypothetical contours and colours, as jotted down by my first glance, or the verification and proof of them, and to see through their few overlaid expressions to something which was immutably material. So I knew I could say with certainty that, whether in Paris or in Balbec, assuming the most favourable possible outcomes with any of the young women who had ever caught my eye in passing, if I had been able to pause for a while and chat, there had never been any whose appearance, then disappearance without anything coming of it, would have left me with such regrets as would these ones, or who could make me believe there would be such excitement in being their friend. No actress, no peasant girls, no boarder at a convent school had ever been so beautiful to me, so fascinating in a suggestion of the unknown, so invaluable precious,

Elles étaient, du bonheur inconnu et possible de la vie, un exemplaire si délicieux et en si parfait état, que c'était presque pour des raisons intellectuelles que j'étais désespéré, de peur de ne pas pouvoir faire dans des conditions uniques, ne laissant aucune place à l'erreur possible, **l'expérience de ce que nous offre de plus mystérieux la beauté qu'on désire** et qu'on se console de ne posséder jamais, en demandant du plaisir – comme Swann avait toujours refusé de faire, avant Odette – à des femmes qu'on n'a pas désirées, si bien qu'on meurt sans avoir jamais su ce qu'était cet autre plaisir. Sans doute, il se pouvait **qu'il ne fût** pas en réalité un plaisir inconnu, que de près son mystère se dissipât, qu'il ne fût qu'une projection, qu'un mirage du désir. Mais, dans ce cas, je ne pourrais m'en prendre qu'à la nécessité d'une loi de la nature – qui, si elle s'appliquait à ces jeunes filles, s'appliquerait à **toutes** – et non à la défektivité de l'objet. Car il était celui que **j'eusse choisi** entre tous, me rendant bien compte, avec une satisfaction de botaniste, qu'il n'était pas possible de trouver réunies des espèces plus rares que celles de ces jeunes fleurs qui interrompaient en ce moment devant moi la ligne du flot de leur haie légère, pareille à un bosquet de roses de Pennsylvanie,

so apparently inaccessible. They were, of the unknown and potential happiness of life, an illustration so delicious and in so perfect a state that it was almost for intellectual reasons that I was desperate with the fear that I might not be able to make, in unique conditions which left no room for any possibility of error, proper trial of what is **the most mysterious thing that is offered to us by the beauty which we desire** and console ourselves for never possessing, by demanding pleasure--as Swann had always refused to do before Odette's day--from women whom we have not desired, so that, indeed, we die without having ever known what that other pleasure was. No doubt it was possible **that it was** not in reality an unknown pleasure, that on a close inspection its mystery would dissipate and vanish, that it was no more than a projection, a mirage of desire. But in that case I could blame only the compulsion of a law of nature--which if it applied to these girls would apply to **all**--and not the imperfection of the object. For it was that which **I should have chosen** above all others, feeling quite certain, with a botanist's satisfaction, that it was not possible to find collected anywhere rarer specimens than these young flowers who were interrupting at this moment before my eyes the line of the sea with their slender hedge, like a bower of Pennsylvania roses

so probably unattainable. The exemplar these girls offered of life's potential for bringing unsuspected happiness was so full of charm, in a state for such perfection, that it was almost for intellectual reasons that I despaired of ever being able to experience, in unique conditions which would allow no room for possible error, **the profound mystery to be found in the beauty one has longed for**, the beauty one replaces, because one knows it is for ever beyond one's reach, by seeking mere pleasure from women one has not desired – which Swann had always refused to do, before meeting Odette – with the result that one dies without ever having enjoyed that other form of fulfilment. It was of course possible **that there would have been** no revelation in such a fulfilment, that the mystery would have been nothing but a projection or mirage of desire, to be dispelled by proximity. If so, I would have to blame an inescapable law of nature (which, if it was applicable to these girls would be applicable to **all girls**, and not any defectiveness in the present object. For this present object was the one **I would have preferred** above all, as I knew perfectly well, having botanized so much among such young blossoms, that it would be impossible to come upon a bouquet of rare varieties than these buds, which, as I looked at them now, decorated the line of the water with their gentle stems, like a gardenful of Carolina roses

