THE LANGUAGE OF THE SOCIAL MILIEU
OF MARCEL PROUST

A Thesis Presented for the
Degree of Master of Arts
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Approved by:
La suppression des mots humains, loin d'y laisser régner la fantaisie,... l'en avait éliminée; jamais le langage parlé ne fut si inflexiblement nécessaire... c'était comme au commencement du monde,... dans ce monde fermé à tout le reste, construit par la logique d'un créateur et où ils ne seraient jamais que tous les deux: cette sonate

Du côté de chez Swann II

Et de même que certains êtres sont les derniers témoins d'une forme de vie que la nature a abandonnée, je me demandais si la musique n'était pas l'exemple unique de ce qu'aurait pu être... s'il n'y avait pas eu l'invention du langage, la formation des mots, l'analyse des idées -- la communication des âmes. Elle est comme une possibilité qui n'a pas eu de suite... mais ce retour à l'analyse était si enivrant qu'au sortir de ce paradis le contact des êtres... me semblait d'une insignifiance extraordinaire.

La Prisonnière II

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ABBREVIATIONS

S - Du côté de chez Swann
J F - À l'ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs
G - Du côté de Guermantes
SG - Sodome et Gomorrhe
P - La Prisonnière
TR - Le Temps retrouvé

The Roman numerals immediately following the names of the works indicate the volume of these works.

The edition used for this study is Œuvres complètes de Marcel Proust, À la recherche du temps perdu, Paris Nouvelle revue française (NRF), 1930.
CHAPTER I - THE LINGUISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS OF PROUST

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century with the initiating of strictly scientific research in Romance languages the study of linguistics has undergone considerable evolution. Today the modern French school, founded by Ferdinand de Saussure, is sociological, being based on the idea that human speech is a social factor as well as a psychological one. With such an approach and that of the idealistic school of Karl Vossler, which believes that language, being the creative organ of thought, and consequently, the soul of peoples, we discern the joining of linguistics and literary study, which now more frequently than ever coincide in a common orientation.

While Proust has developed techniques to penetrate the subconscious and has enveloped his ideas in a well-turned style, he has perforce been preoccupied with language. Historically as a stylist, the author's role is well defined, but Proust, a man of literature interested in language, evinces perhaps unconsciously the credo of this modern school and is notable for combining these two aspects in his work.
In \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} the facts of language form an integral part of the study of a social epoch. Proust has shown its importance as a factor in the social structure which changes with the variations of society in time and place. So important is the role, that his monumental work could almost be described as a large-scale language experiment.

\textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} has a profound connection with its period. Proust manifests himself as a reporter, not only of social manifestations in the ordinary sense, but of the arts and sciences. He is cognizant of the transformations in the art of writing, in the art of painting, in the art of music, and this is the newer point - in language portrayal. For example, \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} represents the art of the new impressionistic school, and popular tastes in music are discussed in the salon of \textit{maisons} verdurin. Because of Proust's interest in language as well as in the other aspects of his society, his work is a valuable document which records the trends of thought of his epoch.

I am going to study this relation of language to the social milieu depicted by Proust.

With his highly developed sensitivity, Proust is concerned with language, as he probes into diversified

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1. See Chernowitz, Maurice E., \textit{Proust and Painting}.
2. See Hier, Florence, \textit{La Musique dans l'œuvre de Marcel Proust}.
fields. Hence he shows an awareness of the fact that linguistics is not an isolated area, but is allied with philosophy, heredity and social environment. For example, he observes in the language of "les jeunes filles de la petite bande" at Balbec, a rapport between the language of their family, their friends, and themselves. He says:

Malgré tout, la voix de ces jeunes filles accusait déjà nettement le parti pris que chacune de ces petites personnes avait sur la vie, parti pris si individuel que c'est user d'un mot bien trop général que de dire pour l'une: "elle prend tout en plaisantant"; pour l'autre: "elle va d'affirmation en affirmation", pour la troisième: "elle s'arrête d'une hésitation expectante". Les traits de notre visage ne sont guère que des gestes devenus, par l'habitude définitifs.... Le même nos intonations contiennent notre philosophie de la vie, ce que la personne se dit à tout moment sur les choses. Sans doute ces traits n'étaient pas qu'à ces jeunes filles. Ils étaient à leurs parents. Les parents ne fournissent pas que ce geste habituel que sont les traits du visage et de la voix, mais aussi certaines manières de parler, certaines phrases consacrées, qui presque aussi inconscientes qu'une intonation, presque aussi profondes, indiquent, comme elle, un point de vue sur la vie. 3

Proust manifests his interest in the phases of linguistic evolution when discussing the errors in the speech of Françoise, the cook at Combray. When Proust reproaches himself for saying these cruel words to Françoise, "Vous êtes excellente... vous êtes gentille, vous avez mille qualités, mais vous en êtes au même point que le jour où vous êtes arrivée à Paris, aussi bien pour vous connaître en choses de toilette que pour bien prononcer les mots et ne pas raire de cuirs", the author adds that this accusation is particularly stupid, for these French words of which we are so proud of pronouncing exactly are themselves slips of speech made by Gaulish mouths who pronounced Saxon or Latin obscurely, our language being none other than the defective pronunciation of several others.

Proust shows his interest in the details of linguistic geography when he discusses the differences between the speech of Françoise and her daughter, who came from a region very close to her mother's, but which was dissimilar because of the nature of the soil, culture, patois, and because of certain peculiarities of its inhabitants. Inasmuch as the speech of the daughter was unlike her mother's the speech of the mother

(Françoise) was not the same as that of her grandmother, a native of Boisleau-le-Fin, a region near the birthplace of Françoise, for these two patois, he says, differed slightly. Proust actually employs the term "géographie linguistique". For example, upon discovering the cook conversing with a chamber maid, who came from the same region and spoke the same patois as she, the narrator says, "ces pittoresques études de géographie linguistique et de camaraderie ancillaire se poursuivirent chaque semaine dans la cuisine". 6

In the study of Bergotte, the writer observes the language of the family group and illustrates the fact that, even though removed from a social group such as the family, we still retain traces of its language traits throughout our lives. The narrator states that peculiarities of "élocution" 7 which existed in only feeble indications in the conversation of Bergotte did not really belong to him, for in later acquaintance with the brothers and sisters of the writer, one discovered the same characteristics, more accentuated, in their speech. It was "quelque chose de brusque et de rauque dans les derniers mots d'une phrase gaie, quelque chose d'affaibli et d'expirant à la fin d'une phrase triste". 8

7. Use of quotes will be limited to citations from the author.
Proust draws a striking parallel between the influence on the young writers of his times, and in turn the influence of certain writers on Bergotte. Perhaps these young men, he says, had never known Bergotte. But his method of thinking, "inoculée" in them, had developed modifications in their syntax and accent. Thus, Bergotte, if he owed nothing to anyone in his style of writing, owed his manner of speaking to one of his old friends, a marvelous conversationalist whom he imitated. It was not only with the members of his family, but with certain writers of his time that other characteristics of his speech were common.

Believing that the human word is related to man's soul, Proust is of the opinion that man's manner of speaking may be influenced by his style of writing. For example, the narrator observes an exact correspondence with the parts of Bergotte's books, where his form becomes both poetic and musical, with the writer's speech. In the following passage it is shown that language and style cannot be separated:

Bergotte avait l'air de parler à contre-sens, psalmodiant certains mots et, s'il poursuivait au-dessous d'eux une seule image, les filant sans intervalle comme un même son, avec une fatigante monotonie.

De sorte qu'un débit prétentieux, emphatique et monotone était le signe de la qualité esthétique de ses propos et l'effet, dans sa conversation, de ce même pouvoir qui produisait dans ses livres la suite des images de l'harmonie.

As previously mentioned, Proust is a very sensitive person, and his highly developed sensitivity even extends to language. For example, he explores intonation and quantities of vowels and consonants. The author, making distinctions between the length of vowels says apropos of the word "odieux":

À la maison j'avais toujours entendu, dans odieux, prononcer l'o long - audieux, - mais m. et Mme Swann disaient l'odieux, en faisant l'o bref.

Here one notes the use of italics, a usage common to many other language examples cited by Proust. This is a phase of the author's desire to stress a specific phenomenon with a kind of scientific curiosity.

Before considering the characters of Proust, we must say a word about his psychology. We should be aware of the importance attached to memory and the unconscious, for the author's idea of the unconscious is inseparable from his theories of memory and habit. What we call memory is, for Proust, a completely

10. J F 1, p. 165.
11. J F 1, p. 113.
uncontrolled and uncontrollable series of the images of the past, governed by habit. Buried in our unconscious there lie other memories which reveal themselves to us but rarely. To Proust the past is always within us, and separated from our consciousness only by our inability to resurrect it. But through the agency of some accidental association these remembrances are reconstructed in all their details. This resurrection of the past explains why the characters of Proust are the expression of his "soi". Pierre-Quint says that "C'est dans cet inconscient que Proust puisse comme dans une cachette les trésors merveilleux qu'il analyse ensuite à la lumière de l'intelligence." He adds: "Proust descendait dans leur conscience guidé par leurs propres phrases comme le mineur suit dans l'obscurité à travers les galeries la trace des filons."\(^{12}\)

Considering his characters in this light, we can very well understand why he is interested in the most ordinary conversations in which are discerned the most revealing signs, errors, and mechanisms. The realistic presentation of the speech of his characters is one of the most original aspects of Proust's work, for he notes with evident interest numerous devices of pronunciation,


\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 163.
enunciation, and phraseology. Interest in these traits is, therefore, an essential part of his method of character study. Proust, a member of the modern school of language, believes that it is of social importance. His love of language is related to the desire to give his work linguistic realism. For example, he delights in designating and offering technical explanations of the favorite words and expressions of his characters. His more scientific preoccupation is manifested in the etymologies of Brichot, the academician.

