


SCHLOSSMAN, BERYL. The Orient of style  
Modernist Allegories of conversion. Durham  
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*Même si on savait que notre page sera brûlée aussitôt écrite, on l'écrirait dans la même extase.*

[Even if we knew that the page would be burned as soon as it had been written, we would write it in the same ecstasy.] (CSB 653)

The writer's translation of autobiographical stigmata into the negative baptism or consecrated blank space of the narrator's name parallels the medieval rendering of the kitchenmaid as a doubly allegorical figure. As "une personne morale, une institution permanente à qui des attributions invariables assuraient une sorte de continuité et identité, à travers la succession des formes passagères en lesquelles elle s'incarnait, car nous n'eûmes jamais la même deux ans de suite [a legal entity, a permanent institution whose invariable assignments insured a sort of continuity and identity, through the succession of passing forms in which she was incarnated, for we never had the same one two years in a row]" (I, 80), she is allegorically typecast in the image of the kitchenmaid ("fille de cuisine"). According to Swann's reading of what the narrator calls "le symbole ajouté qu'elle portait devant son ventre," "la mystérieuse corbeille [the additional symbol that she was carrying in front of her belly, the mysterious basket]" (I, 81; I, 80), she is also an image or incarnation of Giotto's personification of "Caritas," "la puissante ménagère [qui] incarne cette vertu [the powerful housekeeper [who] incarnates this virtue]" (I, 81). The pact of this double allegory is sealed by an additional allegorical dimension, common to both the kitchenmaid and Giotto's "housekeeper"; in both cases, the symbol is repre-



Giotto, *Le Virtù*.  
Padua, Cappella degli Scrovegni all'Arena.  
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sented as being so *real* (“comme si réel” [I, 81]) that no traces of awareness of symbolic resonances can be found in the individual woman’s facial expression. The guarantee of allegory, like that of the stigmata, takes the form of a “sign” in the flesh, not in thought.

Although Proust emphasizes the fundamental allegorical dimension of his novel as an architectural construction—a church in four dimensions, the site of “perpetual adoration”—he is much less explicit about his use of this symbolic architecture as a frame for a modern version of Giotto’s painted allegories. In 1913 the original publication of *Swann* included the announcement that *Le Temps retrouvé* would appear in 1914 and include “The ‘Vices and the Virtues’ of Padua and Combray.” A study of the genesis of *Le Temps retrouvé* reveals the abrupt disappearance of this title.<sup>1</sup> The rough draft of the text attached to this title has only been identified as fragments contained in Cahier 50: the narrator meets the quasi-mythical and comically reduced figure of his desire, the maid of the baronne Putbus, in front of the Arena. She is compared to Giotto’s Charity and allusions are made to Combray and *Swann*’s reproductions.<sup>2</sup>

Proust’s text locates the relation between the allegorical title and *la Charité de Giotto* in the Virgin’s chapel at the Arena Church in Padua. Its interior is covered with Giotto’s frescoes, including the series of the Vices and Virtues. In the later version of the text, Proust annuls the meeting with the baronne’s chambermaid, leaving intact her mythical/comical status as absent love-object, perhaps in order not to distract from the privileged focus and vehicle of love: *la Charité de Giotto*.

But why should the disappearance of the Vices and Virtues from *Le Temps retrouvé* announced in 1913 be of any particular importance, given Proust’s minimal references to Giotto? There are dozens of pages in the *Recherche* concerning cathedrals; their annotations, combined with Proust’s letters, translations, and essays, point to the importance of Emile Mâle and especially of John Ruskin.<sup>3</sup> The former was a respected source, the latter was more of a long-distance mentor and

aesthetic father figure. Proust’s interest in Giotto himself is in part mediated by his reading of Ruskin’s “divine oeuvre.”<sup>4</sup> In the passage of the novel that revolves around *la Charité* and Giotto, the reader’s attention is soon shifted to questions of reading.

#### L’ardeur de son amour

Proust’s introduction to his translation of Ruskin’s *Sesame and Lilies*, entitled “Journées de lecture,” contains a proto-text of *Combray* and especially of the passage following *la Charité de Giotto*. He seems to construct a dialectical relationship between *visibilia* and *invisibilia*—between the realm of pictorial/sculptural representation, the artistic objects discussed in Ruskin’s works, and the reading of the young narrator in “Journées de lecture” and *A la recherche*. At the root of this relationship is the portrayal of the Bible in the visible forms of the cathedral.<sup>5</sup> But he uses the two terms of this relationship—the biblical text and its “translation” into medieval allegory—to mask the unspoken third term, between the art discussed by Ruskin and the discovery of the vocation of reading by the young narrator: the initiation into reading and writing of Marcel Proust. Like the Kabbalists’ reading of the Bible as black fire on white fire, the writing from the hand of God, this turn toward vocation takes up the *invisibilia* of the text in the ineffable “invisible vocation” (II, 397) that transcends the master’s protective authority over the apprentice. Even as early as “Journées de lecture,” it is clear that the theory of reading is a Proustian one, and that the initiation it evokes is inseparable from a certain opposition to the master art historian. The unspoken third term is accompanied by a silent farewell to Ruskin,<sup>6</sup> not as a theoretician/writer/lover of Beauty, but as the adored father of Proustian aesthetics.

The temptation of idolatry is the name Proust gives to his break with Ruskin. It might also be described as the veil concealing what he often calls “réalité”: “La réalité que l’artiste doit enregistrer est à la fois matérielle et intellectuelle. La matière est réelle parce qu’elle est une expression de l’esprit

[The reality that the artist must record is at the same time material and intellectual. Matter is real because it is an expression of the spirit]" (CSB, 111). In one of his few allusions to Giotto outside Ruskinian contexts, Proust compares Flaubert's "originalité grammaticale [grammatical originality]," his "révolution de vision, de représentation du monde qui découle —ou est exprimée— par sa syntaxe [revolution in the vision, the representation of the world, that flows from—or is expressed by—his syntax]" to Giotto's revolution in color (CSB 299). Ten years later, in "A Propos du 'style' de Flaubert," Proust eliminates the parallel with Giotto in his description of Flaubert, "un homme qui . . . a renouvelé . . . notre vision des choses . . . [a man who . . . renewed . . . our vision of things . . .]" (CSB 586). The unspoken third term is doubled by a singular silence concerning Giotto. In the manuscript of the *Recherche*, he crosses out yet another evocation of Giotto's colors in the comparison of *la Charité* with the kitchenmaid.<sup>7</sup>

Giotto seems to be emblematic of a new vision in and through art, comparable to Proust's leap outside the domain of reading and translation of others into the fiction of the reading and translation of the self. The text of *Jean Santeuil* indicates a failed attempt to form this new vision, while *A la recherche* marks its success. Between the two? An unspoken revelation. Proust's talkative dissemination of the voices of Mâle and especially Ruskin, his constant quotation of their interpretation of Giotto, is the silence of Penelope; he weaves and unweaves Ruskin's description of Giotto's frescoes into his own reading. While he endlessly discusses dogmatic frames, cathedral constructions, and so on, his silence on the subject of Giotto speaks volumes.

Through the failure of his earlier attempts, Proust formulates the writing of "reality." He learns to convert the invisible weavings of the self into the figuration of reality—the figuratively *real*, according to his usage of the term—the infinitely symbolic structure of allegory. It is only in this sense that the narrator's quest for vocation may be read as a figural rendering of the "recherche" attributed to Marcel Proust him-

self. "La place de la Madeleine" is the fictional altar of transubstantiation, where the forgotten is converted into memory. In the second phase of Proustian conversion, the allegory of art is constructed around it.

Proust highlights "La pauvre charité de Giotto, comme l'appelait Swann [Poor Giotto's Charity, as Swann called her]" as the predominant virtue, "la Vertu de Padoue" (I, 121). The narrator refers to the kitchenmaid by the allegorical name that integrates "le symbole giottesque de cette vertu [Giotto's symbol of this virtue]," Giotto's Paduan allegory, in *A la recherche*. Introduced as one of the "passing forms" of the kitchenmaids, Giotto's Charity is distinguished by her "état de grossesse déjà assez avancé quand nous arrivâmes à Pâques [condition of rather advanced pregnancy when we arrived at Easter]" (I, 80). The first term of Proust's version of Giotto is the clothing that covers the "mystérieuse corbeille," the "forme magnifique [mysterious basket, magnificent form]": "Ceux-ci rappelaient les houppelandes qui revêtent certaines des figures symboliques de Giotto dont M. Swann m'avait donné des photographies [These [smocks] recalled the ample cloaks worn by some of Giotto's symbolic figures in photographs that M. Swann had given to me]" (I, 80). It was in this sentence that Proust had evoked Giotto's colors, and then erased them. The narrator describes the resemblance between the maid and the "vierges . . . matrones plutôt, dans lesquelles les vertus sont personnifiées à l'Arena [virgins . . . matrons rather, in whom the virtues are personified at the Arena]" (I, 81). Within this frame of the double allegory mentioned earlier, he evokes "le symbole" that is "représenté comme si réel," Giotto's symbol painted to look so real.

The artist represents this reality in the allegorical image rather than in thought:

Par une belle invention du peintre elle foule aux pieds les trésors de la terre, mais absolument comme si elle piétinait des raisins pour en extraire le jus ou plutôt comme elle aurait monté sur des sacs pour se hausser; et elle tend à Dieu son coeur enflammé, disons mieux, elle

le lui 'passe,' comme une cuisinière passe un tire-bouchon par le soupirail de son sous-sol à quelqu'un qui le lui demande à la fenêtre du rez-de-chaussée. [Through the painter's beautiful invention she tramples on the treasures of the earth but absolutely as if she were pressing grapes underfoot to extract the juice or rather as she would have climbed on sacks to raise herself up; and she holds out to God her heart in flames, or rather, let us say that she 'passes' it to him the way a cook passes a corkscrew through the cellar opening to someone at the ground floor window who asks her for it.] (I, 81)

Despite the prosaic evocation of the corkscrew and the cook, it is clear that Giotto's Charity in Combray as in Padua is the symbol or allegorical emblem of the essence of Proustian activity. Bearing human suffering, "tous les malheurs de la terre [all the misfortunes of the earth]" (I, 121), she incarnates love as the ultimate gift by literally offering her ardent heart to God.