ornement d'un jardin sur la falaise, entre lesquelles tient tout le trajet de l'océan parcouru par quelque steamer, si lent à glisser sur le trait horizontal et bleu qui va d'une tige à l'autre, qu'un papillon paresseux, attardé au fond de la corolle que la coque du navire a depuis longtemps dépassée, peut pour s'envoler en étant sûr d'arriver avant le vaisseau, attendre que rien qu'une seule parcelle azurée sépare encore la proue de celui-ci du premier pétale de la fleur vers laquelle il navigue.

Je rentrai parce que je devais aller dîner à Rivebelle avec Robert et que ma grand'mère exigeait qu'avant de partir, je m'étendisse ces soirs-là pendant une heure sur mon lit, sieste que le médecin de Balbec m'ordonna bientôt d'étendre à tous les autres soirs.

D'ailleurs, il n'y avait même pas besoin pour rentrer de quitter **la digue** et de pénétrer dans l'hôtel par le hall, c'est-à-dire par derrière. En vertu d'une avance comparable à celle du samedi où à Combray **on déjeunait une heure plus tôt**, maintenant **avec le plein de l'été** les jours étaient devenus si longs que le soleil était encore haut dans le ciel, comme à une heure de goûter, quand **on mettait le couvert** pour le dîner au Grand-Hôtel de Balbec.

adorning a garden on the brink of a cliff, between which is contained the whole tract of ocean crossed by some steamer, so slow in gliding along the blue and horizontal line that stretches from one stem to the next that an idle butterfly, dawdling in the cup of a flower which the moving hull has long since passed, can, if it is to fly and be sure of arriving before the vessel, wait until nothing but the tiniest slice of blue still separates the questing prow from the first petal of the flower towards which it is steering.

I went indoors because I was to dine at Rivebelle with Robert, and my grandmother insisted that on those evenings, before going out, I must lie down for an hour on my bed, a rest which the Balbec doctor presently ordered me to extend to the other evenings also.

However, there was no need, when one went indoors, to leave **the 'front'** and to enter the hotel by the hall, that is to say from behind. By virtue of an alteration of the clock which reminded me of those Saturdays when, at Combray, **we used to have luncheon an hour earlier**, now **with summer at the full** the days had become so long that the sun was still high in the heavens, as though it were only tea-time, when **the tables were being laid** for dinner in the Grand Hotel.

edging a cliff-top, where a whole stretch of ocean can fit between adjacent flowers, and a steamer is so slow to cover the flat blue line separating two stalks that an idling butterfly can loiter on a bloom which the ship's hull has long since passed, and is so sure of being first to reach the next flower that it can delay its departure until the moment when, between the vessel's bow and the nearest petal of the one towards which it is sailing, nothing remains but a tiny glowing gap of blue.

I had to go back to the hotel, as Robert and I were going out to dinner at Rivebelle and my grandmother insisted that, on such occasions, I take an hour's rest on my bed, a siesta which the Balbec doctor soon ordered me to extend to all other evening as well.

To go back into the hotel, there was now no need to leave **the esplanade**, walk round the back and enter by the main vestibule: by a change of time-table analogous to Combray's Saturday, **when lunch was one hour early, the midsummer days** had become so long that, when **the tables were being laid** for dinner at the Grand-Hôtel of Balbec, the sun was still high in the sky, making it feel like afternoon tea-time.



**Aussi les grandes fenêtres vitrées et à coulisses restaient-elles ouvertes** de plain-pied avec la digue. Je n'avais qu'à enjamber un mince cadre de bois pour me trouver dans la salle à manger que je quittais aussitôt pour prendre l'ascenseur.