Cognizant of the linguistic interests of other authors, Proust makes relevant remarks about the speech of his characters, who in their speech may imitate the language of the characters of other writers. À propos of the use of the negative by the elevator boy, he will cite the example of Molière. To the narrator's question "À quelle heure serez-vous revenu?", the boy answers "J'ai pas", the comment there being that the "liftier", "poussant à l'extrême la règle édictée par Bélise d'éviter la récidive du pas avec le ne, se contentait toujours d'une seule négative." This "règle édictée par Bélise" refers to the Bélise of Molière's Les Femmes savantes.  

15. See Molière, Les Femmes savantes, act II, scene VI.
In the discussion of the social milieu which Proust depicts, it is necessary in the beginning for the reader to study the author's own background as well as his mentality and interests.

The writer was born into the upper bourgeoisie in 1871, his father, Dr. Adrien Proust, being already eminent in his profession, not only as a private practitioner and a hospital physician, but as a professor of the faculty of medicine in the University of Paris. Descended from a staunch Catholic family long established at Chartres, Adrien Proust had married an educated young Jewess of the prosperous family of Weil. 16

Literary-minded, from his earliest years the author was a passionate reader. He used to spend the long summer afternoons reading the novels of George Sand, Theophile Gautier and Dickens, the poems of Mallarme, and the Arabian Nights. 17 The only school of writers he never appreciated was the naturalistic, which was flourishing during his childhood and early youth. However, he did follow that part of the naturalistic doctrine which stressed the importance of documentation. Proust obtained much of his material from intuitions.

but he sought the details with which to build these sections in the same way as the naturalists, with note-book in hand.

Mr. Spagnoli believes that perhaps to a certain extent Proust’s social position contributed to his distaste for a literature that dealt largely with the proletariat, of which he knew little or nothing. That he could take an interest in social questions, however, is manifested by his admiration for George Sand and Tolstoi. He admired these writers for their literary qualities as well. Besides his intellectual interest in the writings of George Eliot and in the essays of Emerson and in the work of Muskin, of whom he was a disciple, Proust had an intense interest in life, especially in the life of the upper classes of society. He was a passionate reader of memoirs. He studied Saint-Simon’s Memoires because of the data they gave on the seventeenth-century predecessors of men and women whom Proust saw about him during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

At the Lycée Condorcet, one of the oldest and most famous schools in Paris which had been the training ground of many distinguished statesmen, diplomats,

journalists, and poets, Proust began his school days. Although some of his classmates have said that the author did not have a striking intellect, he was considered a serious student. However, his poor health made his attendance erratic. While at the Lycée he made many friends, among them being Robert Dreyfus, Jean de Tiran, Louis de la Salle, and Léon Brunschvicq.

Berrick Léon says that while Proust was at Condorcet, his appreciation of language was exceptional and his conversation reflected from term to term a series of special words he had but lately added to his vocabulary. He used many recondite and literary phrases and enjoyed employing a string of picturesque adjectives. His speech was characterized by the long and complex structure of its sentences. This involved discursiveness soon became apparent in his literary style.19

As early as fifteen, Proust frequented the drawing room of the famous beauty, Mme Straus, who entertained people of intellect and wit. Here Proust astonished the patrons by his sparkling conversation and ceremonious manners. The author took delight in imitating members of the salons which he frequented.

19. Ibid., pp. 24-25.
Capturing their mannerisms and peculiarities of speech with an acute exactness, Proust was a clever mimic. The keen observations made in the salons which he visited provided Proust with data for the realistic character portrayals of *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

Although not born to the aristocracy, Proust in 1895 was already near the top of the social ladder and was being received in circles, which, as a youth, he had only dreamed of penetrating. The tone of this society was set by the arrogant Count de Montesquiou who ruled with snobbery over a certain group of the so-called fashionable world. Montesquiou, being a prince of literary amateurs and a dabbler in poetry, influenced the young boy who had collaborated in several reviews and had already looked upon literature as a career.

Discovering no better way of commanding the attention of the Montesquiou coterie, Proust was determined to imitate his model and began to participate in literature in that super-refined manner which may be attributed as much to the atmosphere of the society he frequented as to his own esthetic nature.

one can acquire more information about Proust's activities at this period by reading the Correspondance générale de Marcel Proust, compiled by Paul Brach and Dr. Robert Proust, brother of the author. Among Proust's correspondents and friends were people of literary fame such as Robert de Montesquiou, mentioned previously; the Countess de Noailles, a poet of renown; Sydney Schiff, who wrote under the pseudonym, Stephen Hudson; Paul Souday, author of works on Proust, Gide, and Valéry; Ernest Robert Curtius, a German critic; Mme Straus, who had furnished Proust with many traits for the Duchess de Guermantes; and Mme Scheikewitch, who is remembered not only for the great friendship between her and Proust, but for the manner in which the author revealed to her the whole conception of his work when Le côté de chez Swann first appeared.

Although Proust is accurate in his treatment of linguistics, there is no evidence in the letters that the author had correspondence with any linguists, nor is there mention of linguistic authorities.

Much has been said about the writer, but assuredly not the last word. In Douglas Alden's book, Marcel Proust and His French Critics, one can note, since 1913, both during the author's life and
posthumously, that nothing has been said about the author’s contribution to linguistics.

Unlike Balzac, who, in his Comédie humaine, runs the gamut of all classes of French society, the aristocracy of the restoration, the rich bourgeoisie, the "people" of Paris, the aristocracy and the bourgeois of the province, peasants and men of all trades, Proust restricts himself to the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century French salon.

Unlike Balzac, who was extremely scrupulous in collecting details to render his characters more authentic and who was obliged to make special expeditions to find material for his work, Proust’s acquaintance with the classes he presented was part and parcel of his everyday life, for by the time he was twenty-five the author had penetrated into almost every social group.

Unlike Balzac, who did not have much formal education nor a wide acquaintance with literary and artistic friends, Proust had an academic background of language. For we are dealing with a man well educated, who had frequented the company of the so-called intellectuals, who is sensitive to others, and who by nature, is prepared to observe with finesse.
Unlike Balzac, Proust, a psychologist of the school of Freud and Bergson, by means of some accidental association which evokes the memories of the past, can recreate his characters in the smallest details without notebook or pencil.

Unlike Balzac, Proust renders an explanation of the language of his characters. He takes great pains, for example, in giving us a parenthetical discussion of some word which his character uses and makes detailed references to their intonation and gestures.
CHAPTER II - Proust's Conception of Social Strata

In his analysis of an individual, Proust seems to be constantly aware of the social class to which that individual belongs. Each of his characters, too, is conscious of this attachment to a particular class, the nobility, the bourgeoisie, or the "people". Each of these groups will be discussed in later chapters.

He believes also that an awareness of class distinctions is rendered necessary by the inescapable force of atavism. The individual inherits these class traits. He may be conscious and proud of them like Mme de Marsantes of whom Proust says that her soul was filled by atavism with the frivolity of court life and like the Baron de Charlus, who emulates his ancestor of two or three centuries earlier.

Aware that both atavism and social environment are cohesive forces, Proust discerns in a unit, such as the family, a vocabulary, differing from the general vocabulary of the larger social group to which it belongs, mainly by the use of certain words in special senses. There may be a family intonation, as for example, in the family of Bergotte. So important is this factor in shaping the language of the individual

that even when removed from direct association with
his elder relations, the individual, as he grows
older, discovers that he instinctively adopts for
certain situations of adult life the words and tones
which his parents had used before him. For example:

Au moment où ce nouveau moi se
formait, il trouvait son langage
tout prêt dans le souvenir de
celui... qu'on m'avait tenu,
que j'avais maintenant à tenir
aux autres, et qui sortait tout
naturellement de ma bouche,
soit que je l'évoquasse par
mimétisme et association de
souvenirs, soit aussi que
les délicates et mystérieuses
incantations du pouvoir
génésique eussent en moi,
a mon insu, dessiné comme
sur la feuille d'une plante,
les mêmes intonations, les
mêmes gestes, les mêmes attitudes
qu'avaient eus ceux dont
j'étais sorti. 2

Proust's linguistic and social groups are
neither fixed in their limits, stable in their
composition, nor homogeneous. There is interpenetration,
since the same individual belongs to more than one
group at a time and may even pass from one to another.
A person may gain admittance to a higher class, but will
always be an outsider, like Odette de Recy (Mme Swann),
for her traits are not typical of the upper bourgeoisie

or the nobility, these strata to which she aspires, but are characteristic of her lower-class origins. However, it is through language that the individual is truly conscious of belonging to any one collectivity, so much so, indeed, that when he has the opportunity of using a phrase not in current use in his class, he says it with affectation or conscious imitation.

Proust believes that sub-classes exist. Not all nobles have all the class traits in common, and among the bourgeoisie one observes different categories, each distinguishable by its type of wit, its peculiarity of expression, of pronunciation, of greeting people.