Proust quotes the source of this passage, Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, in the notes to *En mémoire des églises assassinées* (CSB 97):

A la chapelle de l'Arena elle se distingue de toutes les autres vertus à la gloire circulaire qui environne sa tête et à sa croix de feu. Elle est couronnée de fleurs, tend dans sa main droite un vase de blé et de fleurs, et dans la gauche reçoit un trésor du Christ qui apparaît au-dessus d'elle pour lui donner le moyen de remplir son incessant office de bienfaisance, tandis qu'elle foule aux pieds les trésors de la terre (CSB 744). [In the Arena Chapel she is distinguished from all the other virtues by having a circular glory round her head, and a cross of fire; she is crowned with flowers, presents with her right hand a vase of corn and fruit, and with her left receives treasure from Christ, who appears above her, to provide her with the means of continual offices of beneficence, while she tramples underfoot the treasures of the earth.] (X: 397)

Proust also quotes a passage that he and his editors attribute to *The Eagle's Nest*, another work by Ruskin: "à Padoue la Charité de Giotto tend dans sa main son coeur à Dieu, foule aux pieds des sacs d'or, les trésors de la terre, et donne seulement du blé et des fleurs (CSB 745) [in Padua the Charity of Giotto gives her heart to God, while she tramples upon bags of gold, the treasures of the earth, and gives only corn and flowers]" (XXVII: 130; X: 397). Proust's translations of Ruskin's representation of Giotto's Charity include yet another version quoted at the end of a non-fictional text, without a reference other than quotation marks. It is the most "Proustian" of the three passages, i.e. it most closely approximates Proust's formulation in *Combray*: "cette figure de la Charité que Giotto a peinte à Padoue . . . et dont Ruskin a souvent parlé dans ses livres, 'foulant aux pieds des sacs d'or, tous les trésors de la terre, donnant seulement du blé et des fleurs, et tendant à Dieu, dans ses maux, son coeur enflammée' [the figure of Charity that Giotto painted in Padua . . . and that Ruskin often mentioned in his books, 'while she tramples upon bags of gold, all the treasures of the earth, and gives only corn and flowers; and from the depth of her sufferings, she gives to God her heart in flames']" The allegorical rendering of *La Charité de Giotto* emphasizes a certain form of *passion*. Ruskin's different readings of Giotto's Charity reveal the mystical confluence of giving and receiving; this ambivalence is justified by iconographic tradition and by the attitude of Giotto's Charity herself. But there can be no doubt about what Ruskin calls "l'ardeur de son amour [the glowing of her love]" (CSB 744), and Proust's translations of Ruskin echo the same words, quoted from another author: "M. Mâle a dit admirablement: 'La Charité qui tend à Dieu son coeur enflammé . . .' [M. Mâle has said it admirably: 'Charity who offers to God her heart in flames . . .']" (CSB 745).

Among the elements borrowed from Ruskin's description of *La Charité* the crucial one is most evident in the third version quoted above. As the *chute de phrase*, it stands out from the rest of the sentence: "son coeur enflammé [her heart in flames]." The "enflamed" (impassioned) heart of Charity is

offered to God. Given Ruskin's importance for Proust, as well as the key role played in Ruskin's aesthetic by *La Charité de Giotto*, Proust's use of this source is hardly surprising. A closer reading of the sentence, however, reveals subtle but important differences between Proust's translation and the description he incorporates in the *Recherche* through the fictional voice of the narrator.

In the most "Proustian" of Ruskin's descriptions of Charity, three verbs in the form of present participles structure the sentence: "foulant," "donnant," "tendant." Proust's sentence (on I, 81, quoted above) reproduces them in the present indicative, with minor changes: "foulant" becomes "foule," "tendant" becomes "tend." The latter, however, becomes the second in a series of three verbs, and instead of "donne," Proust writes "passe." He brings this verb into relief by using it twice, once with the feigned artificiality of superfluous quotation marks that underscore the metaphorical quality of the image, and a second time in the literal, material meaning of "give." He expands the sentence with another tripartite structure, the three similes. Given Proust's predilection for a somewhat pedantic tone in certain descriptive passages of the novel (an unconscious echo of the master, perhaps?), it would be difficult to defend the hypothesis that the hyperbole and the conversational tone or prolixity of this sentence form a deliberate imitation of Ruskin's style. I would suggest, however, that this sentence offers an example of *serious* parody or imitation of Ruskin (in contrast to the comic version, exemplified by Proust's pastiche entitled "La Bénédiction du sanglier. Etude des Fresques de Giotto représentant l'Affaire Lemoine à l'usage des jeunes étudiantes du Corpus Christi qui se soucient encore d'elle, par John Ruskin [The Benediction of the Wild Pig. Study of Giotto's Frescoes Representing the Lemoine Affair for the Use of the Young Students of Corpus Christi who are Concerned with it, by John Ruskin]").

The master of metaphor builds this strategic sentence with the repetition of "comme." In "A Propos du 'style' de Flaubert," Proust writes: "je crois que la métaphore seule peut donner une sorte d'éternité au style [I believe that metaphor

alone can give a kind of eternity to style]" (CSB 586). Where then lies the *Proustian* eloquence of the sentence in question? Ironically, it would seem that the Ruskinian prolixity displayed in the similes and parallel verbs acts as a disguise for the truly Ruskinian core of the sentence, its jewel of metaphor: "et elle tend à Dieu son coeur enflammé [and she gives to God her heart in flames]." For "donnant" read "passe": the gift is a passage. At the core of the mystical offering of "Caritas" is the core of Proust's sentence: the heart. Proust evokes and translates Ruskin's image of it in a text entitled "Pèlerinages ruskiniens en France [Ruskinian Pilgrimages in France]," published in *Le Figaro* on February 13, 1900 (and signed "Marcel Proust"):

Tel qu'il fut, chrétien, moraliste, économiste, esthéticien; renonçant à sa fortune, donnant la beauté au monde, mais soucieux aussi d'y diminuer l'injustice et donnant son coeur à Dieu, il fait penser à cette figure de la Charité que Giotto a peinte à Padoue et dont Ruskin a souvent parlé dans ses livres, 'foulant aux pieds des sacs d'or, tous les trésors de la terre, donnant seulement du blé et des fleurs, et tendant à Dieu, dans ses maux, son coeur enflammé.' [As he was, Christian, moralist, economist, aesthetician; renouncing his fortune, giving beauty to the world, but concerned as well about diminishing injustice in it and giving his heart to God, he evokes the figure of Charity that Giotto painted in Padua, and about which Ruskin spoke often in his books, 'while she tramples upon bags of gold, all the treasures of the earth, and gives only corn and flowers; and from the depth of her suffering, she gives to God her heart in flames.'] (CSB 443-44)

This obituary marks the site of an aesthetic and scriptural transmission camouflaged and preserved as an act of "passage" in *A la recherche*.

Proust's ambivalent adoration and condemnation of Ruskin are reflected in the allegorical figures of Charity and Idolatry. In this eloquent obituary, however, the author's identity

and judgment are veiled in silence. He may be found receiving the Ruskinian transmission somewhere between “giving beauty to the world” and “giving his heart to God,” in the anticipated role of the artist. The heart of Ruskin/Charity concludes the obituary that began with a comparison of Ruskin’s soul—and particularly its immateriality, contrasted with the body laid to rest at Coniston—to the focus of Romantic necrology, the heart of the poet. Proust writes:

je propose à ses amis de France de célébrer autrement le ‘culte de ce héros,’ je veux dire en esprit et en vérité, par des pèlerinages aux lieux qui gardent son âme (tel ce tombeau d’Italie qui s’intitule le tombeau de Shelley et qui du poète, dont le reste du corps fut consumé par la flamme, ne contient que le coeur) et qui lui confièrent la leur, pour qu’en la faisant passer dans ses livres, il la rendît immortelle. [I propose to his friends in France that they celebrate otherwise the ‘cult of this hero,’ I mean in spirit and in truth, with pilgrimages to the places that possess his soul (like the grave in Italy that bears the name of Shelley and that contains of the poet, consumed in the rest of his body by flames, only the heart) and that entrusted their soul to him, in order that by filtering it [la faisant passer] into his books, he render it immortal.] (CSB 441)

The centerpiece of Proust’s intertextual tribute to Ruskin (the description of *La Charité de Giotto* in the *Recherche*) is the heart of Proust’s revelation of allegory: “et elle tend à Dieu son coeur enflammé [and she passes to God her heart in flames].” Through the image of the poet’s heart and its passage through flame, Proust prefigures the connection between Giotto’s Charity and Ruskin that ends the obituary. The hero’s soul and its truth meshes with the poet’s heart in a striking comparison that concludes with a passage of the soul/heart duality into the writing of books. The exchange between place and spectator, the offering of souls, concludes with immortality: if Proust’s remarks are read retrospectively, in light of the *Recherche* and in particular its remarks about Charity, the

heart of the poet, and immortality, then perhaps it is the suffering heart, caught up in material reality and desire—the “saisissant” and the “frappant” of the “effectivement subi [effectively suffered]” (I, 82)—that passes through form to give its power to allegory. The passage in question recalls Flaubert’s “adieu to the personal”: the heart is dissolved in the eternity of ink.

Allegory is inseparable from the revelation of the weaving and unweaving of time, its invisible substance theorized by Proust and Benjamin. Its effects are marked with the stamp of *Nachträglichkeit*, belatedness:

Mais plus tard j’ai compris que l’étrangeté saisissante, la beauté spéciale de ces fresques tenait à la grande place que le symbole y occupait, et que le fait qu’il fût représenté, non comme un symbole puisque la pensée symbolisée n’était pas exprimée, mais comme réel, comme effectivement subi ou matériellement manié, donnait à la signification de l’oeuvre quelque chose de plus littéral et de plus précis, à son enseignement quelque chose de plus concret et de plus frappant. [But later I understood that the startling strangeness, the particular beauty of these frescoes depended on the large space that the symbol occupied in them, and that the fact that it was represented, not as a symbol since the symbolized thought was not expressed, but as real, as effectively suffered or materially handled, gave to the meaning of the work something more literal and more precise, to its teaching something more concrete and striking.] (I, 82)

Proust establishes his singular version of allegory through the fictional role of Giotto’s Charity, a figurative portrait that illustrates the artistic weight of the symbol and its representation of the real. Proust’s explanation points to the convergence of allegory and metaphor, image and language, in “quelque chose de plus littéral [something more literal].” The style and vision of the *Recherche* can be seen as the effect of this gap between thought (or the idea) and the letter.

In this framework, Proust’s three interjections, the similes

qualifying *La Charité de Giotto*, may be read in terms of their allegorical resonances. The extraction of juice from earthly grapes, the act of raising the self toward God, the “passing” of the corkscrew—these images, in the context of Giotto’s fresco, are figures of the sacrament founded in the Passion. Christ’s love, the offering of flesh and blood, gives rise to transubstantiation, the central term in Proust’s aesthetic. Although it is unspoken here, transubstantiation is the miracle of style exemplified by Vermeer’s *View of Delft*, and the little panel of yellow wall that performs an uncanny “open sesame” for Bergotte. The symbol and the real add up to something literal—poetic truth, unhindered by the mysteries and veils of idolatry.<sup>8</sup> Ruskin’s transmission has been enacted. Transubstantiation may now occur: “Il fallait bien que ces Vertus et ces Vices de Padoue eussent en eux bien de la réalité puisqu’ils m’apparaissaient comme aussi vivants que la servante enceinte, et qu’elle-même ne me semblait pas beaucoup moins allégorique [These Virtues and Vices of Padua must have contained within themselves quite a lot of reality since to me they appeared to be as lifelike as the pregnant maid, and she herself did not seem much less allegorical]” (I, 82). Proust’s version of *La Charité de Giotto* may be considered as a portrait of the artist who creates the incarnation of allegory.