En passant devant le bureau **j'adressai un sourire au directeur, et sans l'ombre de dégoût, en recueillis un dans sa figure** que, depuis que j'étais à Balbec, mon attention compréhensive injectait et transformait peu à peu comme une préparation d'histoire naturelle. Ses traits m'étaient devenus courants, chargés d'un sens médiocre, mais intelligible comme une écriture qu'on lit et ne ressemblaient plus en rien à **ces caractères bizarres, intolérables que son visage m'avait présentés ce premier jour**, où j'avais vu devant moi un personnage maintenant oublié, ou, si je parvenais à l'évoquer, méconnaissable, difficile à identifier avec la personnalité insignifiante et polie dont il **n'était** que la caricature, hideuse et sommaire. Sans la timidité ni la tristesse du soir de mon arrivée, je sonnai le lift qui ne restait plus silencieux pendant que je m'élevais à côté de lui dans l'ascenseur, **comme dans une cage thoracique mobile** qui se fût déplacée le long de la colonne montante, mais me répétait : « Il n'y a plus autant de monde comme il y a un mois.

**And so the great sliding windows were kept open** from the ground. I had but to step across a low wooden sill to find myself in the dining-room, through which I walked and straight across to the lift.

As I passed the office **I addressed a smile to the manager**, and with no shudder of disgust gathered one for myself from his face which, since I had been at Balbec, my comprehensive study of it was injecting and transforming, little by little, like a natural history preparation. His features had become familiar to me, charged with a meaning that was of no importance but still intelligible, like a script which one can read, and had ceased in any way to resemble these queer, intolerable characters which his face had presented to me on that first day, when I had seen before me a personage now forgotten, or, if I succeeded in recalling him, unrecognisable, difficult to identify with this insignificant and polite personality of which the other **was** but a caricature, a hideous and rapid sketch. Without either the shyness or the sadness of the evening of my arrival I rang for the attendant, who no longer stood in silence while I rose by his side in the lift **as in a mobile thoracic cage** propelled upwards along its ascending pillar, but repeated: "There aren't the people now there were a month back.

**And, as the tall sliding glass-doors**, which opened right on to the esplanade, **stayed wide open**, all I had to do was step over a low wooden frame, straight into the dining-room, then walk directly to the lift.

As I passed the office, **I gave the manager a smile and received one in return**, signalled by his face, which, since the beginning of our stay at Balbec, my studious attentiveness had been injecting and gradually transforming as though it was a specimen in natural history. The features of his face had become nondescript, expressive of a meaning which, though mediocre, was as intelligible as handwriting one can read; they no longer resembled **the outlandish and unbearable characters printed on this face as I had seen it on our first day**, when I had been confronted by a personage now forgotten – or at least, if I ever contrived to remember him, now unrecognisable – and difficult to identify in this polite and insignificant person, of whom the other **had been** only a caricature, hideous and summary. Freed of the shyness and distress of the evening of my arrival, I rang for the 'lift', who did not now observe unbroken silence as we ascended together, **as though inside a mobile rib-cage** gliding upwards along the vertical column, but kept saying, 'Not as many people about now as a month ago.

On va commencer à s'en aller, les jours baissent. » Il disait cela, non que ce fût vrai, mais parce qu'ayant un engagement pour une partie plus chaude de la côte, il aurait voulu nous voir partir tous le plus tôt possible afin que **l'hôtel fermât** et qu'il eût quelques jours à lui, avant de « rentrer » dans sa nouvelle place. Rentrer et « nouvelle » n'étaient du reste pas des expressions contradictoires car, pour le lift, « rentrer » était la forme usuelle du verbe « entrer ». La seule chose qui m'étonnât était qu'il condescendît à dire « place », car il appartenait à ce prolétariat moderne qui désire effacer dans le langage **la trace du régime de la domesticité**. Du reste, au bout d'un instant, il m'apprit que dans la « situation » où il allait « rentrer », il aurait une plus jolie « tunique » et un meilleur « traitement » ; les mots « livrée » et « gages » lui paraissaient désuets et inconvenants. Et comme, par une contradiction absurde, le vocabulaire a, malgré tout, chez les « patrons », survécu à la conception de l'inégalité, je comprenais toujours mal ce que me disait le lift. Ainsi la seule chose qui m'intéressât était de savoir si ma grand-mère était à l'hôtel. Or, prévenant mes questions, le lift me disait : « Cette dame vient de sortir de chez vous. » J'y étais toujours pris, je croyais que c'était ma grand-mère.