The author's attitude towards snobbery must be particularly noted. An attempt to enter smart society, with the accompanying scorn for those in a lower position is the form it usually takes in his work. Among the nobility itself are found different types of snobbery typified by the provincial aristocracy such as the Marquis de Cambremer and those of Parisian high society. We can discern it among the bourgeois, the Verdunins and their "petit noyau", in Bergotte, the writer, as well as in Frangoise, the cook at Combray. For Proust is aware that this fault is ever-present.

socially, because the struggle for superiority spreads from the upper strata to the very lowest. It is regarded as highly desirable to express with passion one's allegiance to a certain group. The individual not only chooses mannerisms but certain forms of expression in order to show that he knows the verbal hall-mark of that class and desires to adopt it as part of his speech. Condemning snobbery for its insincerity and hypocrisy, Proust's keen observation was able to detect it and to point it out as one of the greatest vices of the society in which he lived.

To summarize, Proust has shown that an individual must necessarily belong to a certain class for hereditary and social reasons. Those inherent interests extend into the family and other sub-groups to which we belong. He not only believes, however, in the influence of the social and biological factors, but also in that of the outside environment. It is in light of these facts that we study the phases of language of the three main social divisions which Proust depicts, the nobility, the bourgeoisie, and the "people".
CHAPTER III - THE LANGUAGE OF THE ARISTOCRACY

It is difficult to organize and analyse the language according to intonation, vocabulary, and such, for Proust observes these phenomena as they may occur in each person. Therefore, I am classifying by characters rather than by language categories.

Before discussing specific details relative to the speech of the coterie of the Guermantes, representing aristocratic society, it is necessary to observe the spirit of the salon and the types of conversation found there, for the salon sets the pattern for the individual who is influenced by this way of life.

What the Duchess de Guermantes admired most in her salon was not intelligence but wit. Her milieu liked neither pedantry nor buffoonery. For example, the narrator says:

C'était l'infiltration de l'esprit Guermantes qui l'avait fait les classer ainsi (Briocot and Mistr). Jamais il n'eût osé présenter ni l'un ni l'autre à la duchesse, sentant d'avance de quel air elle eût accueilli les tirades de Briocot, les calomnies d'Elstir, l'esprit des Guermantes rangant les propos prétentieux et prolongés du genre sérieux ou du genre farceur dans la plus intolérable imbecilité. 1

The milieu of the Guermantes considered as a bore even an eminent minister who was a bit solemn and who liked puns. It seemed that the Guermantes desired to have men of talent frequent their salon, but they neither respected nor understood them.

Proust says that if one finds other literary circles where everyone has the same manner of pronunciation, of enunciation, and consequently, of thinking, as in the salon of the Guermantes, it is not certain that originality would be any greater, nor would there be an obstacle to imitation, in other such milieux.

Minicry, a diversion of the salons, was practiced in the coterie of the Guermantes, and its members applauded imitation. When the Duchess mimics the Duke de Limoges, the Guermantes say with admiration, "Ah! on peut dire que vous le tenez" or que tu le tiens.4

Another preoccupation of the salon of the Guermantes was the discussion of ethics and morals. For example, the narrator says:

Dans les moments identiques on voyait tout d'un coup les Guermantes prendre un ton presque aussi vieillard, aussi bonhomme.

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et à cause de leur charme plus grand, plus attendrissant que celui de la marquise pour dire d'une domestique: "On sent qu'elle a un bon fond, c'est une fille qui n'est pas commune...."
À ces moments-là le génie de la famille se faisait intonation.  

The Duchess, considered by many to be the most beautiful, the most virtuous, and most intelligent woman of her milieu, liked to be surrounded by the so-called "hommes d'élite" provided they were single. Although desirous of being encircled by the most intelligent and witty people, the Duchess herself was a pseudo-intellect. In a conversation where Hugo, Zola, and the Dreyfus affair are being discussed, one can observe this quality when she says to Mme de Varancon:

Mais Zola n'est pas un réaliste, madame! C'est un poète!" dit Mme de Guermantes, s'inspirant des études critiques qu'elle a lues dans ces dernières années et les adaptant à son génie personnel.  

Proust states that in her accent, in the choice of her words, one felt that the "fond" of the conversation of the Duchess came directly from Guermantes. In pronunciation as well as in choice of vocabulary, Mme de Guermantes exhibits affectation.

5. G III, p. 83.
See G III, p. 162 for choice of word "poison".
See G II, p. 33 for use of "plumitif".
desirous of putting on airs and displaying sophistication, she takes pleasure in imitating the pronunciation of the lower classes. Speaking of Mme de Villeparisis, she says:

Mais voyons, elle est venue reciter avec un bouquet de lis dans la main et d'autres lis "sa" robe. (Mme de Guermantes mettait, comme Mme de Villeparisis, de l'affectation à prononcer certains acts d'une façon tres paysanne...

For the most part when discussing literary works the duchess was capable of choosing the pronunciation which seemed to her the most Île-de-France or the most Champenois, in order to add, as Iroust says, "une recherche artiste". 9

The duchess often uses the "calemour", a form of wit typical of the Guermantes as well as of the lower classes. For example, she tells Swann:

--- Mais mon petit charles, je m'ennuie après votre photographie.
--- Ah! extinctor dracinis labror
Anubis, dit Swann.
--- Oui, c'est si joli ce que vous m'avez dit là-dessus en comparaison du Saint-Georges de Véniss. Mais je ne comprends pas pourquoi Anubis.
--- Comment est celui qui est ancêtre de babal? demanda M. de Guermantes.
--- Vous voudriez voir sa baballe, dit Mme de Guermantes d'un air sec, pour montrer qu'elle se préparait elle-même ce calemour. 10

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See G III, p. 114 for another "calemour" of the duchess.
It is difficult to determine whether to include the question of intonation with language. The author, being interested in character delineation, feels that intonation and language, being part and parcel of a realistic character portrayal, are inseparable. For the same reason it is hard to draw a line between gesture and intonation in his characters. An illustration is the portrayal of the Duke Basin de Guermantes, an "anti-dreyfusard", who like the majority of the Guermantes, with his noble pretenses, is a snob. For example, the Duke pronounces these words "quand on s'appelle le marquis de Saint-Loup" with pomposity, knowing, says Proust, that it was a greater thing to be called "le duc de Guermantes."

The Duke, like his wife, a pseudo-intellect, keeps a notebook filled with citations which he reads before important dinners. Like the Duchess he also finds it at the same time "bon enfant et comique" to speak the language of the people, for when the narrator arrives, the Duke takes his guest's overcoat saying, "Permettez-moi de vous débarrasser de vos frusques", saying thus the vulgar word meaning "toga", "duis", or "glad-rags".


Like the rest of the Guermantes, the Princess des Laumes uses an affected pronunciation. For example, upon hearing the pianist playing a prelude, she remarks, "c'est toujours charmant", and as Proust adds "avec un double ah au commencement du mot qui était une marque de délicatesse et dont elle sentait ses lèvres si romanesquement froissées comme une belle fleur, qu'elle harmonisa instinctivement son regard avec elles en lui donnant à ce moment-là une sorte de sentimentalité et de vague." Here Proust has revealed his interest in language as well as his sensitivity in an elegant metaphorical style, to the quantity of consonants.

Using an expression common to the Guermantes, the Princess des Laumes says concerning Mme de Cambremer, "Elle se met trop en avant, je trouve que chez une si jeune femme, ce n'est pas agréable, car je ne crois pas qu'elle soit ma contemporaine."  

Like the Princess des Laumes, the Princess de Parme has an admiration for the "mots" of the Duchess de Guermantes and employs the affected pronunciation common to that group. Speaking about Mme de Cambremer she refers to the Cambremers as "gens de la campagne", and when the general says "Mais Cambremer, c'est un nom authentique et ancien" she replies, "Je ne vois

aucun mal à ce que ce soit ancien... Mais en tout cas ce n'est pas euphonique" and, Proust adds, detaching the word euphonique as if it were between quotation marks, an affectation of speech peculiar to the coterie.

Mme de Marsantes, who was considered in the faubourg Saint-Germain as a superior being of great kindness, like the princess des Launes and the princess de Parme, speaks in a manner peculiar to the Guermantes, because as the narrator says:

elle disait en détachant le mot, en le faisant valoir, et en le psalmodiant sur deux tons différents en une modulation qui était particulière aux Guermantes: "J'ai eu l'honneur, le grand hon- neur de rencontrer Monsieur Bergotte, de faire la connaissance de monsieur Elstir", soit pour faire admirer son humilité, soit pour le même gout qu'avait M. de Guermantes de revenir aux formes désuètes pour protester contre les usages de mauvaise éducation actuelle ou on ne se dit pas assez "honoré". 17

With the utterance of "J'ai eu l'honneur, le grand hon-neur", Proust adds that Mme de Marsantes believed that she assumed a great role and knew how to welcome the names of men of worth as if she had the privilege of receiving them in her own chateau. 18

Mme de Souvré, like the Marquise de Vitri, shows herself inferior to the people whom she treats with disdain, acts scornfully toward others, and reveals herself a true snob. When she says to the narrator, "Bonsoir... Y a-t-il longtemps que vous n'avez vu la duchesse de Guermantes?", she excelled, as the author indicates, in giving to this type of sentence an intonation which proved that she used it "par bêtise pure", like those persons, who for lack of ideas and to pad their conversation, repeat the same thing over and over.