Art marks the mystical passage of the enflamed heart, the Passover leap of the angel, the pillar of light. This privileged moment enters the creation of Combray from the liturgy of Easter. Proust underscores the mystical character of Charity when he quotes Mâle: “‘*La Charité* qui tend à Dieu son coeur enflammé est du pays de St François d’Assise’ [The Charity who holds out to God her heart in flames is from the region of St Francis of Assisi]” (CSB 745). The aesthetic consequences of mystical love are confirmed in a quotation from *The Stones of Venice*: “‘La beauté propre à la plupart des conceptions italiennes de la Charité est qu’elles subordonnent la bien-faisance à l’ardeur de son amour, toujours figuré par des flammes’” (CSB 744) [‘The peculiar beauty of most of the Italian conceptions of Charity is in the subjection of mere munificence to the glowing of her love, always represented by

flames’]” (X: 397). The complex layering of fiction and aesthetics revolves around the living allegory of Charity. Her portrait introduces the representation of symbolicity and the rhetoric of allegory into the construction of Proust’s cathedral, where the dimensions of the letter take the irreducible aesthetic form of a medieval fresco. At the same time, this artistic vision is rooted in a moral and ethical constellation intimately linked with the cathedral structure of *A la recherche*. Proust “translates” Giotto’s revelation through color of the visible into a revelation of the invisible—reading, imagination, subjectivity, time—through the letter.

Chosen from among the Vices and Virtues of Padua, Charity is the vehicle not only for the allegory of reading, but for the symbolic proportions of the Proustian enterprise as well. In the context of the turn or conversion that founds the artist’s vocation, Proust’s insistent repetition of the term of “incarnation” is doubled or tripled in the unfolded layers of reading that illustrate the operative effects of allegory. A kitchenmaid takes on the form of Giotto’s matron, and then the incarnation of Giotto’s Charity: she becomes this double incarnation because of a third form, (pro-)creation. The narrator enters the world of reading, thereby taking up forms that deliciously blur and suspend his own so-called identity. This is the first step toward his incarnation of reading: the book to be written out of his own life, the creation infinitely transmitted or offered to other readers.

Even when she finally gives birth, *La Charité de Giotto*, now called by her allegorical name, is still associated with her basket, filled with the asparagus described through the exquisite details and colors of the flowers “dans la corbeille de la Vertu de Padoue [in the basket of the Virtue of Padua]” (I, 121). Her affect is still “douloureux, comme si elle ressentait tous les malheurs de la terre [sorrowful, as if she felt all the misfortunes of the earth]” (I, 121); among the stars and azure crowns of the asparagus, she seems to evoke the angels painted in the Scenes at Padua. They too are “douloureux,” mourning the death of Christ with a show of emotion that instantly displaces the hieratic poses and the Byzantine formalism of the

painter's contemporaries. Giotto offers a possible model for Proust's own rendering of subjectivity, displaced from the codes of the nineteenth century, inaugurating literary modernity. With Dante and the Proust of *la Charité*, Giotto renders medieval vision through the intensely personalized identity of the modern subject. *La Charité de Giotto* suffers, "très malade de son accouchement récent [very ill from her recent childbirth]"; she stays in bed ("ne pouvait se lever" [I, 121]); her ever-present basket of asparagus provokes asthma attacks (I, 124). . . .

#### Les vices et les vertus

Unlike Swann, Françoise, Mme Sazerat, and so on, "la Charité de Giotto" is not a character; she is pure allegory. Her place in the text is predicated on her "condition of pregnancy." Like her suffering, her sorrowful air, and her eventual disappearance due to violent attacks of asthma, her pregnancy resonates on the level of what is called "autobiography," or what I would prefer to call indirect autobiography, the fictional portrait of the artist. The narrator's vision of creation becomes *material* or *real* through the pregnancy of "la Charité," the allegory of spiritual fecundity and "accouchement." In this particular instance, Proust's vision of the real prefigures Lacan's "Réel." By definition, the "Real" eludes the psychic agencies and conceptualizations of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Like Proust's investigation of reality and its sexual ground, Lacan's elaboration of the Real is often related to the subject of maternity.<sup>9</sup>

In an empty interior space, a non-conceptual "trou" or hole, the narrator places the object of future exaltation; the mystical moments of vision give rise to a future *Magnificat*, an offering to God of a fiery heart. The single real pleasure of the narrator's life, these visionary moments are contrasted with the futility and "sterility" that previously haunted him: "cette contemplation, quoique d'éternité, était fugitive. Et pourtant je sentais que le plaisir qu'elle m'avait, à de rares intervalles, donné dans ma vie, était le seul qui fût fécond et véritable

[this contemplation, although of eternity, was fleeting. And yet I had the feeling that the pleasure it had given to me at rare intervals in my life was the only one that was fruitful and true]" (III, 875). Later, he remarks: "On peut presque dire que les oeuvres, comme dans les puits artésiens, montent d'autant plus haut que la souffrance a plus profondément creusé le coeur [One can almost state that oeuvres, as in artesian wells, rise higher the more deeply suffering has hollowed out the heart]" (III, 908). As creation, Charity's childbirth opens the universe of reading for the narrator. The narrator's understanding and appreciation of Giotto's allegory occur belatedly (*nachträglich*), and the transition from the universe of reading to the interior creation of the book is also belated. The offering of beauty and the heart is delayed until the narrator's vision will have taken its belated effect: "La valeur objective des arts est peu de chose en cela; ce qu'il s'agit de faire sortir, d'amener à la lumière, ce sont nos sentiments, nos passions, c'est-à-dire les passions, les sentiments de tous [The objective value of the arts is modest in that respect; the things that must be brought out, held up to the light, are our sentiments, our passions, in other words, the passions, sentiments, of everyone]" (III, 907). This comment about the narrator's preference for the company of Albertine rather than Elstir recalls Swann's preference for Odette rather than his aesthetic "object," the painting of Giotto, Botticelli, Vermeer.

The gift of the heart and the heart's gift of beauty in aesthetic form repeatedly link Proust's figure of Charity to the figure of the Virgin. Climbing on "sacks" in order to raise herself up, Proust's *Charité de Giotto* rises through the earthly treasures of the flesh to a symbolic domain that is paradoxically linked for all time to a passage through jouissance and death . . . an incarnation. The immeasurable distance between the voice of God and the unspeakable fall into the materiality and corruption of flesh maps out the territory of the impossible—the point of incarnation and its counter-signature, resurrection. Mary's *Magnificat* answers the Annunciation (Luke 1:35): *Exaltabo*, she begins, My soul doth magnify the Lord. A pure fire of love and her paradoxical flesh without sin raise



her like Charity to the heights of divine poetic voice and ear —another name for what is generally called mystical love. In this context, it might appear that critics who repeat the narrator's statements about Swann's idolatry are playing into the hands of Proust's fiction, while Swann "himself," a vehicle of allegory who bears allegorical reproductions, stands for a Proustian inseparability of love and creation. In this sense, the representations of the narrator and Swann can only be separated on certain fictional levels and in terms of the messianic structure of the *Recherche*.

According to the terms of this structure, then, Swann's fatal mistakes form the theater for the narrator's apprenticeship. He founders in aesthetic idolatry and displaces his focus on aesthetic creation to an investment in love. Doubly negated, Swann's vision of art figures a kind of photographic negative of the double gift of creation according to *La Charité de Giotto*, who offers beauty to the world and her heart to God. Swann abandons all hopes of Ruskinian gifts of beauty when he falls in love with Odette, and offers his heart to a paragon of feminine corruption and evil. Does she represent the keeper of the treasures of the earth? the monster symbolizing Idolatry at Amiens?<sup>10</sup> The ungodliness of both Odette and Albertine is such that true words cross their lips only by mistake, either when they lose track of their own intricate lies or when innate vulgarity gives them away. Odette turns Swann's potential for creation into a double negation: not only does she become a substitute for his Ruskinian vocation, she destroys all memory of him after his death. When she consigns Swann to silence and erases his name, her behavior recalls the sadism of Françoise who effects the literal disappearance<sup>11</sup> of *la Charité de Giotto* by torturing the kitchenmaid until she gives notice.

But Swann's gift of allegorical reproductions is ultimately a gift of allegorical reproduction itself. Charity is doubled by the Virgin, the gift of the enflamed heart is doubled by the powers of allegorical writing in the book the narrator will write to save Swann from oblivion, and the words of the *Magnificat*:

Swann possédait une merveilleuse écharpe orientale, bleue et rose, qu'il avait achetée parce que c'était exactement celle de la Vierge du *Magnificat*. Mais Mme Swann ne voulait pas la porter. Une fois seulement elle laissa son mari lui commander une toilette toute criblée de pâquerettes, de bleuets, de myosotis et de campanules d'après la Primavera du *Printemps*. Parfois, le soir, quand elle était fatiguée, il me faisait remarquer tout bas comme elle donnait, sans s'en rendre compte, à ses mains pensives le mouvement délié, un peu tourmenté de la Vierge qui trempe sa plume dans l'encrier que lui tend l'ange, avant d'écrire sur le livre saint où est déjà tracé le mot "Magnificat." [Swann possessed a marvelous Oriental scarf, blue and pink, that he had bought because it was exactly the one worn by the Virgin in the *Magnificat*. But Mme Swann did not want to wear it. Only once she allowed her husband to order a dress covered with daisies, cornflowers, forget-me-nots, and bellflowers like the one worn by la Primavera in *Spring*. At night sometimes, when she was tired, he remarked to me in a very low voice that without her knowledge, her pensive hands took on the loosened and slightly tormented movement of the Virgin who dips her quill in the inkwell held out to her by the angel before writing in the holy book where the word "Magnificat" already has been traced.] (I, 617)

Odette refuses Swann's vision of art, and his displaced vocation leads him to renounce the heights. He would be forever silenced, fallen "very low," were it not for the comments he makes in a hushed voice to the narrator. Proust's allegory indicates that only the narrator can take up the Virgin's pen and redeem the fallen Swann.

Given the proliferation of allegory in the *Recherche*, how can the disappearance of "The 'Vices and the Virtues' of Padua and Combray" from *Le Temps retrouvé* be explained? In other words, what is the status of Proustian allegory, simultaneously offered and retracted, disseminated and yet erased? The split between vice and virtue, Padua and Combray, already informs

the evocation of *La Charité de Giotto*. In the completed typed draft and published version of *Combray*, an additional split enters the picture. Invisible rather than pictorial, it elaborates the temporal rhetoric of allegory. Proust writes: "Mais plus tard j'ai compris . . . [But later I understood . . .]" (I, 82). Understanding occurs as a belated effect of the narrator's apprenticeship to Swann: he bears the mystery and resonant code of allegory, and he offers it as a gift of hieroglyphics. Like Flaubert's modern allegories of antiquity, the code of *La Charité de Giotto* is suspended in the framework of modern fiction.

The infinitely meaningful dimensions of allegory are the belated effect of its status as an emblem, a display of hidden meaning. Its splendor is never completely revealed, and as an aesthetic object it can never be fully mastered by the "limits" that define its significance. Out of mystery, then, comes belated understanding. The abyss of time takes shape in the foreplay of pleasure, a symbolic jouissance caused by the narrator's eventual "understanding" of the Giotto fresco. In the context of knowledge and enjoyment, the manuscripts show that Charity originally hung in the narrator's bedroom before he displaced the scene of apprenticeship to the "salle d'études [study]."<sup>12</sup> Later the narrator moves out of the bedroom where his love for Albertine held them both hostage. As he attained allegorical understanding by moving beyond the death that devours Swann, he passes beyond Albertine's death to take a trip with Maman.

