



COMPLETE
CLASSICS
UNABRIDGED

The Guermantes Way

Marcel Proust

Read by **Neville Jason**

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST • 3

CD 1

1	The twittering of the birds at daybreak...	6:30
2	And yet the fairy must perish if we come in contact...	4:36
3	What form was assumed in my mind by this name...	8:12
4	In the parties which she gave...	7:23
5	'Ah! Combray, Combray!' she cried.	6:32
6	This new friend of Françoise was very little at home...	5:53
7	As soon as she had shut the window again...	6:57
8	'I can well believe that it is something...'	7:41
9	What annoyed her more than anything...	5:20
10	And it became all the more essential...	9:15
11	But if the Hotel de Guermentes began for me...	6:31
12	As one of Mme de Guermentes's footmen was in the habit...	4:11

Total time on CD 1: 79:09

CD 2

1	That villa, that opera-box, into which Mme de Guermantes...	4:46
2	That evening as, armed with the ticket...	5:56
3	Next to me were some common people...	5:55
4	Like a mighty goddess who presides from far aloft...	6:51
5	'That fat fellow is the Marquis de Ganancay,'...	8:19
6	I no longer felt the same indulgence...	9:18
7	My own impression, to tell the truth...	4:44
8	I thought so at first.	6:34
9	Just as the curtain was rising on this second play...	6:58
10	The explanation of Mme de Cambremer's presence...	6:42
11	Mme de Cambremer was trying to make out...	7:15
12	On coming home from the Opéra-Comique...	5:58

Total time on CD 2: 79:33

CD 3

1	Why did I one morning...	4:45
2	I should not myself have felt that Mme de Guermentes...	6:07
3	To return to Françoise...	7:03
4	I was genuinely in love with Mme de Guermentes.	5:55
5	The friendship, the admiration that Saint-Loup felt for me...	7:54
6	At that moment a sergeant who was exercising a horse...	9:39
7	To return to the problem of sounds...	6:08
8	The silence, though only relative, which reigned...	7:03
9	Robert, without being aware of its cause...	7:37
10	If I wished to go out or to come in...	9:07
11	What one has meant to do during the day...	8:02

Total time on CD 3: 79:26

CD 4

1	When I had finished sleeping...	6:09
2	But soon I was constantly going to see the regiment...	6:39
3	One of them said that the Captain had bought a new horse.	5:07
4	On leaving the barracks I would take a stroll...	9:04
5	The wind grew stronger.	5:32
6	'Robert, this is hardly the time or the place...'	6:01
7	Which was exactly what he had just been doing...	5:31
8	On the third evening, one of his friends...	6:40
9	At this point I was interrupted by Saint-Loup...	7:59
10	Partly out of courtesy to his friends...	10:28
11	The enunciation of these theories by Saint-Loup made me happy.	10:11

Total time on CD 4: 79:28

CD 5

1	'Saint-Loup is quite right...'	6:30
2	When the conversation became general...	7:22
3	I breathed a sigh of relief when I realised...	8:49
4	All the same I could see that, during the hour that followed...	6:46
5	'Listen, if you don't mind. Just one last word...'	5:13
6	For I continued my eager demands...	5:01
7	If the Prince de Borodino was not prepared...	4:32
8	Son, doubtless, or grandson of an Emperor...	7:46
9	And, the moment our call has sounded...	9:19
10	When I came among Robert and his friends...	5:35
11	'You haven't seen Sergeant Saint-Loup, have you...'	4:20
12	Alas, this phantom was just what I did see...	7:29

Total time on CD 5: 78:51

CD 6

1	Meanwhile the winter was drawing to an end.	5:02
2	She was now wearing lighter, or at any rate brighter, clothes...	7:53
3	Saint-Loup came to Paris for a few hours only.	6:30
4	My father had informed us that he now knew...	7:41
5	My father had also another encounter about this time...	6:31
6	I left the house early, with Françoise complaining bitterly...	7:32
7	Never had Robert spoken to me so tenderly of his friend...	5:59
8	Suddenly Saint-Loup appeared...	8:23
9	It was not 'Rachel when from the Lord'...	10:59
10	It was, by the way, quite true that she was 'literary'.	8:07
11	She seemed anxious to pacify Robert...	4:42