"They're beginning to go now; the days are drawing in." He said this not because there was any truth in it but because, having an engagement, presently, for a warmer part of the coast, he would have liked us all to leave, so that **the hotel could be shut up** and he have a few days to himself before 'rejoining' in his new place. 'Rejoin' and 'new' were not, by the way, incompatible terms, since, for the lift-boy, 'rejoin' was the usual form of the verb 'to join.' The only thing that surprised me was that he condescended to say 'place,' for he belonged to that modern proletariat which seeks to efface from our language **every trace of the rule of domesticity**. A moment later, however, he informed me that in the 'situation' which he was about to 'rejoin,' he would have a smarter 'tunic' and a better 'salary,' the words 'livery' and 'wages' sounding to him obsolete and unseemly. And as, by an absurd contradiction, the vocabulary has, through thick and thin, among us 'masters,' survived the conception of inequality, I was always failing to understand what the lift-boy said. For instance, the only thing that interested me was to know whether my grandmother was in the hotel. Now, forestalling my questions, the lift-boy would say to me: "That lady has just gone out from your rooms." I was invariably taken in; I supposed that he meant my grandmother.

Days getting shorter. They'll all start leaving soon.' He said this not because it was true, but because he had another job waiting for him on a warmer stretch of the coast and wished we would all go away as soon as possible, so that the hotel **would close** and he might have a few days to himself before 'recommencing' his 'new situation'. 'Recommencing' and 'new' were in no way contradictions for him, 'to recommence' being for him the normal form of the verb 'to start'. The only thing that surprised me in what he said was the word 'situation', for he belonged to the working classes of modern times, who try to remove from their speech **all reminder of the system of domestic service to which they belong**. He also told me that in this 'situation' where he was about to 'recommence', he would have a handsomer 'tunic' and higher 'remunerations', the words 'uniform' and 'wages' seeming antiquated and unseemly to him. Vocabulary having, by an absurd contradiction, outlived the idea of inequality in the minds of the 'bosses', I always had trouble in understanding what the 'lift' said. For instance, if what I really wanted to know was whether my grandmother was in or out, the 'lift' would anticipate my questions and say, 'The lady has just left your rooms.' This caught me out every time without fail: I always thought he meant my grandmother,

« Non, cette dame qui est je crois employée chez vous. » Comme dans l'ancien langage bourgeois, qui devrait bien être aboli, une cuisinière ne s'appelle pas une employée, je pensais un instant : « Mais il se trompe, nous ne possédons ni usine, ni employés. » Tout d'un coup, je me rappelais que le nom d'employé est comme le port de la moustache pour les garçons de café, une satisfaction d'amour-propre donnée aux domestiques et que cette dame qui venait de sortir était Françoise (probablement en visite à la cafétéria ou en train de regarder coudre la femme de chambre de la dame belge), satisfaction qui ne suffisait pas encore au lift car il disait volontiers en s'apitoyant sur sa propre classe : « chez l'ouvrier » ou « chez le petit », se servant du même singulier que Racine quand il dit : « le pauvre... ». Mais d'habitude, car mon zèle et ma timidité du premier jour étaient loin, je ne parlais plus au lift. C'était lui maintenant qui restait sans recevoir de réponses dans la courte traversée dont il filait les nœuds à travers l'hôtel, évidé comme un jouet et qui déployait autour de nous, étage par étage, ses ramifications de couloirs dans les profondeurs desquels la lumière se veloutait, se dégradait, amincissait les portes de communication ou les degrés des escaliers intérieurs qu'elle convertissait en cette ambre dorée,