Here the reader discovers a doubling of the *Nachträglichkeit* that characterized the narrator's appreciation of Giotto's Charity: the excursion to Padua was once supposed to take place during the narrator's childhood. In addition, Proust gives a particularly virtuoso performance of belatedness when he proposes the trip to Padua as an occasion "pour revoir ces 'Vices' et ces 'Vertus' dont M. Swann m'avait donné des reproductions, probablement accrochées encore dans la salle d'études de la maison de Combray [in order to see again those 'Vices' and 'Vertues' of which M. Swann had given me reproductions, probably still hanging in the study of the house at

Combray]" (III, 648). Because of these temporal layers, the explanation of the disappearance of "Les 'Vices et les Vertus' de Padoue et de Combray" from *Le Temps retrouvé* must be delayed until after a brief summary of the textual history reconstructed by genetic studies.<sup>13</sup>

The question of the Vices and Virtues is present in various stages of *Combray* and *Le Temps retrouvé*, including the early manuscripts of *Contre Sainte-Beuve*. The first evocation of these allegories in the novel occurs in the narrator's description of *La Charité de Giotto* in *Combray*: "Et je me rends compte maintenant que ces Vertus et ces Vices de Padoue lui ressemblaient d'une autre manière [And I realize now that these Virtues and Vices of Padua resembled her in another way]" (I, 81).

The narrator's appreciation of the reproductions of the Vices and Virtues, a gift from Swann, is delayed until an unspecified "later," but his understanding seems to have already occurred when the allegories are explicitly evoked in the account of a trip to Padua (*La Fugitive*, III, 648). According to Bernard Brun's genetic reconstruction of *A la recherche*, *La Prisonnière* and *La Fugitive* are rooted in the project of *Le Temps retrouvé*. The discussion of Giotto comes to light as a reflection of the "original" Giotto motif: Padua inversely mirrors Combray, i.e. it repeats the image of Combray, but time has turned it inside out and revealed its structural role as a point of origin. The reproduction is the source of *La Charité de Giotto*. When the narrator enters the chapel of Santa Maria dell'Arena, Proust returns to the reproduction and builds the chapel as a repetition of that small image of Charity, an allegory of an allegory of an allegory. I will return to this spiraling image and its role in the interpretation of Proust's allegorical landscape following the genetic commentary on the evolution of the Giotto motif.

Proust makes extensive use of materials from the *Sainte-Beuve* project, notably the "matinées," the sounds and odors of the street, and the article published in *Le Figaro* (III, 9, 16, 567).<sup>14</sup> Proust seems to displace material from the *matinée* with Maman to a later time in the novel. Despite the labyrin-

thine silences that characterize Proustian "chronology," the temporal layering in this instance is not simply double (lost and found), since the insertion of this material prior to the *matinée* of the *Princesse de Guermantes* creates a third temporal focus.<sup>15</sup> The third layer, however, is located in the mysterious silence of the Proustian tapestry or in an unlocalized temporal cloud. In contrast to this silence of writing, fiction loudly proclaims the two terms of Venice and Combray, Saint-Marc and Saint Hilaire. The narrator comments: "J'y goûtai des impressions analogues à celles que j'avais ressenties si souvent à Combray, mais transposées sur un mode différent et plus riche [There I enjoyed impressions analogous to those that I had felt so often in Combray, but transposed into a different and richer mode]" (III, 623). There are other doubles: Madame Sazerat reappears, and the narrator takes the trip to Italy that he nearly took as a child (III, 630, 623 ff.).

The object of scholarly genetic studies seems to take a Romantic form through an organic model of textuality. In Proust's case, the fiction of a quasi-organic internal spiral of art and life strangely parallels the genetic model. The effect of genetic studies resonates on the symbolic level of Proust's doubles: the genetic term of "bipartition" indicates a form of sexual reproduction by meiosis that is an effect of Swann's reproductions of the Vices and Virtues, including *la Charité de Giotto*. Allegory gives rise to more allegory—not by chance is the model for Proustian reproduction a sexual one. Lost and found: the repetition of life is inseparable from death. Contrary to common opinion, the doubled or messianic structure is a response to that knowledge rather than a repression of it.

The function of reproduction in Proust's fiction may be the cause of the particular bipartition (division) affecting the Vices and Virtues. The result of cutting and pasting is a doubling of Proust's allegorical dimensions à la Giotto that occurs late in the chronology of Proust's composition, on a typed manuscript. The kitchenmaid, Swann's gift, and the trip to Padua originally composed an undivided ensemble<sup>16</sup> until Proust crossed out the trip to Padua and wrote "cut here." Although *La Prisonnière* and *La Fugitive* were not conceived before World

War I, when he had this version typed, he had already imagined another trip to Venice and Padua. According to a recent study,<sup>17</sup> he planned to insert this second trip prior to the text of *Le Temps retrouvé*.

The earliest evocations of the voyage to Italy and the allegorical art the narrator admires there are presented in a Proustian form of allegory as emblematic spirals of meaning, symbolic doubles or layers, and fragments independent of the fictional plot. The Venetian motif is founded in Cahier 3 (1908), among the Cahiers Sainte-Beuve, and Cahier 5 includes a visit to Santa Maria dell'Arena. A narrative link does not occur until Cahier 8, when the episodes of Françoise and the grande-tante, Eulalie's visits, and so on, appear in coherent narrative form. This text<sup>18</sup> is now considered to be the first rough draft of *Combray*.

The current and definitive form of the episode appears in Cahier 10. The two pages concerning the trip to Padua have been cut out. (In the typed version, the passage is simply crossed out.) The description of the frescoes and their symbolism is missing from Cahier 10, however, and has been located in an autograph classified as the "Proust 21."<sup>19</sup> As if in tacit accord with the symbolic stratification typical of allegory, the manuscript layers multiply. Proust inserts another copy in the form of a note that contains this description of the frescoes, and then he adds an additional copy of the trip to Padua. He annuls the crossing-out made previously and joins this passage to the rest of the typed version according to Cahier 10. In 1911 he crosses the trip out of the typed version of *Combray*, and in 1916 he cuts it out in order to include it in the composition of *La Fugitive*.

Bernard Brun concludes that the voyage to Padua is first linked to the reproductions at the time when Proust introduced a "message" into the work; the breaking of this link was a second step, a rupture and a displacement, related to the creation of *Le Temps retrouvé*. He describes the introduction of the message and its later reappearance as revelation in terms of an "initiatory progression" and a "final message."<sup>20</sup> The reader is struck by a resemblance between the vocabula-

ries of the genetic study and Proust's fiction; the division of Giotto's Padua emblemizes the doubling of the Vices and Virtues, the allegory that enters the ground of writing. Once again, however, the doubles are threatened by a third element that cannot be easily assimilated into the structure of "bipartition." The origin of the narrator's vision of Giotto, and within the fictional realm of the *Recherche*, the origin of the Giotto paintings themselves, is the site of a displaced or perverted origin that is doubly allegorical: the narrator's Charity is not the original fresco in Padua, but rather its reproduction. The silence of the realization ("later I understood [Mais plus tard j'ai compris]") is related to the perversity of a meditation that falsifies guaranteed origins. One could name this essential phenomenon of belatedness the Swann effect.

#### A la fin d'un roman.

The question of why Proust erased "The 'Vices and the Virtues' of Padua and Combray" from *Le Temps retrouvé* still remains unanswered. In the light of this disappearance, is it possible to claim that Proust's enterprise is steeped in allegory? If the reader concedes that Proust's work is inseparable from allegorical representation, then what is the status or interpretive weight of that blank space preceded by a crossing-out? To answer these questions, it will be necessary to read the doubling of the text, the subterranean continuation of *la Charité de Giotto*. Marked by "bipartition"—a rupture, a repetition, an after-effect—this paradoxical continuation may be a form of forgetting as well, the "oubli" essential to Proust's invention of "involuntary memory."

He marks the tempo of the two pages introducing the trip to Venice (III, 623–24) with the repetition of "as in Combray." The narrator describes his impressions of the beauty of Venice: "j'y goûtai des impressions analogues à celles que j'avais si souvent ressenties autrefois à Combray, mais, transposées . . . [There I enjoyed impressions analogous to those that I had felt so often in Combray, but transposed . . .]" Saint-Hilaire is compared to Saint-Marc, daily life in Venice is no less real

than daily life in Combray: "comme à Combray le dimanche matin. . . . comme à Combray les bonnes gens de la rue de l'Oiseau . . . [as in Combray on Sunday mornings. . . . as in Combray the good people of the rue de l'Oiseau . . .]," and so on. Proust's Padua takes the form of a self-contained extension of Venice (although in terms of allegory in the *Recherche*, Venice might have grown out of Padua). On the fictional level, he locates the narrative episode of the Venice trip under the sign of the opposition between Combray and Padua/Venice. Since the ecstasy of involuntary memory opens and closes the *Recherche* with the revelation of two places—Combray at the beginning, during the matinée with Maman, and Venice at the end, during the "matinée held by the princesse de Guermantes"—this opposition is particularly important for the fictional experience of conversion. The question remains, however, whether this opposition concerns the allegory of the Vices and Virtues.

Within the Venetian episode, the continuation of *la Charité de Giotto* takes the form of a visit to Giotto's chapel in the "real" Santa Maria dell'Arena. The central panel in a miniature triptych (III, 648), this visit is preceded by an evocation of art and the narrator's "travail" à la Swann (III, 645–47)—à la Ruskin: "un travail que je faisais sur Ruskin [some work I was doing on Ruskin]" (III, 645). It is followed by an evocation of life in the world (the farewell to Padua, letters announcing the two marriages, a dialogue concerning these marriages [III, 655–59]). Like the *Recherche* itself, the trip to Venice is under the sign of the pulsation of desire, its rhythm of alternation. Irreducible to a mimetic mechanism, this phenomenon is inscribed earlier in the *Recherche* as "the intermittences of the heart." Love is inextricably linked to death: consecrated by absence and made permanent, it vanishes beneath the cloud of lost time and identity, leaving its only traces in the symbolic death that paradoxically marks its disappearance. The narrator's trajectory of love takes him through the loss of his grandmother and the presence of Albertine to Venice. This city is the site of a complex layering or palimpsest of absences; indeed, it is Albertine's absence, if not her death, that makes it possible for the narrator (held captive by his "prisoner") to

travel to Venice at all. The palimpsest of feminine deaths includes an element of temporal depth: Albertine's ascendance coincided with the effacement of the mother and the disappearance of the grandmother, whereas the trip to Venice is placed under the sign of the presence of the mother and the definitive disappearance of Albertine. This return to the original love of the narrator (his tête-à-tête with Maman) is marked by the turn or return of the narrator's vocation.