On analyzing the conversation of Mme de Gâillardon, we observe that no expression occurs as often as "chez mes cousins de Guermantes". By its frequency, this expression reflects the dissatisfied snobbishness of one who consoles herself by pronouncing as often as possible one of the most aristocratic names of the society and emphasizing her relationship with it.

Mme de Cambremer-Legrandin, when a young girl, learned to pronounce the illustrious names Uzes and robe according to the usage of the "gratin" or the upper crust. Though born a bourgeois Legrandin, she had married the Marquis de Cambremer in the hope of being received in the Faubourg. And as she heard the

19. SGI, p. 72.
Duchess de Guernantes say, "Madame d'Chenonceau", for "Madame de Chenonceau", she imitates it awkwardly, not eliding the same mute ə, trying to emulate this aristocratic pronunciation.

Dans d'autres groupes mondains, quand on parlait des Chenouville, l'habitude était (du moins chaque fois que la particule était précédée d'un nom finissant par une voyelle, car dans le cas contraire on était bien obligé de prendre appui sur le ə, la langue se refusant à prononcer Madame d'Ch'nonceaux), que ce fut l'ə muet de la particule qu'on sacrifiait. On disait: "Monsieur d'Chenouville".

Chez les Cambremer la tradition était inverse, mais aussi impérieuse. C'était l'ə muet de Chenouville que, dans tous les cas, on supprimait.

It is one more indication of Roust's meticulous interest in details that he should give such a minute dissection to an example of the effect of tradition upon the pronunciation of a family name in a "groupe mondain".

In the following passage Roust states the reasons for the particular use of adjectives by Mme de Cambremer-Legrandin, who in language as well as in art, desires to be "à la page". This citation also illustrates the desire of a person to show that she knows and can use

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current and popular expressions with ease.

u'était l'époque où les gens bien élevés observaient la règle d'être aimables et calmes dite des trois adjectifs. Mme de Cambrember les combinait toutes les deux. Un adjectif louangeux ne lui suffisait pas, elle le faisait suivre (après un petit tiret) d'un second, puis (après un deuxième tiret) d'un troisième. 22

On the other hand, to produce a startling effect and to create an impression Mme de Cambrember would break the conventional manner of placing an adjective.

Kroust says:

Enfin, par une certaine simplicité raffinée qui n'avait pas d'être sans produire une impression considérable dans la famille et même le cercle des relations Mme de Cambrember avait pris l'habitude de substituer au mot qui pouvait finir par avoir l'air mensonger, de "sincère", celui-ci "vrai". Et pour bien montrer qu'il s'agissait en effet de quelque chose de sincère, elle rompait l'alliance conventionnelle qui eût mis "vrai" avant le substantif, et le plantait bravement après. Ses lettres finissaient par: "Croyez à son amitié vraie", 23 "Croyez à sa sympathie vraie".

Concerning the conversation of the Marquis de Horpois, who, like a true capitalist, esteemed a large

22. SC II, p. 112.
23. SC II, p. 113.

see SC II, pp. 139-140 for particular use of "beau" by M. de Cambrember.
fortune, roust says that it was

un répertoire si complet des formes surannées du langage particulières à une carrière, à une classe et à un temps - un temps qui, pour cette carrière et cette classe-là, pourrait bien ne pas être tout à fait aboli.

When pronouncing a word "affinités", Norpois "a détache ce mot "affinités", ce mot qui était une véritable trouvaille, sur un ton qui raisait savoir à tous qu'il était employé à bon escient et en pleine connaissance de cause." 25

Like the Duke de Guermantes, the Marquis de Norpois also enjoys saying words for effect. His propensity of pronunciation puts into relief the close bond between intonation and language. For example, after quoting the Arab proverb, "Les chiens aboient, la caravane passe", he stops for the company to look at him and to judge the effect that this citation has produced. 26

his intonation demands attention, for, expressing his opinion to Bloch on the Dreyfus affair, M. de Norpois accentuates the sincerity of his convictions, roust says, with the energy of the words which he had pronounced. 27

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See J P I, p. 44 for similar example of pronunciation by the Marquis.
In Le temps retrouvé Proust carefully observes the effect of the war on the language of his characters. Not only the vocabulary, but even the syntax of M. de Morpois is seen to be affected by it, as when the former ambassador adopts the cautious "savoir" as the sign of the future tense in his newspaper articles. The Baron de Charlus says to the narrator regarding the changes after the war:

Même la syntaxe de l’excellent
Morpois subit du fait de la
guerre une altération aussi
profonde que la fabrication
du pain ou la rapidité des
transports. Avez-vous remarqué
que l’excellent homme, tenant
da proclamer ses désirs comme
une vérité sur le point d’être
réalisé, n’ose pas tout de même
employer le futur pur et simple,
qui risquerait d’être contredit
par les événements, mais a
adopté comme signe de ce temps
le verbe savoir? 28

It would seem that Morpois ordinarily would use "je le ferai". Instead he employs the old compound form, really saying, "je saurai le faire". Proust does not give an example but presupposes that he understands the phenomenon.

It is difficult to know whether to put the salon of Mme de Villeparisis into the aristocratic category.

as the members of her salon were of the "troisième
ordre, bourgeoise, noblesse de province ou tareé,
dont la présence a depuis longtemps éloigné les gens
elegants et snobs, qui ne sont pas obligés d'y venir
par devoirs de parenté ou d'intimité trop ancienne." 29

The marquise de Villeparisis is presented as the
true initiator of Proust to high society, for she is
the first person of this milieu who welcomes him. It
is through her that the narrator becomes acquainted
with Saint-Loup, her great-nephew, and through Saint-Loup
he meets the Guermantes.

Mme de Villeparisis often had a little descriptive
gesture, a "mot juste" to define what she was saying,
always avoiding technical terms. 30 To her, "mot juste"
means a word which fits the social situation, not
that which has a special effectiveness in the passage
from a stylistic point of view. She also considered
painting, music, literature, and philosophy as the
proper accomplishments of a young girl brought up
in the most aristocratic fashion.

Mme de Villeparisis refrains from speaking of
"la question d'Orient" to prime ministers as well as
of the essence of love to novelists and to philosophers.

when she has literary and political celebrities in her salon, she contents herself, like the Duchess de Guermantes, with making them play poker.

Although not entering a conversation on a topic in which the other party was conversant, Mme de Villeparisis reverts to imitation of "les gens lettrés" to impress her listener when in the company of someone less informed than she. When speaking to the grandmother of Proust she uses the words of Mme de Sévigné, for she delights in displaying her working knowledge of the writings of such a great literary figure. She says:

Dès que j'ai reçu une lettre, j'en voudrais tout à l'heure une autre, je ne respire que d'en recevoir. Peu de gens sont dignes de comprendre ce que je sens.  

Even though upon first thought one might put the baron de Charlus and Robert de Saint-Loup into the category of the Guermantes, I believe they should be classified differently. Although both Charlus and Saint-Loup have characteristics common to the other members of this coterie, they have many salient traits which do not coincide with those of the Guermantes.

Charlus, uncle of Saint-Loup, a man of "une quarantaine d'années, très grand et gros, avec des

32. G II, p. 22.
See J F II, p. 150 for another example of conversation of Mme de Villeparisis.
moustaches très noires", "les yeux perlants", "une
suprême oeillade à la fois hardie, prudente, rapide et
profonde."

was perhaps the greatest snob of the
aristocracy. Proud of his name, Palamède, he displayed
all the manners of his ancestors, had all their qualities,
all their vices. At times, his snobbery was merely a
mask for his other vice, homosexuality.

Not desirous of being associated knowingly with
anyone but the aristocracy, Charlus reproaches the
narrator for having told mme de Guermantes that he,
Charlus, was "lié" with Proust and tells the
narrator:

Quant à vous être vanté de m'avoir
été présenté, d'avoir cause avec moi,
de me connaitre un peu... L'extrême
différence d'âge qu'il y a entre
nous me permet de reconnaître,
sans ridicule, que cette présentation,
esc causeries, cette vague de
relations étaient pour vous,
se n'est pas à moï de dire un
honneur... 35

Since Charlus is an "inverti", one must study
that part of Charlus which made him still more of a
snob. The voice of Charlus with elements of "un jeune
homme et une femme" was one of the ways by which his
vice could be detected. Charlus was a member of that

35. CE III, p. 233.

See J F II, p. 211 for example of Charlus' vanity
in speech.
group of "hommes-femmes", who are obliged to hide their vice by diverting their glances and even changing the type of adjectives in their vocabulary.

Types like Charlus, in fact, speak a special language in order to conceal their secret in society. If their "argot" better permits them to hide themselves, it sometimes helps to unmask them, for they may introduce into their conversation with their friends one of the special words designated for their own group, like the word, "trquer".

When Charlus pronounces the word "trquer", Proust acts surprised. Thus, in spite of the learned disguise in which he clothes himself, a single word, spontaneously pronounced, unmasks the speaker.

Robert de Saint-Loup, nephew of the Baron de Charlus, is a handsome and rich young man, with the impertinence of a young lion - a complex personality, who seems at first glance, implacable and proud, but at second view friendly and alert. Many a young rich bourgeois who had never entered into aristocratic society and knew it only from the outside was moved to admiration for what he knew of Saint-Loup. They found something "chic" in his handsome face and loose

36. G I, p. 29.
gait, for Saint-Loup, like the other aristocrats we have discussed, did not disdain the bourgeoisie, but instead scorned the members of his own class.