Total time on CD 6: 79:26

CD 7

1	If we were not yet in the theatre...	5:57
2	Presently came a message that Robert was waiting...	7:17
3	One number in the programme I found extremely trying.	8:49
4	When, the curtain having fallen, we moved on to the stage...	6:08
5	A group of men – journalists – noticing the look of fury...	7:06
6	At that moment I saw Saint-Loup raise his arm...	7:53
7	These incidents, particularly the one that was weighing...	8:43
8	Moreover, talent is not a separate appendage...	7:39
9	On the occasion of this first call...	8:44
10	'Oh, Ministers, my dear sir,' Mme de Villeparisis was saying...	5:48
11	Earlier in the day Mme de Villeparisis might have been...	5:09

Total time on CD 7: 79:21

CD 8

[1]	Presently there came into the room...	9:13
[2]	'I understand, sir, that you thinkin' of writin' somethin'...'	7:01
[3]	Meanwhile I had been talking to Bloch...	8:15
[4]	Presently Mme de Villeparisis sat down again at her desk...	8:10
[5]	That admirable writer G – entered the room...	8:36
[6]	If, in the drawing-room of Mme de Villeparisis...	7:10
[7]	The presence of Bergotte by my side...	5:49
[8]	Everyone had gathered round Mme de Villeparisis...	5:50
[9]	Mme de Villeparisis rang the bell...	5:28
[10]	'I have better news,' she murmured in my ear...	7:07
[11]	She rang the bell...	6:00

Total time on CD 8: 78:44

CD 9

1	'You must speak loud,' she warned Bloch...	7:06
2	Before M de Norpois, under constraint from his hostess...	7:19
3	'You know who we're talking about, Basin?' the Duchess asked...	6:41
4	'Seven Princesses! Dear, dear, what a snob she must be!'	5:15
5	'Tell me, my dear aunt,' M. de Guermantes inquired...	6:32
6	Bloch was flattered by this picture of himself...	5:53
7	M. de Guermantes uttered the words...	7:23
8	'I think you're all equally tiresome...'	8:48
9	Possibly the explanation of M. de Norpois speaking in this way...	7:31
10	'You aren't going to Mme de Sagan's ball this evening?'	6:29
11	M. de Norpois put these questions to Bloch...	4:28
12	Bloch coloured; M. d'Argencourt smiled...	6:00

Total time on CD 9: 79:31

CD 10

1	Full of curiosity and anxious to have more light thrown...	8:58
2	In the country, Mme de Marsantes was adored...	6:02
3	A faint smile made Mme de Guermantes's eyelashes quiver...	6:21
4	The Prince's name preserved in the boldness...	6:04
5	But Prince von Faffenheim was no simpleton.	8:45
6	The following winter the Prince was seriously ill...	9:04
7	The arrival of Mme Swann had a special interest for me...	6:05
8	For the rest, Charles Morel seemed to have...	5:34
9	Mme de Villeparisis meanwhile...	5:40
10	I studied M. de Charlus.	5:39
11	I have recorded a long way back...	4:55
12	I was anxious nevertheless for information...	6:25

Total time on CD 10: 79:41

CD 11

1	Robert called me away to the far end of the room...	7:42
2	I should have liked to reply...	8:04
3	I was fully aware that my company...	7:06
4	Anxiously Mme de Marsantes bade me good-bye.	4:14
5	As I went downstairs I heard behind me a voice...	4:46
6	'You have enough intelligence, I suppose...'	6:11
7	I warned him that, anyhow, Mme Bloch no longer existed...	4:57
8	'Let us return to yourself,' he said...	5:51
9	'I am sorry about that,' said M. de Charlus.	9:19
10	As for myself, no sooner had I turned in at our gate...	6:54
11	Cottard had told us to take her temperature.	7:07
12	In spite of this more special competence...	7:09

Total time on CD 11: 79:27

CD 12

1	Inasmuch as a great part of what doctors know...	7:51
2	'But do you want me to take a cure like that, Sir?'	8:44
3	I was startled to see her so flushed...	6:39
4	Finally my grandmother emerged...	5:37
5	Just as I was signalling to a cabman...	6:23
6	And if Legrandin had looked back at us...	7:01
7	The sun was sinking, it burnished an interminable wall...	7:07
8	My mother and I (whose falsehood was exposed...)	8:11
9	'Oh! My dear, it's dreadful to have to stay in bed...'	5:27
10	My grandmother's illness gave occasion to various people...	6:46
11	People of taste and refinement tell us nowadays...	8:45