As Swann's love for Odette consigned his own symbolic disappearance, the narrator's love for Albertine confirmed his inability to engage in a search for his own vocation. Maman occupies the opposite pole in this structure, since she will create the conditions necessary for the revelation of "involuntary memory." Under her watchful eye, the narrator marks the birth or return of his vocation in the Baptistery of Saint-Marc.

The sacrament of baptism is central to the narrative of the life of Christ and his prophetic vocation. In the early Christian church, the ceremony of baptism occurred at the climax of the conversion experience, during the vigil of Holy Saturday. Its Judaic antecedents, or rather the Christian borrowings from Judaism, include both the ceremony of naming and a Passover tradition of re-enacting the paschal night of sacrifice, Exodus and the pillar of fire. Venice/Padua joins Balbec (the pillar of fire at Rivebelle) and Combray ("Holy Week") as a privileged site of Proustian memory and vocation, subtly harmonized through the liturgical motif of Easter/Passover. In order to take notes for his work on Ruskin, the narrator explains, "Nous entrions, ma mère et moi, dans le baptistère . . . [We would enter, my mother and I, the baptistery . . .]" (III, 646). The excursion to Saint-Marc opens the first panel, focusing on art, of the miniature triptych representing Giotto's Padua at its heart. Following his insistence on the parallel between Venice and Combray, Proust emphasizes the symbolic importance of the Baptistery. It resonates through the named architectural symbolism, the scenes of Christ's baptism, and the mosaic art that figures the narrator's conversion in an unarticulated *tolle, lege*. He takes up the book in "la précieuse reliure, en quelque cuir de Cordoue, du colossal

Evangile de Venise [the precious binding made of some Cordoba leather of the colossal Gospel of Venice]" (III, 646). Engaged in reading it, he lingers: "Voyant que j'avais à rester longtemps devant les mosaïques qui représentent le baptême du Christ, ma mère, sentant la fraîcheur glacée qui tombait dans le baptistère, me jetait un châle sur les épaules [Seeing that I would have to linger for a long while before the mosaics that represent Christ's baptism, my mother, feeling the chilled freshness that was falling in the baptistery, would throw a shawl over my shoulders]" (III, 646).

The passionate and virginal maternal figure ("la ferveur . . . de la femme âgée qu'on voit dans la *Sainte Ursule* de Carpaccio [the fervor . . . of the elderly woman who is seen in Carpaccio's *Saint Ursula*]" ) brings the narrator out of his narrative context and into the future of a present tense: "Une heure est venue pour moi où, quand je me rappelle le baptistère, devant les flots du Jourdain où saint Jean immerge le Christ . . . il ne m'est pas indifférent que . . . à côté de moi, il y eût une femme drapée dans son deuil avec la ferveur . . . [An hour has come for me when, remembering the baptistery, in front of the Jordan waters where Saint John immerses Christ . . . it is not a matter of indifference . . . that next to me, there was a woman draped in mourning with the fervor . . .]" (III, 646). He contrasts his pleasure of mourning, increased by the previous visit to Saint-Marc with his mother, to that same pleasure mentioned by Albertine at Balbec and dismissed as a pure illusion on her part. The microscopic opposition between Albertine and Maman is rooted in the Venetian art of Carpaccio. But the extension of this artistic comparison clearly opposes the mother's abnegation to Albertine's worldly desires for luxury that had caused the narrator's financial ruin. Maman is identified with the mosaics of Saint-Marc, but Albertine is recalled wearing the Fortuny overcoat that disappears with her after a visit to a monument of worldly pleasures, Versailles ("elle avait jeté sur ses épaules un manteau de Fortuny qu'elle avait emporté le lendemain et que je n'avais jamais revu depuis dans mes souvenirs [she had thrown over her shoulders a Fortuny coat that she had taken the next day and

that I had never seen since then in my memories]" [III, 647]).<sup>21</sup> Rendered permanent in Saint-Marc, Maman's virtue is contrasted with the vice of Albertine, twice fugitive. Her flight ended in her death and in another "fuite," the disappearance of the narrator's love for her, his "retour vers l'indifférence [return toward indifference]" (III, 643).

Hovering between the fin de siècle terms of art and life, the quasi-nameless narrator lingers in the Baptistery. His namelessness, described earlier as negative baptism, guarantees Proust's own vocation even as it walks the borderline between fiction and an unverifiable moment of "autobiography." Negative baptism suspends the narrator's identity between creator and creation. It marks this fictional identity (as fiction and in fiction) with the stigmata of indirect autobiography, and takes on the decisive proportions of the writer's vocation in Saint-Marc.

Une heure est venue pour moi où, quand je me rappelle le baptistère devant les flots du Jourdain où saint Jean immerge le Christ . . . il ne m'est pas indifférent que dans cette fraîche pénombre, à côté de moi, il y eût une femme . . . et que cette femme . . . que rien ne pourra plus jamais faire sortir pour moi de ce sanctuaire doucement éclairé de Saint-Marc où je suis sur de la retrouver parce qu'elle y a sa place réservée et immuable comme une mosaïque, ce soit ma mère. [An hour has come for me when, remembering the baptistery in front of the Jordan waters where Saint John immerses Christ, . . . it is not a matter of indifference that in the fresh half light, next to me, there was a woman . . . and that this woman . . . whom nothing will ever be able to take out of the softly lit sanctuary of Saint Mark where I am sure to find her because her place there is reserved and as immutable as a mosaic, is my mother.] (III, 646)

The messianic hour indicates a definitive separation from the narrator's mother. Sidetracked once during childhood at Combray, this separation or loss haunts an entire (fictive) life lived under the sign of the goodnight kiss. Feminine losses

multiply. In Venice, the mother mourns the loss of the narrator's grandmother, whose appearance and character she takes on in a gradual transformation. The narrator has lost Albertine, and he anticipates the loss of his mother. For an uncanny instant, Albertine is returned to him (when he receives a telegram he thinks she has sent [III, 641]) and then lost again, in the doubled twilight of nightfall: "'deux fois crépusculaire, puisque la nuit tombait et que nous allions nous quitter' ['like a double twilight, since night was falling and we were going to leave each other']" (III, 647).

At this particular moment in Proust's fiction, the density and multiplication of feminine losses are presented as a web of countless repetitions. Proust gives the reader already afflicted with vertigo a final dizzying spin when he echoes the doubled twilight of Albertine's last letter (III, 468) with the doubling of her letter in Italy (III, 647). The narrator's last nightfall with her was a kind of double negative, according to her written account of it. In the wake of Albertine's death, clearly underscored in the Italian *ricorso*, this double negative is unveiled in the infinite dimensions of negativity. Proust's metaphoric constellation of nightfalls and separations, Egyptian dark nights and moments of loss and forgetting, seems to be inseparable from the negativity that gives them their power and form (and forever dismisses the reading of Proust as a precious fin de siècle gentleman writer). Indeed, one of his dizzying virtuosités appears in the form of a simultaneous evocation of aesthetic pleasure and the disappearance of its beholder into the abyss. Albertine's correspondence and its double negative echo the double negative of Swann's creation—the gift of beauty and the gift of the heart—in the form of Odette as Botticelli's *Primavera*. An idolatrous substitute for vocation, Swann's art of love consigns him to the abyss. Botticellian beauty and all, Odette bears a certain resemblance to the Grim Reaper, and Albertine's double negatives are no less threatening.

In the Venetian baptistery, the narrator's mother (unlike Albertine) takes her place and finds form among the allegories of the Gospel. Accessory to the narrator, self-effacing and

almost hidden, Maman becomes part of Saint-Marc: "her place there is reserved and as immutable as a mosaic." Out of the vertiginous impossibility of the real, out of reality as flesh and absence, creation and death, Maman steps into art: compared to a mosaic in Saint-Marc, she becomes a permanence that maintains the negativity of mourning and death without erasure. This paradoxical structure is repeated on the temporal level. Within the time sequence of the visit to Saint-Marc (in the imperfect tense), the narrator inserts a deictic present tense ("Today") with a messianic hour: "An hour has come for me" (III, 646). In allegory, a future past moves into the permanent presence of resurrection.

In the opposition of Albertine to Maman that unfolds in the baptistery, the narrator inverts the allegorical process that renders his mother's virtue in the marble and glass of mosaic, the beauty of allegory. The common ground of Carpaccio shows the division between Maman as Saint Ursula and the body of Albertine, evoked (along with the narrator's love for her) in "*Le Patriarche di Grado exorcisant un possédé* [*The Patriarchs of Grado Performing an Exorcism*]" (III, 646). Maman as the patron saint of the 11,000 virgins is opposed to—Albertine the possessed? her son the possessed? the devil himself, exorcised during the Catholic ceremony of baptism? All three, perhaps, since the infinite dimensions of negativity do not lend themselves to easy demarcations or simple oppositions.

Under the narrator's "cover," the illusory parallelism of the two women, loved and lost through death, Proust inverts the process of allegory that moves Maman from the realm of the real into the realm of art. The narrator admires the paintings that will lure him into seeing the images of his desire:

Tout à coup je sentis au coeur comme une légère morsure. Sur le dos d'un des *Compagnons de la Calza*, reconnaissable aux broderies d'or et de perles qui inscrivent sur leur manche ou leur collet l'emblème de la joyeuse confrérie . . . je venais de reconnaître le manteau qu'Albertine avait pris pour venir avec moi en voiture découverte à Versailles, le soir où j'étais loin de me douter qu'une

quinzaine d'heures me séparaient à peine du moment où elle partirait de chez moi. [Suddenly I felt something bite lightly at my heart. On the back of one of the *Calza Brothers*, recognizable in the gold and pearl embroideries that inscribe their sleeve or collar with the emblem of the carefree brotherhood. . . . I had just recognized the coat that Albertine had taken to come with me in an open carriage to Versailles, that evening when I was far from the knowledge that scarcely fifteen hours separated me from the moment when she would leave my house.] (III, 647)

This is not a coincidence, but rather an extension of allegory, since the Venetian designer of Albertine's coat detached it from Carpaccio's painting: "Or c'était dans ce tableau de Carpaccio que le fils génial de Venise [Fortuny] l'avait pris . . . pour le jeter sur celles de tant de Parisiennes [Now it was from this painting by Carpaccio that the brilliant son of Venice [Fortuny] had taken it . . . to throw it over the shoulders of so many Parisian women]" (III, 647). Fortuny's design moves out of the emblematic spiral of aesthetic permanence in Carpaccio's painting to Albertine's shoulders, on the night of her first (and ultimately definitive) disappearance. The motif of art steps into the real; a forgotten past is resurrected, but only for an instant. Albertine's coat goes with her, and both evaporate from the narrator's memory. In Venice his love is nearly resurrected, but not quite; desire and melancholy are "bientôt dissipé" after only a few moments. Proust's allegorical inversion here marks the resurrection as momentary. The "forms" of Albertine move from art to the real, and then they vanish forever. Within the domain of allegory, virtue remains triumphant and vice is condemned to its own silence.