The author states that Saint-Loup amicably took the hand of any bourgeois that was presented to him, and when he did not understand the name, he would, when speaking to the man, call him "mon cher". However, holding a grudge against the people of his own class, he rarely sought their company, for he neither liked the scornful nor the hostile attitude that his relatives took regarding, for example, his liaison with "une femme de "théâtre". 39

As we have seen Proust uses the discussion of his ideas on language to render a realistic character portrayal. This language commentary gives the author an opportunity to express his personal ideas well. This method of procedure is employed in the following description of the speech of Saint-Loup:

Saint-Loup employait à tout propos ce mot de "faire" pour "avoir l'air", parce que la langue parlée comme la langue écrite, éprouve de temps en temps le besoin de ces altérations du sens des mots, de ces raffinements d'expression. 40

such a comment on a syntactic type of structure demands attention today. For example, Leo Spitzer has devoted an entire article to the use of "faire" in this sense. 41

Proust adds that just as journalists often know from what school of literature the "élegances" they use are derived, so the vocabulary and even the diction of Saint-Loup were imitated from three different esthetes, none of whom he knew but whose modes of speech had been indirectly imposed on him. 42

When Charlus says to Saint-Loup that there is more veracity in a tragedy of Racine than in all the dramas of Hugo, Saint-Loup says to the narrator:

C'est tout de même effrayant, le monde....Préférer Racine à Victor Hugo c'est quand même quelque chose d'énorme! Il était sincèrement attristé des paroles de son oncle, mais le plaisir de dire "quand même" et surtout "énorme" le consolait. 43

Saint-Loup utters these words triumphantly, for with this aristocrat they are the expression of his desire to realize his high aspiration, a work of art. But as one imprisoned by his milieu where one only discusses superficial things, he leads an insignificant existence, and therefore these words console him.

Regarding the language of the aristocracy one can conclude that its members, desirous of assuming airs,

41. Spitzer, Leo, "Ça fait distingué; elle fait "espagnole", The Romanic Review, vol. 31, 1940, pp. 44-52.
42. G I, p. 92.
43. J F II, p. 221.
exhibit affectation in both intonation and in choice of words. They take delight in imitating the pronunciation and in using expressions characteristic of the lower classes. At the same time, wishing to display their intelligence as well as their knowledge of erudite subjects, the nobility discuss literary topics. The majority, although not deeply intelligent, use both literary and artistic jargon to give their speech profundity.
Since Proust is for the most part concerned with the nobility, his generalizations of the intellectual, moral, artistic, and language traits of the bourgeoisie may at first glance seem relatively few. But in this study we shall see this idea to be erroneous, for Proust devotes much space and interest to the language of the bourgeoisie. From this class spring all the artists and intellectuals he presents, such as Vinteuil, the musician, Klastir, the artist, Berotte, the writer, La Berce, the actress, Ski, the sculptor, Cottard, the doctor, Brichot, the academician, and the narrator himself.

Proust observes two types of bourgeoisie: the new, represented by "la petite bande" at Balbec, and the dispossessed nobility, like the Verdurins, and the old, puritanical and severe.

In the new bourgeoisie, exemplified by the Verdurins and their friends, we note the social ideals of all the bourgeoisie in the study of snobberiness, the Verdurin's ambitions toward the aristocratic circles, the stupid vanity of all the bourgeoisie at Balbec and in Paris.
The Verdurins, feigning to dislike all the members of the upper classes, believe that anyone who knows salon life is an "ennuyeux". For example, "En disant aux Verdurin que Swann était très "smart", Odette leur avait fait craindre un "ennuyeux". Il leur fit au contraire une excellente impression dont à leur insu sa fréquentation dans la société élégante était une des causes indirectes."¹ When Mme Verdurin feels obligated to invite her landlords, the cambremers, to her summer home at Balbec, La Raspelière, she pretends she is afraid to meet anyone who does not belong to her group.

Unlike the Guermantes, the Verdurins do not give elegant dinners, but have their "couvert mis". For the evening, there is no planned program. The pianist plays, but only if "ca lui chantait", for they forced no one to perform, and as M. Verdurin said, "Tout pour les amis, vivent les camarades!"²

The Verdurins were a close-knit group, and in order to become a part of the "petit noyau", or the "petit groupe", or the "petit clan" it was necessary to adhere to a Credo, one of the articles of which stated that the young pianist, a protegé of Mme Verdurin

¹. S I, p. 280.
². S I, p. 262.

See S II, p. 264 for more characteristics of the "petit clan".
that year and of whom the patron said:

"Ça ne devrait pas être permis de savoir jouer Wagner comme gai" "enrogeait" à la fois Plante et Kubenstein et que le docteur Gottard avait plus de diagnostique que Potaïn. 3

"Enfoncer", highlighted by being put between quotation marks, is a slang word which means, in this case, "surpasser", "être supérieur à", 4 for Anne Verduri, whose salon is famous for its music, desires her pianist to excel in his métier.

Cited below is a passage in which is illustrated the "esprit de corps" of the clan as well as the heterogeneity of language in the group:

Que de fois il m'est arrivé, lisant avec une certaine émotion un conte habilement filé par un académicien disert et un peu vieillot, d'être sur le point de dire à Bloch ou à Ma de Guernantes: "Comme c'est joli!" quand, avant que je n'osasse ouvrir la bouche, ils s'écriaient, chacun dans un langage différent: "Si vous voulez passer un bon moment, lisez un conte d'un tel." 5

What does Proust mean by "language" in this passage?

This is not the first time that the author makes such an enigmatic remark.

   See J P I, p. 234 for use of plural by women of the "petit clan".
"Mme Verdurin scorns the aristocracy, although she acts like the "ennuyeux" whom she herself reviles. At the slightest word an habitue uttered against an "ennuyeux" or against an "ancien habitue" who now belonged in the category of "ennuyeux" she would emit a cry, close her eyes, as if she had seen an indecency, and plunge her face into her hands. I have made no remarks concerning the language of Mme Verdurin, as her speech has no particular peculiarities. Of the dispossessed nobility, she does not use the expressions of other members of the "petit noyau".

In Charles Swann, one can observe a transition between the milieu of the Verdurins and the milieu of the Guermantes, for he belongs to the first by his origins, and to the second by his refined tastes and by his closest friends. To the member of the coterie of the Guermantes, Swann is a man "par excellence". Swann did not suspect that he no longer lived in the society which his family frequented and that, in this society, his bourgeois name of Swann was repeatedly mentioned as an outstanding member of the Jockey-Club and one of the favorites of the chosen society of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

It is in the salon of the Duchess de Guermantes that Swann spends his days, and although intelligent, Swann is so conquered by this world, that he submits himself to these imperious rules, through which he has learned the tone of the salons. Unable to hide his true bourgeois self he prolongs a word, both pedantic and incorrect, such as "profonde", in order to excuse himself. Proust says:

\[
\text{il prononça profonde, comme si qu'avait été un mot ridicule car son langage gardait la trace d'habitudes d'esprit qu'une certaine rénovation marquées par l'amour de la musique, lui avait momentanément fait perdre.}
\]

In this case Proust does not underline "profonde" as is his usual custom when discussing the phenomenon he mentions.

In Odette de Crécy we have a woman of the lower classes, who enters the upper bourgeoisie and attempts to discard her past through imitation of the aristocracy, but who, through her language and mannerisms, always reveals her real background. To be well dressed, to be noticed at the yearly art exhibit of the salons or at the most important horse races of the season, is "le chic", the ambition of Odette de Crécy, Mme Swann, later Mme de Forcheville. 9

8. Ibid.
9. See S II, pp. 40-41 for Odette's discussion of "chic".
Although she becomes the mistress of the Duke de Guermantes, Odette does not cast aside her old friends. After meeting Swann and entering a much better circle, she still frequents "les petites gens" and the "petit noyau" of the Verdurins.

Although having come from the lower ranks, Odette was accustomed to choose the expressions that she had learned from the distinguished people with whom her husband permitted her to make friends, and she consequently uses the most noble language for the most simple things. But even when she has become Mme Swann, she still retains many of the popular expressions of the "petit clan" of former days. Proust says that it is from the aristocratic friends of Charles that she used the mannerism which consisted of suppressing the article or demonstrative pronoun before an adjective qualifying a person, sometimes a more vulgar expression (for example, "C'est un rien!", a favorite word of one of her friends), and she sought to place them in all the "histoires" that, according to a habit learned in the "petit noyau", she liked to tell. She said "J'aime beaucoup cette histoire", "ah! avouez, c'est une bien belle histoire!"

The use of belle as such is a pet term of the Guermantes, enough so to earn the author's italics.

10. JF I, p. 113. See JF I, pp. 227-228 for example of Mme Swann's attempt at pretentious language.
Despite the fact that Odette tries to emulate the language of her husband's aristocratic friends, the influence of the "petit clan" is always with her. For example, when talking to two people, she used to raise her voice, hurl her words as she had so often heard the "patronne" of that group do when she "dirigeait la conversation".  The word "patronne" meaning "boss" is a low bourgeois or even a term of the "people". "Diriger" used in this sense means "to steer" but has no particular connotation. The italics are for the purpose of stressing the dictatorial manner of the "patronne".