"No, that lady; I think she's an employee of yours." As in the old speech of the middle classes, which ought really to be done away with, a cook is not called an employee, I thought for a moment: "But he must be mistaken. We don't own a factory; we haven't any employees." Suddenly I remembered that the title of 'employee' is, like the wearing of a moustache among waiters, a sop to their self-esteem given to servants, and realized that this lady who had just gone out must be Françoise (probably on a visit to the coffee-maker, or to watch the Belgian lady's little maid at her sewing), though even this sop did not satisfy the lift-boy, for he would say quite naturally, speaking pityingly of his own class, 'with the working man' or 'the small person,' using the same singular form as Racine when he speaks of 'the poor.' But as a rule, for my zeal and timidity of the first evening were now things of the past, I no longer spoke to the lift-boy. It was he now who stood there and received no answer during the short journey on which he threaded his way through the hotel, hollowed out inside like a toy, which extended round about us, floor by floor, the ramifications of its corridors in the depths of which the light grew velvety, lost its tone, diminished the communicating doors, the steps of the service stairs which it transformed into that amber haze,

'No, I mean that lady that's an employee of yours, I think.' A cook, at least in middle-class terminology of former times, soon no doubt to be abolished, never having been 'an employee', I would think for a moment; 'He's mistaken: we're not factory-owners – we don't have employees.' Then I remembered that the word 'employee' is as essential to the self-esteem of servants as wearing a moustache is to waiters in cafés, and realized that the 'lady' who had just left our rooms was Françoise (probably off to visit the buttry of to watch the young chambermaid sewing for the Belgian lady); though even this degree of self-esteem was insufficient for the 'lift', who, as he bemoaned the lot of his own class, also liked to say not 'workers' but 'the worker', not 'commoners' but 'the commoner', using the sort of singular with which Racine, meaning 'poor men', refers to 'the poor man'. Usually, however, since I had lost all my early eagerness and timidity, I no longer spoke to the 'lift'. He was the one who spoke without receiving an answer as he put his little craft to full speed ahead and, with his hand on the tiller, piloted us up through the hotel, which was like a hollow toy, and which, as storey replaced storey, deployed all about us its branching corridors, where distant light faded away into soft shadows, thinning down communicating doors and the faint steps of stairways, converting them into that golden amber,

inconsistante et mystérieuse comme un crépuscule, où Rembrandt découpe tantôt l'appui d'une fenêtre ou la manivelle d'un puits. Et à chaque étage une lueur d'or reflétée sur le tapis annonçait le coucher du soleil et la fenêtre des cabinets.

Je me demandais si les jeunes filles que je venais de voir habitaient Balbec et qui elles pouvaient être. Quand le désir est ainsi orienté vers une petite tribu humaine qu'il sélectionne, tout ce qui peut se rattacher à elle devient motif d'émotion, puis de rêverie. J'avais entendu une dame dire sur **la digue** : « C'est une amie de la petite Simonet » avec l'air de précision avantageuse de quelqu'un qui explique : « C'est le camarade inséparable du petit La Rochefoucauld. » **Et aussitôt on avait senti** sur la figure de la personne **à qui on apprenait** cela une curiosité de mieux regarder la personne favorisée qui était « amie de la petite Simonet ». Un privilège assurément qui ne paraissait pas donné à tout le monde. Car l'aristocratie est une chose relative. Et il y a des petits trous pas cher où le fils d'un marchand de meubles est prince des élégances et règne sur une cour comme un jeune prince de Galles. J'ai souvent cherché depuis à me rappeler comment avait résonné pour moi, sur la plage, ce nom de Simonet,

unsubstantial and mysterious as a twilight, in which Rembrandt picks out here and there a window-sill or a well-head. And on each landing a golden light reflected from the carpet indicated the setting sun and the lavatory window.