The visit to Padua is the center of the triptych created or re-created by Proust: "pour revoir ces 'Vices' et ces 'Vertus' dont M. Swann m'avait donné des reproductions [In order to see again those 'Vices' and 'Virtues' of which M. Swann had given me reproductions]" (III, 648), the narrator (accompanied by his mother) enters the Arena chapel. The center of Proust's miniature triptych unfolding the Vices and Virtues

maps out the explicit return to the Giotto allegories of Combray. Within this rendering of repetition and its actualization—its “réalisation” as a literal entry into the realm of allegory, “‘les Vices et les Vertus’ de Padoue et de Combray”—Proust introduces two new elements. One of them echoes the identifications made in the baptistery, through the images narrating the life of Christ and the Virgin. The narrator/son and his mother move through narrative from the baptistery, the place of naming and the site of conversion, to the Marian chapel of allegory. The new element within this return to the source of Combray and Swann’s reproductions is narrative itself, the vocation as fiction—fictitious and true, through fiction and its writing.

The other new element literally heralds and introduces the first (“des fresques qui retracent l’histoire de la Vierge et du Christ [frescoes that retrace the story of the Virgin and Christ]”): “Dans ce ciel transporté sur la pierre volaient des anges que je voyais pour la première fois, car M. Swann ne m’avait donné de reproductions que des Vertus et des Vices [In this sky transported onto stone flew angels that I was seeing for the first time, for M. Swann had given me reproductions only of the Virtues and the Vices]” (III, 648). Within this declared domain of allegory, placed under the sign of the Virgin, Proust inscribes Giotto’s angels and relates them to the literal reality of Giotto’s Charity. Their flight impresses the narrator: “Hé bien, dans le vol des anges, je retrouvais la même impression d’action effective, littéralement réelle, que m’avaient donnée les gestes de la Charité ou de l’Envie [And so in the angels’ flight I was finding the same impression of action taking effect, literally real, that the gestures of Charity or Envy had given to me]” (III, 648). The Proustian highlights of virtue and vice, *la Charité et l’Envie*, locate the angels as pure allegory, and therefore as what Proust calls “literally real”: they create a reality effect in Giotto’s painted sky, and they enter reality through the radiant instant of the letter. This effect could be described as the agency of the letter,<sup>22</sup> in order to emphasize its insistence, its ineluctable alterity, and the tendency of allegory to create figures or images.

Proust’s aesthetic chapel displays the angels that the narrator sees for the first time when he enters the territory of his vocation as the promised land denied to Swann. Swann gave him the Virtues and Vices, but the realm of negative baptism and the flight of allegory were destined to be confronted by the narrator alone. Like Dante’s Vergil, the narrator’s initiator may not enter paradise, figuratively rendered in the painted sky of the chapel and the new flight of angels.

### Veils of Fiction

Swann’s flight, his effect of “reality,” and the effect of the real on him (including the retrospective arrangement of consciousness that lends him a prophetic voice shortly before his death) were consummated as disappearance long before the narrator encountered these “volatiles [winged creatures],” Giotto’s angels. Although Swann did not introduce the narrator to the painted “créatures réelles et effectivement volantes [real and effectively flying creatures],” the Proustian “reality” of Giotto’s angels is precisely that allegorical representation of death and the soul’s departure from the earthly realm of so-called reality, through flight: “on les voit s’élevant, décrivant des courbes, mettant la plus grande aisance à exécuter des ‘loopings,’ fondant vers le sol la tête en bas . . . et ils font beaucoup plutôt penser à une variété disparue d’oiseaux ou à de jeunes élèves de Garros s’exerçant au vol plané [one sees them rising up, drawing curves, displaying the greatest ease in their performance of ‘loopings,’ heading toward earth in a nose dive . . . and they bring much more to mind some type of bird that has disappeared than young students of Garros practicing their flying]” (III, 648). The reality that strikes the narrator subtly echoes his vision of the airplane seen with Albertine at Balbec and reinscribes her death within its Italian context (the telegram, Carpaccio, Fortuny, and so on). But the uncanny aeronautics of Giotto’s angels seem to be designed primarily to mark this passage as an instant of fictional autobiography. The angel who disappears in a series of “loopings” practiced “vol plané” under the name of “Marcel Swann”



and flew to his death (“heading toward earth in a nosedive”); Proust evokes the flight of “Marcel Swann” in a note to *En Mémoire des églises assassinées* (CSB 66). The instant of autobiography signs the allegory of the real with the unavowed name of Alfred Agostinelli.

What constitutes the “real” in this passage? This question receives a double answer: flight and death. Throughout *A la recherche*, Proustian angels are privileged in their exclusively allegorical status. They anchor reality in the letter and in invisibilia, since their capacity as messengers does not classify them within the enforced representability of creatures of flesh and blood. Angels bear the allegorical message of allegory; they represent something like allegory squared. In this sense, they guarantee the rhetorical flight of Proust’s allegory from its inception in Swann’s *la Charité de Giotto*.

They thus guarantee the portrayal of the Virtues and Vices, continued in the final panel of the miniature triptych. When the narrator suddenly stages a repetition of the fugitive’s flight, his mother is condemned to repeat the role of Albertine, although in a virtuous mode. At the moment of her departure a porter brings three letters (III, 652), left unread until after the narrator’s reunion with her in the train. Until that moment, however, the narrator’s desire to remain in Venice suddenly returns him to the sufferings of separation and a repetition of loss: “je n’étais plus qu’un coeur qui battait [I was nothing more than a beating heart]” (III, 653).

The suffering heart repeatedly replaces the narrator under the sign of *la Charité de Giotto* and her love. Every allegorist knows, however, that allegory is not a unilateral conception and that the subject of jouissance has at least two answers to every question. Proust’s representation of the adieu to Padua can only be rendered as a permanent setting for the allegory essential to his *Recherche*. It may be for this reason that the final panel of the Padua triptych includes a repetition of the characteristically Proustian drama of the suffering heart, victim of separation. In this context, however, the identification with Charity cannot protect the suffering heart from negativity. Proust’s portrait of the narrator pins him through the heart

and displays him between the two wings of flight; the fugitive of Virtue (Maman), both first and last, and the intermediary fugitive of Vice (Albertine), whose first flight became her last, in death.

Proust’s inscription of the abyss of negativity tacitly returns to the moment of infinite solitude created by the death of his beloved fugitive. The messianic hour of allegorical resurrection perceived in Saint-Marc is linked with the zero hour of total loss. The terms describing the mother’s departure cast it in a permanent form: “Ma solitude irrévocable était si prochaine qu’elle me semblait déjà commencée et totale [My irrevocable solitude was so near that it seemed to have begun already, and to be total]” (III, 652). The anticipated death of the narrator’s mother sets the scene for the farewell to Padua and the reading of letters in the train.

Once he catches up with Virtue, the narrator discovers that the telegraphic resurrection of Albertine was an interpretive error; the enigmatic message had been sent by Gilberte. Wedding bells are still in the air but not for the narrator, despite the apparent ambiguity of the telegram. Maman is alive for the moment, and Albertine has returned to her abyss; the opposition of Virtue and Vice is reaffirmed. This stability is confirmed by the letter to the narrator from Gilberte, announcing her marriage to Robert de Saint-Loup (III, 656). The two sides of Méséglise (chez Swann) and Guermantes come together in the cathedral arch of Proust’s oeuvre. This marriage is a kind of retrospective time capsule for the *Recherche* as a cathedral of allegory leading from Combray and Swann through the final matinée, while the trajectory of the narrator’s anticipated oeuvre brings together Swann’s death and the creation of the final matinée, death and resurrection, in the form of Mlle de Saint-Loup. Gilberte’s wedding announcement is also a letter from Proust to the reader, announcing the structure and span of his novel.

The other letter received by the narrator’s mother locates Proust’s oeuvre at the crossroads of plot, character, temporality, and vocation—the elements of allegory that turn the theme of vice and virtue into a representation of the Vices and the

Virtues. Another marriage has been arranged to stage the oppositions built into the cathedral frame; like Gilberte's marriage to Saint-Loup, it brings together the two "côtés," the lower classes and the Guermantes aristocracy. The young Cambremer will marry Jupien's niece, adopted by Charlus and given the title of Mlle D'Oloron.

The conversation between the narrator and Maman aligns the two marriages according to the arches of Proust's beautiful fiction, the cathedral of *A la recherche*. Time has undermined the stability of the narrator's childhood categories and twisted their oppositions and correspondences into a spiral of allegory. One opposition leads to another: "la grande aristocratie" and "les petits bourgeois," the king and the shepherd-girl—Cambremer and Jupien's niece, Swann and the courtesan Odette, Saint-Loup and the daughter of the socially diminished Swann, and so on. The narrator's mother verbally confronts the fictions of Combray, i.e., the stability of social classes, and casually anticipates the "real" revelation of truth in the mixed blood of "le sang de la mère Moser qui disait: 'Ponchour Mezieurs' et le sang du duc de Guise! [the blood of old lady Moser who used to say 'Ponchour Mezieurs' (Bonjour Messieurs) and the blood of the Duke of Guise!]" (III, 659) Always too high or too low (III, 659), the narrator and his mother are caught at the crossroads of social terms, while the *real* convergence of the allegorical archways occurs at the unmistakable point of allegorical truth—the existence of Mlle de Saint-Loup, who enters the narrator's territory of time and desire during the *matinée*.

The allegory of the Proustian cathedral brings the two ways together in an unpredictable series of encounters. In the representation of the marriage of two minor characters, Cambremer and Mlle d'Oloron, the Virtues and the Vices come face to face. This marriage is typical of those that take place in the *Recherche*. Love is inseparable from the jealousy suffered by a heterosexual partner and caused by the irreducible alterity founding the desire of the (homosexual) beloved. Through the combination of love and suffering, the perfectly Proustian heart of Mlle d'Oloron identifies her with the narrator and

Giotto's Charity. The two sides are juxtaposed in a moment of allegorical marriage that includes the marriage of allegory, Virtue and Vice: "'C'est la récompense de la vertu. C'est un mariage à la fin d'un roman de Mme Sand,' dit ma mère. 'C'est le prix du vice, c'est un mariage à la fin d'un roman de Balzac,' pensai-je [It is the reward of virtue. It's a marriage at the end of a novel by Mme Sand,' said my mother. 'It is the cost of vice, it's a marriage at the end of a novel by Balzac,' I thought]" (III, 658).

Proust presents the two worlds together in this brief exchange that recapitulates the major symbolic layers of the *Recherche*. Sustained by the author of *François le Champi* and the innocent Maman, the lost paradise of Combray is inscribed under the sign of Virtue. Through the narrator's illicit knowledge and sexual apprenticeship, however, paradise has been lost. The hellfire of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* focuses on the (homo)sexual blackness of desire that displaces the Proustian site from Combray to Paris and Balbec, and shifts the domain of love from Maman and the worshiped Gilberte to Albertine and the Balzacian world of Charlus. Fiction moves from factitious innocence and the namelessness of origins (*François le Champi*) to *Illusions perdues*. At the same time, Proust remains faithful to the sign of Giotto's Charity hovering over the world: if the unforeseeable Mlle de Saint-Loup is the product of one allegorical marriage, the premature death of Mlle d'Oloron is the result of the other (III, 671). Consumed by a suffering heart, Mlle Douleur is a martyr to vice. Like the kitchenmaid at Combray, she is silenced and will vanish soon after the wedding.