Desirous of impressing the members of the salon, Odette attempts to make a striking remark, but only succeeds in saying something very ordinary. When Swann says to the narrator "Comment! vous connaissez M. Morpois?", his wife interrupts him employing the platitude, "Oh, il est ennuyeux comme la pluie", showing by the use of this "cliché" evidence of her bourgeois speech.

Odette's snobbishness is a part of her desire to be "chic" just as Charlus' is a part of his desire to conceal his vice. For example, upon seeing the

See J F I, pp. 231-232 for other expressions of the "petit clan" used by Mme Swann.
See 3 II, p. 63 for Mme Swann's use of the "calembour".
Marquise de Villeparisis wear a black wool dress and a bonnet with strings, she says, "Mais elle a l'air d'une ouvrière, d'une vieille concierge, darling! ça une marquise! Je ne suis pas marquise, mais il faudrait me payer bien cher pour me faire sortir nippé comme ça!" The verb "nippé" meaning "habiller" is a colloquial, practically argot term.

For affectation and to impress her friends, Mme Swann often gave an English intonation and pronunciation to certain French words as well as using certain English words and phrases. For example, she delighted in saying to a man, "Vous me trouverez tous les jours un peu tard, venez prendre le thé", giving "the" an English accent as if it were something important and demanded the attention of her guest. Liking Saxe, a type of English porcelain, saying "cela ressemble à des fleurs de Saxe", she pronounced the name with an English accent.

In order to enter a conversation, Mme Swann often feigned intelligence. For example, she asks the narrator if Gilberte had given him the article Bergotte had written about Phèdre, saying, "Mais c'est si

ravissant ce petit opuscule, ce petit tract", in order
to make others believe that she had read the pamphlet
and that she was a "bonne maîtresse de maison". 18
"Tract" cannot be found in the French dictionaries. It
is an English term used for affectation of erudition.

Odette enjoyed employing such English words as
"good bye", 19 "cake", "studio", and "pushing",
the latter word being used when she says to her husband
concerning Mme de Cambremer, "Je la crois très "pushing"."

To the end odette keeps her anglicisms, which are
evident during the war. Formerly contented to call
the English "nos voisins d'outre-Manche", she refers
to them as "nos loyaux alliés", and uses terms like
"les Tonnies", "fair play", "gagner la guerre", etc.

Gilberte Swann, who employs snobbishness to hide
her bourgeois and Jewish origins, is adopted by De
Forcheville, and after the death of Swann, takes the
name of her adopted father. Beautiful but proud, she
remains an inaccessible ideal for the narrator. Like
her mother, odette, attempting to get accepted by
the upper classes, she imitates their language. for

21. Ibid.
  See S II, p. 265, J F I, p. 146, J F I, p. 206,
  J F II, p. 57 for other examples of English usages
  and intonation by Mme Swann.
example, using a sentence widely employed in the salons at this epoch, Gilberte says, "Décidément, je n'ai pas de succès avec mon thé!" (Proust does not mention the intonation of the word "thé" as he does in the case of Odette.) And in order to expunge the idea of formality, she upsets the order of the chairs around the table and says, "Nous avons l'air d'une noce; mon Dieu que les domestiques sont bêtes". 24 Gilberte attaches a certain picture to the word "noce", for she imagines the kind of "noce" that one finds among the lower bourgeoisie or the "people" of France.

The snob, Lograndin, like Mme Verdurin, censures the very people he desires to meet and mingle with. For example, when the narrator asks him whether he is acquainted with the Guermantes, he replies, "Non, je ne les connais pas", but instead of answering in a natural tone, he stresses the words and shakes his head, as if the fact that he did not know the Guermantes could only be a thing of chance. 25

whatever he may be, Lograndin, in the eyes of the parents of Proust incarnates the type of an "homme d'élite", who conducts his life in the most noble manner. However, he reveals his true colors, when at Combray

24 J F I, p. 108.
25 S I, p. 179.
he pretends not to know the narrator and his father.

Brichot, who Proust says would have been considered stupid and pedantic in the coterie where Swann has passed his youth, "avait cette curiosité, cette superstition de la vie, qui unit à un certain scepticisme relatif à l'objet de leurs études, donne dans n'importe quelle profession, à certains hommes intelligents, médecins qui ne croient pas à la médecine, professeurs de lycée qui ne croient pas au thème latin, la réputation d'esprits larges, brillants et même supérieurs." 26

In Brichot, professor at the Sorbonne, and one of the members and founders of the "petit clan", Proust shows both interest in and knowledge of the etymology of place names. Proust is no novice in this type of study, for after comparing his findings with authoritative linguistic works, we have no doubt that Proust was informed in this field.

Proust's interest in the origin of "les noms de lieu" is illustrated when Brichot explains some etymologies to the "groupe de mercredi" of the verdurins. For example, he tells the narrator that "fleur" means "fort" (like fiore), and "bœuf" in Norman, (bœuf) means "cabane". Brichot explains the terminations

"fleur" to place names such as "Fiquefleur", "Honfleur", "Barfleur", "Harfleur", etc. 27 Auguste Longnon, in his book, *Les Noms de Lieu de la France*, verifies Proust's etymology regarding the termination "fleur" which is of Saxon origin and "boefur" or *budh* 29, which has contributed to form a number of place names in Normandy.

When Charlus requests the explanation of Thorpehomme, Brichot gives the following etymology of the name:

"Honne" ne signifie nullement ce que vous êtes naturellement portés à croire...."Honne" n'a rien à voir ici avec le sexe auquel je ne dois pas ma mère. "Honne" c'est Holm, qui signifie "ilot" etc... Quant à Thorpe, ou "village", on le retrouve dans cents mots dont j'ai déjà ennuye notre jeune ami. Ainsi dans Thorpehomme il n'y a pas de nom de cher normand, mais des mots de la langue normande, vous voyez comme tout ce pays a été germanisé. 30

Longnon substantiates Proust's etymology by giving the use of "homme" or Holm 31 in the sense of "île" and *thorp* 32 as the Norse word for "village".

Also concerned with studying "les etymologies végétales", Brichot gives the meanings of the names of diplomats. For example, he states that "d'Ormeason, vous retrouvez l'orme...m. de La Boulaye, le bouleau;...

29. Ibid., p. 281.
32. Ibid., p. 288.
M. d'Annay, l'aune", etc. 33 Longnon, in his chapter, "origines modernes du règne végétal" gives these same derivations. (See Longnon, p. 617-orne, p. 619-bouleau, p. 158-aune) Proust's knowledge of etymology is not common information for any man of letters, where the author acquired his knowledge of and interest in this study is a mystery.

The Doctor, later Professor Cottard, who never lets a locution nor a proper name pass without trying to document them, is at the same time a great surgeon and an imbécile in society. Except with the verdurines, who have become accustomed to his stupid "calembours", to his hesitating manner of speaking, and to his timidity, Cottard is not accepted by elegant social groups. When he repeats, by habit, some of his abominable puns, which make everyone laugh, he says them without moving a muscle. Cited below is a typical pun:

When Proust is ill in the hospital, Cottard puts him on a milk diet, remarking:

Cela vous plaira, puisque
l'Espagne est à la mode,
aille, allé! (Ses élèves
connaissaient bien ce calembour
qu'il faisait à l'hôpital chaque
fois qu'il mettait un cardiaque
ou un hépatique au régime
lactée) 34

33. SG II, p. 94.  
See SG II, pp. 36-37 for other examples of Brichot's etymologies.
34. JF I, pp. 96-97.  
See SG II, p. 68 for another example of "calembours" by Cottard.
Unlike her husband, Mme Cottard, who was modest and spoke little, never lacked assurance when she had found a "not juste". While to Mme de Villeparisis the "not juste" fits the social situation, to Mme Cottard it means a word used in the correct stylistic sense. Proust says that she rarely pronounced a proper name and contented herself with saying "des amis à nous", "une de mes amies", in an affected tone and with the air of importance of a person naming only those whom she desires.

Sainette, sweet and timid, and a friend of the Verdurins, makes an interesting study in both language and psychology, for her lack of self confidence is caused by her inability to express herself clearly. Swallowing her consonants, Sainette uses precious and pretentious expressions such as "Est-ce pas curieux que?". Upon speaking, Proust says that she had in her mouth "une bouillie qui était adorable parce qu'on sentait qu'elle trahissait moins un défaut de la langue qu'une qualité de l'âme, comme un reste de l'innocence du premier âge qu'il n'avait jamais perdue".

As she had had no instruction and had a great fear of making errors in French, Sainette pronounced in

35. S II, p. 57.
a confused manner, thinking that if she made a slip in her speech it would be toned down and no one would be able to distinguish it with certainty, so that her conversation was only "un graillonement indistinct", that is "an indistinct expectoration".

One can put Proust's Jewish characters in the bourgeois class, for they show traits in common with other members of this group.

Bloch, ill mannered, awkward, and snobbish, is a person to be pitied, for his aggressive ways are only a cloak for his lack of assurance. Desirous of meeting nobles, he makes a fool of himself when attempting to obtain an invitation to a ball of a princess. When introduced to the Baroness de Rothschild, he says very little to her because, not having caught her name, he thinks she is an ordinary Englishwoman. His awkwardness, his tactlessness and bad manners are always put at the service of his desire to be a man of the world. A snob toward the centers of his faith, he is ashamed of being a Jew and tries to create the impression that he is only part Jewish.