I asked myself whether the girls I had just seen lived at Balbec, and who they could be. When our desire is thus concentrated upon a little tribe of humanity which it singles out from the rest, everything that can be associated with that tribe becomes a spring of emotion and then of reflexion. I had heard a lady say on **the 'front'**: "She is a friend of the little Simonet girl" with that self-important air of inside knowledge, as who should say: "He is the inseparable companion of young La Rochefoucauld." **And immediately she had detected** on the face of the person **to whom she gave this information** a curiosity to see more of the favoured person who was 'a friend of the little Simonet.' A privilege, obviously, that did not appear to be granted to all the world. For aristocracy is a relative state. And there are plenty of inexpensive little holes and corners where the son of an upholsterer is the arbiter of fashion and reigns over a court like any young Prince of Wales. I have often since then sought to recall how it first sounded for me there on the beach, that name of Simonet,

as unsubstantial and mysterious as twilight, from which Rembrandt models a window-ledge or the handle of a well. And at each of these storeys, a golden glow on the carpet showed it was now sunset beyond the lavatory windows.

I wondered whether the girls I had seen lived in Balbec and who they might be. When the focus of our desire singles out a tiny human tribe, whatever may bear upon them in any way sets off an emotion in us, which then becomes a wondering day-dream. On **the esplanade** I had overheard a lady say, 'Yes, she's one of the friends of the Simonet girl,' with the smug, superior knowledge of the person in the know who says, 'Yes, he's very thick with the young Duc de La Rochefoucauld.' **I was instantly aware** of a look of curiosity on the face of **the person being told** this, a quickened interest in somebody who was so favoured as to be 'one of the friends of the Simonet girl'. It was clear this was a privilege not open to all and sundry. Aristocracy is relative: there are all sorts of inexpensive little resorts where the son of a furniture salesman may be the arbiter of all things elegant, holding court like a young Prince of Wales. Since that moment when I first heard the name 'Simonet', I have often tried over the years to remember how it must have sounded there on the esplanade,

encore incertain alors dans sa forme que j'avais mal distinguée, et aussi quant à sa signification, à la désignation par lui de telle personne, ou peut-être de telle autre ; en somme empreint de ce vague et de cette nouveauté si émouvants pour nous dans la suite, quand ce nom, dont les lettres sont à chaque seconde plus profondément gravées en nous par notre attention incessante, est devenu (ce qui ne devait arriver pour moi, à l'égard de la petite Simonet, que quelques années plus tard) le premier vocable que nous retrouvions, soit au moment du réveil, soit après un évanouissement, même avant la notion de l'heure qu'il est, du lieu où nous sommes, presque avant le mot « je », comme si **l'être** qu'il nomme était plus nous que nous-même, et comme si après quelques moments d'inconscience, la trêve qui expire avant toute autre est celle pendant laquelle on ne pensait pas à lui. Je ne sais pourquoi je me dis dès le premier jour que le nom de Simonet devait être celui d'une des jeunes filles ; je ne cessai plus de me demander comment je pourrais connaître la famille Simonet ; et cela par des gens qu'elle jugeât supérieurs à elle-même, ce qui ne devait pas être difficile si ce n'étaient que de petites grues du peuple, pour qu'elle ne pût avoir une idée dédaigneuse de moi.

still quite indefinite as to its form, which I had failed to distinguish, and also as to its significance, to the designation by it of such and such a person, or perhaps of some one else; imprinted, in fact, with that vagueness, that novelty which we find so moving in the sequel, when the name whose letters are every moment engraved more deeply on our hearts by our incessant thought of them has become (though this was not to happen to me with the name of the 'little Simonet' until several years had passed) the first coherent sound that comes to our lips, whether on waking from sleep or on recovering from a swoon, even before the idea of what o'clock it is or of where we are, almost before the word 'I,' as though **the person** whom it names were more 'we' even than we ourselves, and as though after a brief spell of unconsciousness the phase that is the first of all to dissolve is that in which we were not thinking of her. I do not know why I said to myself from the first that the name Simonet must be that of one of the band of girls; from that moment I never ceased to ask myself how I could get to know the Simonet family, get to know them, moreover, through people whom they considered superior to themselves (which ought not to be difficult if the girls were only common little 'bounders') so that they might not form a disdainful idea of me.