The allegorist must capture passing forms within the permanence of representation. Distracted from art and lured into the evanescent apparitions of desire, Swann succumbs to idolatry. His renunciation of the allegorist's detachment led him away from his Ruskinian artwork, while the narrator has gone full circle (or rather, beyond the circle) to discover his vocation, projected as a conversion to writing that will lift him beyond good and evil. The allegorist stands apart from representation, in the vision opened up by the "adieu au person-

nel” and the sublime passage of the suffering heart. By entwining the narrator’s altered relation to allegory with Swann’s downfall, Proust uncovers the perils of silence underlying the scriptural vocation.

The Padua triptych implicates Swann in the double inscription of allegory: as the initiator of *la Charité de Giotto*, he is the counterpart of its belated effect on the narrator. Anchored in the rhetoric of writing and allegory, Swann thus appears as the mediator for the narrator’s vocation. At the same time, the doubling of the Giotto allegory explains the mysterious disappearance of the allegorical title from *Le Temps retrouvé*. Proust’s doubled reference to Giotto’s allegory in Padua seems to be the correlative of its erasure from the title in *Le Temps retrouvé*: allegory leaves the domain of explicit titles and enters Proustian invisibilia.

In the beginning, Proust wrote of Combray’s *Charité de Giotto* and the visit to Padua/Venice in *La Fugitive (Le Temps retrouvé)* at the same time. The reference to Padua originally occurred in the context of the narrator’s childhood visit to Padua. Proust later deleted this trip, and in its place he fashioned Swann into the provider of images of the Vices and Virtues. As a result of Proust’s deletion and alteration, what was once united is divided in both form and temporality as “Combray” and “Padua.” The cut that splits Proust’s Giotto into two parts swallows the allegorical title once destined for *Le Temps retrouvé*. In light of Proust’s doubling of Combray/ Padua, the original title (“Les ‘Vices et les Vertus’ de Padoue et de Combray”) could no longer be applied to a single chapter (*Le Temps retrouvé*); the allegorical trajectory of the entire novel represents the “Vices and Virtues.” The text itself is the allegory.

Proust may have decided to erase that title (along with his early project of a tryst with the chambermaid of the Baronne Putbus, and so on) because it seemed to be too obviously allegorical, or transparently didactic. His entry into the secret turns of the labyrinth separates allegory into Combray and Padua. This division extends the paired structure of the allegorical image beyond its apparent symmetry to introduce in allegorical terms the narrator’s singular discovery—the invis-

ibility of time. The return of time within a cyclic configuration is a return with a difference; “le temps *re-trouvé*” shows the fundamental asymmetry of Proustian repetition. The cyclic configuration is a thin veil of fiction, hovering over the invisibility of temporal passage.

### Comme Madeleine

Proustian time cannot be reduced to a binary simplicity of lost and found; its asymmetry is related to the revelation of invisibilia, the object of the conversion to writing. This revelation delineates the site of the speaking subject as the marks on the doors of the Hebrews inscribed their monogram as subjects of the Lord and his Passover. If an “object” is the “thing” that answers desire, a goal, or the incarnation of the other, then revelation in the Proustian sense is an “object” inseparable from its “subject”: translation, transfiguration, *correspondance*, container/contained, and “forme et fond” all indicate the connection, inscribed in the vocabulary of Flaubert and Balzac. The Hebrews’ passage out of Egypt and its mode of polytheistic proliferation is adumbrated in the narrator’s conversion to writing: “une joie pareille à une certitude, et suffisante, sans autres preuves, à me rendre la mort indifférente [a joy that was like a certainty, and that sufficed, with no other evidence, to render death indifferent]” (III, 867). Beyond the symmetry of life and death, subject and object are connected when the conversion to writing takes the possibilities instilled by the speaking voice of the subject to their logical Judeo-Christian conclusions, away from nature. It will give the narrator an unnatural asymmetrical insight into the domain of invisibilia—the heart and soul of immortality, resurrection, and writing.

This vision is anticipated in a moment of textual layering that illustrates the step taken by the narrator outside the clear-cut symmetries of life and death, good and evil, truth and falsehood. The allegorist of the Vices and Virtues, Proust displays the narrator under the sign of Giotto’s Charity, surrounded by the angelic bearers of invisibilia and the letter.

But they remind the reader of Old Testament angels who bring with them the double edge of jouissance offered under the law. When Robert de Saint-Loup introduces the narrator to his beloved mistress, the narrator's realization that she is none other than "Rachel quand du Seigneur [Rachel-when-from-the-Lord]" is quite literally overseen by an allegorical messenger, the angel of allegory itself, translated from the biblical site of Sodom: "un mystérieux voyageur, arrêté pour un jour dans la cité maudite, un ange resplendissant se tenait debout [a mysterious voyager, stopped for a day in the cursed city, a shining angel was standing]" (II, 161). Like the "deux anges aux portes de Sodome [two angels at the gates of Sodom]" (II, 631), the angel who becomes visible in the form of a flowering pear tree unmasks the truth in an instant of vision.

The narrator stresses the instantaneity of recognition: "je reconnus à l'instant 'Rachel quand du Seigneur'" (II, 158). Presented earlier in the *Recherche* as "la juive [the Jewish one]" in a bordello, Rachel is derisively nicknamed by the narrator. "Rachel quand du Seigneur" recalls Halévy's *La Juive* and the well-known aria sung to her by Eleazar, the Jewish figure of fatherhood; the madam presents Rachel as an object of supreme sexual delight, while the narrator's nickname opposes her to *la Juive* as vice to virtue. The two arches of Proust's cathedral of allegory come together in a vision of the two versions of Rachel. Vice silently confronts virtue, the narrator's view encounters the fiction created by Robert, and the truth of love—Giotto's Charity, or Halévy's Charity-like figure of Rachel—meets its opposite in Robert's Rachel, a living assortment of vices. On an allegorical level, Rachel recapitulates and anticipates an end point or conclusion ("un aboutissement," according to Proust's text) of two infinities, Virtue and Vice. At the peak of mystery, their mystical meeting is another version of the Proustian cathedral, the line-by-line inscription on thin paper of the meeting of the ways, Swann and Guermantes:

L'immobilité de ce mince visage, comme celle d'une feuille de papier soumise aux colossales pressions de deux

atmosphères, me semblait équilibrée par deux infinis qui venaient aboutir à elle sans se rencontrer, car elle les séparait. . . . Robert et moi, nous ne la voyions pas du même côté du mystère. [The immobility of this thin face, like that of a piece of paper, caught between the colossal pressures of two atmospheres, seemed to me balanced between two infinities that found their end-point in her without meeting each other, for she separated them. . . . Robert and I, we did not see her from the same side of the mystery.] (II, 160)

The truth of love and beauty takes on the Proustian form of *la Charité de Giotto*, but the suffering that inhabits her allegorical forms appears to open the door to "l'artiste du mal [the artist of evil]." Rachel is a minor artist of this kind: her nickname combines the purity of the virginal *Juive* with the corruption of the whore ironically named "Rachel quand du Seigneur" by the narrator. The consequences of Saint-Loup's illusions about Rachel's virtue play out the mortal truth of the narrator's witty nickname for her. The allegorist portrays the intertwining or correspondence of virtue and vice as the quintessential mystery of *Rachel quand du Seigneur*. Its fatal message is the law of desire that subjects even the virtuous to sexuality and death, and that makes all subjects into walk-on characters or "figurants" for what Proust originally called *le bal des têtes* ("la matinée given by the princesse de Guermantes"). Even in innocence, the Proustian angel has its eyes wide open.

The passing form of the flowering pear tree appears to the narrator. As a metaphor or a term of beauty, the pear tree disappears within the invisibilia of its splendor—the angel. The beautiful image ("the splendor of poetry") marks the site where the elements of allegory resonate in unnatural fragments broken by the vision of beauty, the apocalyptic messenger of mystery and divine judgment. At the end of *A la recherche*, Proust writes: "L'art est le vrai Jugement dernier [Art is the true Last Judgment]" (III, 880). The innocence of this angel and the promise of joy offered by "l'Ange d'or du campanile de Saint-Marc [the Golden Angel of the campanile

of Saint Mark]" (III, 623) are linked obliquely to Proust's version of the Fall. He turns the angels of Genesis into innocent voyeurs, witnesses of *le bal des têtes* [*the unmasked ball*], and purveyors of judgment, much like the narrator himself.

The pear tree returns in full beauty, illuminating the darkness of a double-edged mystery: allegory is both fiction and jouissance. "Rachel quand du Seigneur" is the Jew as a feminine incarnation of the narrator's image of Vice, allegorized in his ironic application of Halévy's image of Virtue. Robert's quasi-virginal goddess is the narrator's undesired whore, according to the immeasurable terms of an architectural mystery: the paper-thin separation of the two "sides," Swann's Méséglise and Guermantes, wandering Jews and French aristocrats, Judaic femininity and its presumably innate scandal of sexuality in contrast to the authority of Catholicism.

Rachel in the eye of the angel obliquely leads back to the beginning, when Proust creates a centripetal allegory and the narrator's sources for the conversion of writing. The vision of the narrator leads him to extend the metaphor of the angel in terms that hold memories of Combray, the long afternoons of reading, the "perpetual alliteration" on the banks of the Vivonne and the promise he made to return "with lines": "les grandes créatures blanches merveilleusement penchées au-dessus de l'ombre propice à la sieste, à la pêche, à la lecture, n'était-ce pas plutôt des anges? [the great white creatures marvelously leaning above the shadow favorable to siestas, fishing, reading, were they not angels?]" (II, 160). Back to the beginning, not yet *retrouvé*, not yet *re-found*: back to reading. In the beginning was allegory, and Swann was its dark night, the ground of its shining stars. He catalyzes the translation into emblems and biblical models of desire: Abraham and Isaac (the father and the narrator); Zephora, the wife of Moses (Odette in the photograph kept by Swann); *la Charité de Giotto* (offered and named by Swann through the reproduction and the kitchenmaid), remembered in *his* name at Padua. As a figure of scriptural paternity, Swann is overdetermined—the Judaic father of desire is also Gilberte's Jewish father. The narrator's black vision of the catastrophe of desire, the judgment

of Rachel guaranteed by the shining beauty of the angelic "pear tree in flower," recalls the pre-Fall vision of Gilberte and the flowering hawthornes in "the month of Mary."