Total time on CD 12: 78:36

CD 13

1	On the sixth day...	6:07
2	There came a time when her uraemic trouble...	6:38
3	According to our doctor, this was a symptom...	5:52
4	We went into the sickroom.	9:33
5	A half-brother of my grandmother, who was in religion...	5:45
6	For several nights now my father...	7:42
7	To return now to those last hours...	5:37
8	Chapter 2	5:00
9	There was no one else in the house but Françoise.	6:51
10	To revert to where we were...	6:48
11	I must say it at this point...	8:15
12	As for this pleasure which by accomplishing my desire...	4:54

Total time on CD 13: 79:08

CD 14

1	No doubt it does happen that women of moderate culture...	5:49
2	As she uttered these words the door opened...	8:08
3	I did not respond at once to this invitation...	6:16
4	In addition, Albertine preserved, inseparably attached to her...	5:24
5	Apart from the most recent applications...	5:34
6	The exact opposite happened.	5:50
7	Apart from this, Albertine's social ideas were fatuous...	6:46
8	Albertine had made me so late...	5:48
9	However that might be...	5:15
10	At that moment Mme de Villeparisis entered the room.	6:25
11	People who are merely fashionable...	8:56
12	I was struck by the application of this last epithet...	8:56

Total time on CD 14: 79:30

CD 15

1	The days that preceded my dinner with Mme de Stermaria...	7:08
2	And then, the last carriage having rolled by...	6:39
3	At the same time, my Balbec desires...	7:26
4	The next day was cold and fine; winter was in the air...	8:28
5	What added to my distress at not seeing Mme de Stermaria...	7:27
6	The thought of course never entered my mind...	5:11
7	If as I came downstairs I lived over again...	5:57
8	I was astounded.	6:21
9	As ill luck would have it...	6:42
10	As I have mentioned the Prince de Foix...	8:37
11	In politics the proprietor of this particular café...	8:55

Total time on CD 15: 78:57

CD 16

1	After leaving us for a moment...	6:34
2	'By the way, while I think of it, my uncle Charlus...'	9:28
3	How much familiar intercourse with a Guermantes...	6:17
4	This imagined remoteness of the past...	6:18
5	The people who detested these 'horrors' were astonished...	7:03
6	While I was examining Elstir's paintings...	5:07
7	At the very outset I found myself completely bewildered.	6:00
8	If M. de Guermantes had been in such a haste to present me...	6:43
9	But already the Duke, who seemed in a hurry...	5:46
10	It seemed on the whole more plausible to regard me...	9:39
11	I should add that one of the guests was still missing...	10:00

Total time on CD 16: 79:03

CD 17

1	The other reason for the friendliness shown me...	6:59
2	The Guermantes were just as idiomatic...	6:11
3	To the most trivial statements made by intelligent people...	4:56
4	A single point at which Guermantes and Courvoisiers converged...	7:59
5	To return to the antipathy which animated...	5:51
6	It is in a similar fashion...	6:03
7	Well, to return to Mme des Laumes...	5:39
8	Many of the friends of the Princesse de Parme...	8:21
9	When the room became too crowded...	7:08
10	With certain people (though these, it must be admitted...)	5:52
11	It must be recognised also that the refinement of social life...	6:18
12	The Duke and Duchess gave a very civil greeting...	8:05

Total time on CD 17: 79:29

CD 18

1	And so, thanks on one occasion to 'Teaser Augustus'...	7:55
2	The Courvoisiers were incapable of rising to the level...	5:53
3	When a woman who was intelligent, educated, witty...	7:37
4	As for social activities...	6:58
5	M. de Guermantes at this period in his life...	5:56
6	Very well, at this point in the social year...	6:07
7	As a rule these handsome 'supers' had been his mistresses...	7:46
8	No doubt the love which M. de Guermantes had had...	6:07
9	'Oriane,' began the Princesse de Parme...	6:03
10	'Which leads to some quite amusing scenes...'	7:57
11	I let it be understood that I had no admiration...	4:45
12	Far from condemning Mme d'Arpajon as absurd...	5:49