in my uncertainty about its shape, which I had not quite noticed, about its meaning and the identity of this or that person to whom it might belong: full of the imprecision and foreignness which we later find so moving, when our unremitting attention to this name, with its letters more deeply imprinted in us with each passing second, has turned it (as the name of 'the Simonet girl' was to be turned for me, but not until several years later) into the first word to come consciousness, whether on waking each morning or after fainting, even before any inkling of the time of day, or where we are, almost before the word 'I' itself, as though **the one** it names were more us than we are ourselves, as though the first respite always to end after a few moments' oblivion were the respite of not thinking of it. Why I decided, there and then, that the name 'Simonet' must belong to one of the gang of girls I have no idea: how to get to know the Simonet family became my constant preoccupation, and especially how to be introduced to them by people they would see as above themselves – which should not prove difficult, if the girls were just vacuous and immoral specimens from the working-classes – so that they could not look down on me:

Car on ne peut avoir de connaissance parfaite, on ne peut pratiquer l'absorption complète de qui vous dédaigne, tant qu'on n'a pas vaincu ce dédain. Or, chaque fois que l'image de femmes si différentes pénètre en nous, à moins que l'oubli ou la concurrence d'autres images ne l'élimine, nous n'avons de repos que nous n'ayons converti ces étrangères en quelque chose qui soit pareil à nous, notre âme étant à cet égard douée du même genre de réaction et d'activité que notre organisme physique, lequel ne peut tolérer l'immixtion dans son sein d'un corps étranger sans qu'il s'exerce aussitôt à digérer et assimiler l'intrus ; la petite Simonet devait être la plus jolie de toutes – celle, d'ailleurs, qui, me semblait-il, aurait pu devenir ma maîtresse, car elle était la seule qui à deux ou trois reprises, détournant à demi la tête, avait paru **prendre conscience** de mon fixe regard. Je demandai au lift s'il ne connaissait pas à Balbec des Simonet. N'aimant pas à dire qu'il ignorait quelque chose il répondit qu'il lui semblait avoir entendu causer de ce nom-là. Arrivé au dernier étage, je le priai de me faire apporter les dernières listes d'étrangers.

For one cannot have a perfect knowledge, one cannot effect the complete absorption of a person who disdains one, so long as one has not overcome her disdain. And since, whenever the idea of women who are so different from us penetrates our senses, unless we are able to forget it or the competition of other ideas eliminates it, we know no rest until we have converted those aliens into something that is compatible with ourself, our heart being in this respect endowed with the same kind of reaction and activity as our physical organism, which cannot abide the infusion of any foreign body into its veins without at once striving to digest and assimilate it: the little Simonet must be the prettiest of them all—she who, I felt moreover, might yet become my mistress, for she was the only one who, two or three times half-turning her head, had appeared **to take cognisance** of my fixed stare. I asked the lift-boy whether he knew of any people at Balbec called Simonet. Not liking to admit that there was anything which he did not know, he replied that he seemed to have heard the name somewhere. As we reached the highest landing I told him to have the latest lists of visitors sent up to me.

perfect knowledge of those who disdain you, like complete absorption of any such person, is impossible unless one has overcome that disdain. Every time we are assailed by images of women very different from ourself, unless these images are eliminated by being forgotten or overlaid by others, we can have no peace of mind until we have converted these strangers into something more like us, the self in that respect being similar in its action and reactions to the physical organism, which is incapable of accepting a foreign body within itself, without immediately setting to work to digest and assimilate the intruder. The Simonet girl must be the prettiest of them, and also, it seemed to me, the one who might be able to be my mistress, since it she was the only one who, by turning slightly away two or three times, **has appeared aware** of my staring eyes. So I asked the 'lift' whether he knew of anyone in Balbec called Simonet. Being reluctant to admit ignorance of anything, he replied that he thought he had 'heard tell of some such a name'. When we reached the top floor, I asked him to have them send up the latest list of newcomers.