The central moment of Proustian time is Easter: "ne m'étais-je pas trompé comme Madeleine quand, dans un autre jardin, un jour dont l'anniversaire allait bientôt venir, elle vit une forme humaine et 'crut que c'était le jardinier'? [had I not been mistaken like Mary Magdalene when, in another garden, on a day whose anniversary was coming soon, she saw a human form and 'believed that it was the gardener?']" (II, 160) In this instant of transformation at some point after the beginning (Combray) and before the return or "retrouvailles" of time, the unfolding of the paschal allusion to Christ's body, no longer flesh but not yet resurrected in glory, focuses the question of form and scriptural identity. The return of time is promised by the angelic pear trees, "Gardiens du souvenir de l'âge d'or [guardians of the memory of the golden age]" (II, 160). Much later the golden angel of Venice (III, 623) will appear as a guardian like the pear tree angels, "garants de la promesse que la réalité n'est pas ce qu'on croit, que la splendeur de la poésie, que l'éclat merveilleux de l'innocence peuvent y resplendir [guarantors of the promise that reality is not what we think it is, that the splendor of poetry, the marvelous luster of innocence can shine in it]" (III, 160). After the angelic guarantee of invisibility and the cluster of revelations of "reality," the heraldic signs of Proust's angels will point toward the possibilities of reappropriating the lost paradise, and the narrator will be led to "ces vérités écrites à l'aide des figures [these truths written with the help of figures]" (III, 879). The revelations of privileged moments counter the loss of time, but it can only be *re-trouvé through* figuration, or the arabesque of writing.

The dimensions of the loss of time unravel the symmetry of "lost" and "found." The return of what was once possessed and lost does not reinstate the object of that loss. For example, the narrator at the final matinée does not re-become the child he was at Combray; the retrieval is a symbolic one. The deferral of return is related to a transference to writing:

something has been transported, displaced, or linked through correspondence. In Proustian terms, one might say that analogy is the closest one can ever get to singularity. In the dimensions of poetic language, the image—analogy or metaphor—is always located in an “elsewhere,” it is always somewhere else, an alibi of invisibilia. Through the act of transference inherent in Proust’s writing (III, 890), the image articulates the mysterious language of “perpetual alliteration” that turns an interior tablet covered with figures (“un grimoire compliqué et fleuri”) into more figures: “these truths written with the help of figures.” Proust the invisible takes on the miracles of transubstantiation. He filters and crystallizes, converting the invisible into the visible “saturation” of desire and form. Through the “re-” with a difference, the repetition of deferred and waylaid reading (III, 879), loss is repeatedly displaced and subsumed in the interpretive act, and “reading” becomes “creation.” The losses of time, flesh, love, and life itself—the “accidents” of corporeality—are mysteriously interpreted, converted, and made into a work of art (III, 879) that emerges from the interiority or the invisibility of “an ineffable vision” (III, 875). This vision is mystical and therefore requires a revelation (III, 878). Like Proust’s angels, the mystery or the mysterious vision does not deny reality; it is in fact the ultimate form of reality, acted out in the domain of “truths.”

At the end of the novel Proust finally defines reality in the terms that turn him, through fiction, toward the *Recherche*; “in the direction of” (or “à la recherche”) is inscribed in the turn of a repetition with a difference. The terms of reality and repetition describe or create writing, in the mouth of the narrator. For him and his creator, reality is as literary and mystical as the doctrine of *correspondance*. Proust explains it in a sentence filled with Baudelairean resonance: “Une heure n’est pas qu’une heure, c’est un vase rempli de parfums, de sons, de projets et de climats. Ce que nous appelons la réalité est un certain rapport entre ces sensations et ces souvenirs [An hour is not only an hour, it is a vase filled with perfumes, sounds, plans, and climates. We give the name of reality to a certain relation between these sensations and memories]” (III, 889).

Reality is a singular relationship between the subject and the time-ravaged realm of the flesh (encoded as the unmasked ball, and later as the “matinée chez la princesse”), translated and resurrected as “beautiful style” (III, 889). Moving from the accidental relation to something described as a “common essence,” the writer operates a mysterious and indescribable leap from translation to creation. In order to resurrect objects or moments in the beauty and permanence of language, the writer must find (“retrouver”) the correspondence that links them. Their poetic liaison, *correspondance*, takes precedence over the objects or moments themselves.

What is specifically Proustian about this formulation of *correspondance* is that beautiful style is both the vision of reality and its resurrection, both the terms of absolute evanescence (“two sensations”) and their resurrection “à jamais,” for all time, in the permanent glory of “essence commune.” The vision of the world beyond, the “là-bas” of visionary experience, includes a return through fleeting sensation to the memories it evokes from the past, buried under clouds of forgetfulness. Reality, “un certain rapport entre ces sensations et ces souvenirs [a certain relation between these sensations and memories],” is the “rapport unique que l’écrivain doit retrouver pour en enchaîner à jamais dans sa phrase les deux termes différents [unique relation that the writer must find to forever connect in his sentence the two different terms]” (III, 889).

The paradox of Proustian correspondence is that the “common essence” described by the narrator, the permanence of “beautiful style,” is the result of the encounter or “rapport” between two contingent sensations, two instants of fleeting feeling. This permanence is evanescence squared, or what Proust calls metaphor. The artist “dégagera leur essence commune en les réunissant l’un et l’autre pour les soustraire aux contingences du temps, dans une métaphore [will bring out their common essence by uniting the one and the other in order to subtract them from the contingencies of time, in a metaphor]” (III, 889). Here and beyond, sensation and memory: these binary oppositions open out toward metaphor, the third

term of the Proustian trinity. The writer translates through substance. Transubstantiation makes reading into a creation and takes the instant of experience and the turn or return to memory out of the retrospective glance and the ravages of time. Through the ongoing figuration of metaphor, the visionary power of style (III, 895), it enters the fullness of time: "Je crois que la métaphore seule peut donner une sorte d'éternité au style [I believe that metaphor alone can give a kind of eternity to style]" (CSB, 586).

## Autobiographies of Style

*Le son de la trompette est si délicieux,  
Dans ces soirs solennels de célestes vendanges,  
Qu'il s'infiltré comme une extase dans tous ceux  
Dont elle chante les louanges.*

*The trumpet sound tastes of such delight  
In sky-risen wine harvests' awed evenings  
That like an ecstasy it infiltrates  
All those whose praise it sings.*

*(Oeuvres complètes, vol. I, p. 172;  
my translation)*

## 8 La Charité de Giotto

- 1 Bernard Brun, "Le Temps retrouvé dans les avant-textes de Combray," *Bulletin des Informations Proustiennes* 12 (1981), p. 20.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 For a discussion of Proust's relationship to Ruskin, see Richard A. Macksey, "Proust on the Margins of Ruskin," in *The Ruskin Polygon*, eds. J. D. Hunt and F. M. Holland (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1981), and, by the same author, "'Conclusions' et 'Incitations': Proust à la Recherche de Ruskin," *MLN* 96 (1981), pp. 1113-19. For a discussion of Proust's correspondence with Emile Mâle, see Richard Bales, *Proust and the Middle Ages* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1975).
- 4 *En mémoire des églises assassinées*, III. John Ruskin, in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, précédé de *Pastiches et mélanges* et suivi de *Essais et articles*, ed. P. Clarac with Y. Sandre (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 115.
- 5 The reading of the cathedral as a visible representation of the biblical text is crucial for Proust, following Mâle and Ruskin. Spectacular examples and analyses according to this reading can be found in Mâle's *L'Art religieux du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle en France* (Paris: Livre de poche, 1961) and in Ruskin's works, e.g., *The Bible of Amiens*, translated by Proust. In the *Recherche*, Elstir's remarks about cathedrals (addressed to the young narrator) are the most explicit references to this aspect of the theories of Mâle and Ruskin, but this reading is a touchstone of Proust's general aesthetic.
- 6 Proust's letters to Marie Nordlinger indicate the important literary investment represented by Proust's "apprenticeship" to Ruskin. The work on Ruskin functions as a bridge leading to Proust's mature writing. See especially *Correspondance de Marcel Proust*, ed. Phillip Kolb (Paris: Plon, 1970), vol. 4. Kolb describes 1904 as "l'année Ruskin par excellence" for Proust (*ibid.*, p. vi).
- 7 N.A.Fr. 16733, p. 117.
- 8 In the sacrament, as in Proust's interpretation of allegory, the presence of the Word is *real*. See my earlier discussion of Proust's terms of "conversion" and "transubstantiation." For a different interpretation of the latter term, see Genette's "Proust Palimpseste," in *Figures I* (Paris: Seuil, 1966).
- 9 See Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire XX, Encore* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), pp. 29-34, 131, and *R.S.I.* (supposedly forthcoming as *Séminaire XXII*) in *Ornicar?* (Paris: Seuil, n.d.). The Real eludes conceptualization and forms a "gap" in the Imaginary and Symbolic. Lacan's suggestions concerning sexuality as the link between life and death via reproduction, and the woman as "pas-toute" imply that insofar as femininity in psychoanalysis means maternity and maternity is the evidence that woman is "pas-toute" or is lacking something by virtue of possessing an absence that manifests itself as "folle, énigmatique" (131)—the description of feminine jouissance—the "trou" of jouissance is inde-

- pendent of, and in some sense opposed to, the "trou" of sexual reproduction seen as bearer of the Real.
- 10 In the introduction to his translation of Ruskin's *La Bible d'Amiens*, Proust describes the statues of the West porch of Amiens Cathedral: "Au-dessous de la Foi est l'Idolâtrie adorant un monstre [Below Faith is Idolatry worshiping a monster]" (CSB 97).
  - 11 See I, 124, for the disappearance of Charity, and III, 567-91, for the erasure of Swann's name and memory after his death.
  - 12 N.A.Fr. 16733, p. 116.
  - 13 The following paragraphs owe much to Brun, pp. 18-20.
  - 14 See Kazuyoshi Yoshikawa, *Etudes sur la genèse de 'La Prisonnière' d'après des brouillons inédits* (Paris: Sorbonne, 1976), unpublished thesis.
  - 15 Here as in the interpretation of the Giotto reproduction, an interpretive reading brings into view a level of textual complexity not available within the framework of genetic studies.
  - 16 N.A.Fr. 16733 (116-22).
  - 17 See Cahiers 47, 48, 50. Jo Yoshida, *Proust contre Ruskin: la genèse de deux voyages dans la 'Recherche' d'après des brouillons inédits* (Paris: Sorbonne, 1978), unpublished thesis.
  - 18 Bernard Brun posits the existence of intermediary and preceding manuscripts that have not yet been found.
  - 19 N.A.Fr. 16703 (16 ff.)
  - 20 Bernard Brun, p. 20.
  - 21 The disappearance and reappearance of this beautiful coat and its role in the aesthetics of allegory recall Salammbô and the cloak of Tanit. See "Crimson and Diamonds."
  - 22 I am extending Lacan's "instance de la lettre" from the field of the unconscious to the domain of aesthetic allegory. This distinction may be less one of operation than of effect, since the productions of the unconscious do not necessarily include the element of violence implicit in the seductions of allegory.

## 9 La Vocation Artistique

- 1 This quotation from Proust's *Cahiers* is taken from J. M. Cocking, *Proust: Collected Essays on the Writer and His Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 127-28.
- 2 See Richard Macksey, "The Architecture of Time: Dialectics and Structure," in *Proust: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. René Girard, pp. 104-21.
- 3 See "Necropolis and Carnival" above, for an interpretation of Proust's reading of Flaubert.
- 4 In Proust's own time, another writer influenced by Flaubert was reducing the unit of construction even further. In *Finnegans Wake*, and on a more modest level in *Ulysses* before it, James Joyce transgressed the limits of the word itself and made it the minimal unit of prose con-