Unsure of himself, Bloch states opinions which are not his own in order to assume an air of importance.

Speaking about Sir Rufus Isaëls, he says, "Ah! un individu absolument courageux", and, Proust adds, with "cette énergie affirmative, cet accent d'enthousiasme qu'on n'apporte qu'aux convictions qu'on ne s'est pas formées soi-même". It is interesting to note that the author exploits with special insistence this matter of intensity.

The war changes Bloch, for in it he acquires a new prestige. Attempting to break away from his Jewish heritage, he takes a pseudonym and finds a coiffure suited to his complexion and a voice suited to his pronunciation. His language is no longer eloquent, for he now imitates Proust's manner of speaking in order to feel himself a part of that group.

Bloch's father, like his son, a snob, tries to emulate the aristocrats in actions and speech. The narrator says that at first Bloch's children considered him a superior being. In this milieu where the artificial grandeur of the aristocracy do not exist, one replaces, Proust believes, by still more foolish distinctions:

C'est ainsi que pour sa famille
et jusqu'à un degré de parente
fort éloignée une prétendue
ressemblance dans la façon de
porter la moustache et dans
le haut du nez faisait qu'on
appelait à Bloch un "faut
duc d'Alma",...La
ressemblance était des

See J F II, p. 197 for Bloch's prolonging of the name "Legrandin".
40. T R II, p. 92.
plus vagues, mais on dit que ce fut un titre.

The contempt of Bloch's father for the aristocracy is illustrated when his son, having told him that he is bringing the Marquis de Saint-Loup-en-Bray to dinner, the father cries, "Le marquis de Saint-Loup-en-Bray! Ah! bougre!", using, as Proust adds, an oath which to Bloch's father was the mark of the greatest social deference. He employs this colloquial vulgarity to show deference to the Marquis as well as to display his surprise that such a dignitary is coming.

Through Albertine's unconscious use of words and phrases and from the new additions to her vocabulary, the narrator derives conclusions as to her recent experiences as a member of "la petite bande" at Balbec, a very suspicious group, the character of whose relations can be inferred. Jealous of Albertine, the

42. J F II, p. 201.
43. See Nyrop, K., Grammaire historique de la langue française, vol. IV, 1772, p. 54.
44. Article recently accepted for publication in Romance Philology, Orr, John (Edinburgh); "Bougre as Expletive", communicated by A.H. Schutz. Again a case where a phenomenon to which our author calls attention is one which has claimed the attention of grammarians. C.f. Article by Spitzer, Leo, The Romantic Review, "ce fait distingué; elle fait "espagnole", XXI(1940)pp. 144-52.
author studies with minute care each of the words of the young girl which might betray her, for she uses the expressions of milieu other than that of the biminet, her parents, or the Bontems, the uncle and aunt who have reared her.

Rouxt is cognizant of the fact that although certain traits are typical of a social class, this does not necessarily mean that everyone possessing one or more of them belongs to that class. Albertine's drawing and nasal tone, he says, was probably due to provincial heredity, a juvenile affectation, of British lack of enthusiasm, the lessons of a foreign teacher, and a congestive hypertrophy of the mucous membrane of the nose. 45

Albertine employs words common to "la petite bande". For example, when she uses the words "tram" and "tacot" for "chemin de fer", the writer says that the richness of synonyms that the little band possessed to designate the word "chemin de fer" was not yet revealed to Albertine, who said these words unconsciously. Both of these synonyms are slang terms. "Tram" is a familiar word for "tramway" or "railway", while "tacot" is an argot word meaning a "petite et mauvaise voiture".

45. J F III, p. 150.
46. J F III, p. 150.
See J F III, p. 155 for Albertine's use of "youpin".
which can likewise be applied pejoratively to a train.

In the language of André, friend of Albertine, and member of the troop at Balbec, Proust is aware of the effect of atavism on speech. Here, as in chapter I, the author manifests his interest in the heredity and geographical origins of a character. He discerns certain traits of Périgord in the speech of André, for in her "voix du Nord", the narrator observes the accent of the province, Périgord. Between this province and the temperament of the young girl which dictated her inflexion, he notices a "beau dialogue" which showed that no one could separate the young girl from her native region. 48

In the voice of each member of the little troop, the author discovers a living picture, imposed by their inflexions as well as by features of the race, and he regrets the day when these girls will lose this accent of enthusiastic conviction which gives the most simple things such charm.

One can conclude from the study of the bourgeoisie that Proust is very much interested in the language of this group. Snobbishness, the desire to be

47. See Hauche, op. cit., p. 251.
superior to the next person or to belong to a higher social collectivity, is a determining factor in shaping the language of the bourgeoisie. Its members emulate the nobility in both manners and speech. However, they reveal their bourgeois origins by reverting to a usage or mannerism of their own group through the "cliché", through the use of low bourgeois or even terms of the "people" like "patronne" and descending to lower strata by allowing themselves to slip into argot like "enfonceur", "nipper", and other vulgarisms."
CHAPTER V - THE LANGUAGE OF THE "PEOPLE"

The psychology of the language of the working people is very close to that of the nobles, for the proletariat is activated by the same motives as the aristocracy. Being for the most part in the service of the nobility, its members emulate many of the traits of their superiors. Just as he did for the nobility, Proust criticizes the ambitions of the common people in their attempt to raise themselves out of their class.

The footman of Mme de Chevigny, upon going out with Charlus, says in reply to the Baron's question, "Est-ce que ici, ou à Paris...vous ne pourrez pas me presenter beaucoup de vos camarades d'une maison ou d'une autre?":

--- Oh! non! repondit la valet de pied.
   je ne frequente personne de ma classe.
   je ne leur parle que pour le service.
   Mais il y a quelqu'un de tres bien
   que je pourrai vous faire connaître.
--- Qui? demanda le baron. 1
--- Le Prince de Guermantes.

Although not an illustration of the speech of the footman, this example shows characteristics typical of other members of the proletariat.

Through the study of français, one can better understand the motivation behind many of the traits in

1. 8 G II, p. 170.
the speech of the Duke and Duchess de Guermantes, because
after all it is a lack of insight that causes affectation
in either group.

The servant, whose old code taught her that she
should not seek the friends of her masters, is not
wholly exempt from such failings for at Combray,

elle jouissait suffisamment de
ci que ma tante possédait,
sachant que les richesses de
da maîtresse du même coup élevèrent
et embellissent aux yeux de tous
sa servante; et qu'elle Françoise,
est insigne et glorifiée dans
Combray, Jouy-le-Vicomte et
autres lieux, pour nombreuses
fermes de ma tante, les visites
fréquentes et prolongées du
scur, le nombre singulier des
bouteilles d'eau de Vichy
consommées. 2

even though she reigns to be proud of the "people",
Françoise still desires to be associated with the
upper classes and expects to draw from her connections
additional respect from members of her own group.
When Aunt Léonie gives gifts to those people whom the
cook calls "des gens comme moi, des gens qui ne sont
pas plus que moi", it was these same people whom she
scorned, unless they called her "Madame Françoise"
and considered themselves as "moins qu'elle". 3

2. S I, pp. 151-152.
The speech of Françoise is distinguished by proverbs, vigorous expressions, grammatical errors, and dialectal pronunciations found even in the people of the cities. However, one could not say in front of her, "le conte un tel", without her face darkening and her words becoming sharp and brusque, signifying that she was attached to the nobility, because she had that spirit of loyalty, the lack of which she found the greatest of faults in others.  

When the cook says, "C'est une maison ou il va surtout des hommes!", Proust states that both she and her daughter sought to reproduce the manner in which M. de Morpois had said this sentence, as they would have done for some intonation of Bressant or Thiron in L'aventuriere or in the Grand de M. Poirier. In his references to the actors, Bressant and Thiron, who starred in these two plays by Augier, the author shows both interest in intonation and the desire of the lower strata to emulate the salon speech.

Françoise is conscious of her imitation of learned terms, for when she says to Proust's mother, "Madame sait tout; madame est pire que les rayons X", the author adds that the servant says X with an

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affected difficulty and a smile in order to ridicule herself for using this learned term.  

Françoise used "l'estoppeuse" for "la stoppeuse".  

This prosthesis, an unconscious linguistic phenomenon, is in this respect probably similar to the erroneous pronunciation of "New-York":

Croyant la langue moins riche qu'elle n'est et ses propres oreilles peu sûres, sans doute la première fois qu'elle avait entendu parler de jambon d'York avait-elle cru - trouvant d'une prodigalité invraisemblable dans le vocabulaire qu'il put exister à la fois York et New York - qu'elle avait mal entendu et qu'on aurait voulu dire le nom qu'elle connaissait déjà. Aussi, depuis, le mot d'York se faisait précéder dans ses oreilles ou devant ses yeux si elle lisait une annonce de: New qu'elle prononçait Nev'. Et c'est de la meilleure foi du monde qu'elle disait à sa fille de cuisine: "Allez me chercher du jambon chez Olida. Madame m'a bien recommandé que ce soit du Nev' York".  

Most of the errors of the servant, as expected, are due to a false conception of the world and to pre-conceived ideas. Her world and experiences are limited, for she lives in an alien society. She says to the mother of the narrator, "Je ne sais pas d'où

7. S G I, p. 127 for Françoise's pronunciation of "lion".  
ce que ça devient", not establishing a clear demarcation between the verb "venir", and the verb "devenir". She mixes the two constructions, "Je ne sais d'où ça vient", and "Je ne sais ce que ça devient".

When Françoise speaks about her cousin from "Alger" (Algerie), the narrator and his mother wondering who this cousin could be, finally comprehend that the cook understood by the name of "Alger", the city of Angers. The old servant, who knew the name by the awful dates which her employers received, was ignorant of the more remote Angers.

When the cook, speaking of Antoine, uses "Antoinette" in order to discover in the name of Antoine a feminine which would designate the wife of the "maître-d'hôtel", Proust adds that undoubtedly in her grammatical creativeness she had an unconscious recollection of "chanoine" and "chanoinesse".

To a mind so constituted, the most common word might have a special meaning. For example, the word "monde" signified for her "demi-monde".

The servant was ignorant of the usage of what Saint-Loup called the partitive articles, for she said

"avoir d'argent", "apporter d'eau". The writer only mentions this phenomenon, but gives no explanation.

The daughter of Françoise, considering herself a "femme d'aujourd'hui" puts on airs by using Parisian slang. For example, having been told by her mother that the narrator has just returned from visiting a princess, the girl says in Parisian argot, "Ah! sans doute une princesse à la noix de coco" (queer or "nutty").

In an attempt to be "chic", Françoise often imitates the witicism and slang of her daughter:

Je disais alors à Françoise de faire mes malles, puis aussitôt après de les défaire. Et comme le démon du pastiche, et de ne pas paraître vieux jeu, altérer la forme la plus naturelle et la plus sûre de soi, Françoise empruntant cette expression au vocabulaire de sa fille, disait que j'étais dingo.

Thus she uses a slang word meaning "cracked".

The "batonnier", who in order to impress his guest, keeps repeating the name of Aimé, the "maître d'hôtel", when he has someone to dinner, represents the working man who desires to rise from his estate by assuming a manner of importance. He would repeat the

15. S G I, p. 176 for use of "gigolettes".
name incessantly, but with a smile, for he insisted on
displaying at the same time his good relations with
the "maître d'hôtel" and his superiority over him.
And the "maître d'hôtel" himself, each time that he
heard his name, would smile proudly, showing that he
felt the honor and understood the jest.

In the "liftier" or elevator boy at the Grand
Hôtel at Balbec, who comes into contact with the upper
classes in his work, one can observe a similar desire
to "get on in the world". The anglicized word "liftier"
itself denotes a certain hauteur. Therefore, it is not
astonishing that the "liftier" himself should have
something of that attitude. Concerning him Proust says:

"Il n'y a plus autant de monde
comme il y a un mois. 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 parti tous le
plus tôt possible afin que
l'hôtel remât et qu'il eût
quelques jours à lui, avant
de "rentrer" dans sa nouvelle
place. Rentrer et "nouvelle"
n'étaient au reste pas des
expressions contradictoires car,
pour le lift, "rentrer" était
la forme usuelle du verbe "entrer".
La seule chose qui m'étonnait
était qu'il condamnait à
dire "place", car il appartenait
t à ce prolétariat moderne qui

See S G II, p. 297 for language of the "maître
d'hôtel".
desire 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
semblaient désuets et in-
convenants. 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.

Proust says that the "liftier" seldom uses the
word "pédalement", a term of his profession, outside
of his work. For example, employing the verb "pédalement",
meaning "to work a treadle" when he runs the elevator,
he never uses this term of his trade when he rides a
bicycle, but if, on foot, he were delayed from being
on time, he says, "Vous pensez si on a pédalement !" in
order to signify that he had walked fast. This
citation displays the dual personality of the "liftier",
for when attached to his trade, he is an ordinary
proletarian but when absent from his work he aspires
to greater achievements.

If he wanted to seem as though he has understood
everything from the first second, he would say, "Oui,
oui, oui, oui, oui, oui, je comprends très bien", with a

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17. *F III*, pp. 48-49.
See *G II*, pp. 225-227 for other euphemisms of the
"liftier".
distinctness and in an intelligent tone. With the repetition of this expression a second time, Proust finds this good impression obliterated, for the sentence is now both mechanical and stupid. 19

The "maître d'hôtel", who delights at the beginning in tormenting Françoise, insists upon mispronouncing "envergure" as "enverjure". He was happy to show his master that:

bien qu'ancien jardinier de Combray
et simple maître d'hôtel, tout de même bon français selon la règle
de Saint-André-des-Champs, il tenait de la déclaration des
droits de l'homme, le droit de prononcer "enverjure" en toute
independance, et de ne pas se laisser commander sur un point
qui ne faisait pas partie de son service et ou par conséquent
depuis la révolution, personne
n'avait rien à lui dire puisqu'il
était mon égal. J'eus donc le
chagrin de l'entendre parler à
Françoise d'une aspiration de
grande "enverjure" avec une
insistance qui était destinée
à me prouver que cette pro-
nunciation était l'effet non
de l'ignorance mais d'une 20
volonte sûrement réfléchie.

Concerning the language of the "people", one observes that Proust depicts no true proletarians, except the marginal elements attached to the upper

reaches of society. It is small wonder that their speech reflects this dependence on the nobility and the bourgeoisie. In their attempt to raise themselves out of their group, they assume airs and imitate the language of these other classes. In an attempt to conceal their proletarian origins, they even disdain members of their own group. Like Francoise and her daughter, their language may be distinguished by grammatical irregularities and dialectal pronunciations.
CONCLUSION

Proust has given us a study of the anobbery of the three main classes of society — the nobility, the bourgeoisie, and the "people". All the strata have in common certain traits of human nature such as ignorance, stupidity, and tradition, examples of which are born out on the linguistic side.

It is true that the author is concerned with language in so far as there is interaction to its allied human fields. Showing the effect of philosophy, heredity, and social environment on the speech of his characters, he is at the same time cognizant of the influence of language traits upon sub-groups such as the family, the inverts of the circle of Charlus, and the young girls of the "petite bande" at Balbec. Although not a systematic linguist, the writer displays an interest uncommon among novelists in linguistic geography and in the etymology of place names.

Proust does what most novelists do not do — he makes commentary on language phenomena as an aspect of his observation of character. He utilizes it to obtain a skilful character delineation. In giving us a parenthetical discussion or gloss of some word which
his character uses, the author has developed a method of commentary peculiar in a novelist. Desirous of drawing the reader's attention to a word which typifies his character, he actually on occasion underlines that term.

Through the discussion of Proustian psychology we have seen that with the "souvenir involontaire" the past which Proust recreates, is at the same time a moment of the present. The "souvenir involontaire" reveals the "essence générale" of things, and the art of the writer consists in furnishing to his readers the means of discovering in these voluntary memories the confirmation of his thought.

Proust is interested in the intonation, pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax of his characters.

As is true of other similar phenomena, he is cognizant of the effect of atavism on intonation. With him it is inseparable from the verbal elements of language, and both are part and parcel of character portrayal. Through intonation the author shows the pretentiousness of his personages. The spoken inflections of the nobility may assume a pompous air while the bourgeoisie, like Mme Swann, often imitate that of the nobility or give an English intonation to certain French words for affectation.
By emphasizing pronunciation, Proust brings out
the snobbishness of all the social classes. The
Guermantes use the affected pronunciation common to
their group; the bourgeoisie imitate the nobility; the
"people" ape the higher social strata.

Through choice of vocabulary the individual may
reveal the class to which he belongs. Albertine,
Charlus, Odette, are all betrayed by the use of a
word common to their group. The aristocracy talk in
terms which add an artistic or learned touch to their
speech. Using those phrases acceptable to their group,
they nevertheless find it great sport to imitate the
speech of the people. There is at times an odd
cleavage. The Princess des Laumes and Mme de Marsantes
speak in a manner peculiar to the Guermantes, while
the Duke de Guermantes adopts the vocabulary of the
people. The members of the bourgeoisie, in their
attempt to use the expressions of the nobility, often
divulge their true origins by reverting to bourgeois
or even peasant usages such as the "cliché", and by
permitting themselves to slip into argot or vulgarian.
Odette Swann, attempting to discard her past through
imitation of the aristocracy, reveals her real
background by using the platitude, "Oh, il est ennuyeux
comme la pluie" and vulgarisms such as patronne and
nippée. Conversely, as a disguise the "peuple" use a
vocabulary above their stratum. Thus, they may be dis-
tinguished by errors due to their effort to use phrases
of a society essentially alien.

The syntax of the characters may be influenced
by various factors. For instance, the particular
use of adjectives by Mme de Cambremer-Légrandin is
according to the fashion in vogue at this period, and
the Marquis de Norpois does not speak in the same style
as he did before the war.

The author is cognizant of certain philosophical
aspects of language. However, due to the limited
scope of this thesis, I have only given those examples
cited on the prefatory page.

Certain results in this thesis are negative.
By the recreation of the past through the "souvenir
involontaire" the writer evokes not only one image
but a whole series. According to the Proustian method
it is virtually impossible to dissect these memories,
and consequently impossible to dissociate language
(when a part of the resurrected memory) as a divisible
segment. The obtaining of linguistic details by the
reader is difficult, for they are inextricably bound
together. It is a paradox that although one cannot
treat language independently, one cannot ignore it, especially when dealing with an author who is conscious of its importance.

As a document on the language of the various strata of society in France at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, Proust’s data are valuable and fairly extensive in scope.
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