Total time on CD 18: 79:00

CD 19

[1]	I was beginning to know them...	5:32
[2]	Moved by this last quotation, Mme d'Arpajon exclaimed...	6:22
[3]	It was Mme de Chaussegros herself who had said...	5:56
[4]	'Good Lord, yes,' he replied...	6:07
[5]	'That portrait ought to appeal to Mme de Gallardon...'	6:31
[6]	'Babal always knows everything...'	6:04
[7]	'But you take the same view of my aunt...'	5:29
[8]	'As we're discussing your family, Oriane...'	6:05
[9]	'I really must go and see the Queen of Naples...'	5:39
[10]	In the period that followed...	5:51
[11]	Now, on this occasion, among the visitors...	6:47
[12]	'Babal, you're divine, you know everything...'	5:54
[13]	Mme de Guermentes was now nourishing a similar project...	5:19

Total time on CD 19: 77:43

CD 20

1	'A good-looking boy, I believe?' she asked.	5:40
2	'And is the Grand Duchess well?'	4:37
3	M. de Guermantes, rejoicing that she should be speaking to me...	7:01
4	Everyone smiled.	6:04
5	'You are quite mistaken,' replied the Duchess...	7:31
6	There was at Combray a Rue de Saintrailles...	5:28
7	In middle-class families one sometimes sees...	8:50
8	Better informed than his wife...	6:18
9	I was privately convinced that all these stories...	5:03
10	I did not even reply to the Ambassadors...	6:37
11	However, my historical curiosity was faint...	8:13
12	Just as I was about to leave...	6:19

Total time on CD 20: 77:48

CD 21

1	An exaltation that sank only into melancholy...	8:30
2	From this point of view...	3:41
3	When all was said, very different in this respect...	6:11
4	After a moment's silence I asked him...	7:35
5	So far, I had never dreamed that M. de Charlus's rage...	6:21
6	'Sir, I swear to you that I have said nothing...'	6:31
7	'Sir,' I replied, moving away from him...	7:07
8	'You will excuse my not accompanying you home...'	8:38
9	'The Duchesse de Guermantes...'	6:22
10	We are attracted by every form of life...	6:27
11	The fact remains, nevertheless...	6:49

Total time on CD 21: 74:19

CD 22

1	On the day on which the party was to be given...	6:46
2	'You shall see Oriane in a minute,' the Duke told me...	6:21
3	The Duke appeared touched that I should have come...	5:49
4	The Duke called back the footman...	6:16
5	'To be sure, it is,' said the Duke...	9:08
6	M. de Guermantes returned...	5:37
7	'Oriane, you might at least tell the story properly...'	7:57
8	Another footman came into the room.	5:40
9	The footman returned with the Comtesse Mole's card...	7:05
10	'Listen, Basin, I ask for nothing better...'	6:20
11	'What's that you say?' cried the Duchess...	6:46

Total time on CD 22: 73:52

Total time on CDs 1-22: 28:50:02

Marcel Proust

(1871–1922)

The Guermantes Way

The critic André Maurois described Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* as 'one of the greatest works of the imagination of all time'.

The literal translation of the work's French title, 'In Search of Lost Time', contains within it a clue to the creation of this monumental work of biographical fiction. Having wasted time living a dilettante existence in the fashionable world, Proust, in middle age, decided to re-dedicate his life to art, and to attempt at last to achieve the great work of which he knew himself capable.

Remembrance of Things Past was his chance to justify his life, and to cheat death through an act of artistic creation. It was the means he would use to conquer time through recreating his lost years. Memory was the material with which he would weave the magic cord to be launched into infinity; that cord

which now binds us to him, and stretches forward into the future, linking his genius to unborn generations.

The Author

Marcel Proust was born on 10 July, 1871. His father, a distinguished professor of medicine, was from a Catholic family, while his mother was Jewish. Although convinced from an early age of his calling as a writer, Proust was riddled with self-doubt and wrote relatively little at the beginning of his career.

During his twenties, he co-founded a short-lived review, *Le Banquet*; contributed to another literary publication, *La Revue Blanche*; and in 1896 had his first book published, a collection of essays entitled *Les Plaisirs et Les Jours*.

He became an enthusiastic admirer of Ruskin and translated his *Bible of Amiens*

and *Sesame and Lilies* into French. A novel, *Jean Santeuil*, which was the precursor of *Remembrance of Things Past*, was abandoned, and eventually published long after Proust's death, in 1954.

For much of his youth Proust led the life of a man-about-town, frequenting fashionable Paris drawing rooms and literary salons, which were to form the background of a number of his early stories and sketches, and subsequently of *Remembrance of Things Past*.

The death of his adored mother in 1905 resulted in a nervous collapse and aggravated his chronic asthma and insomnia. But, despite his grief and the sense of loss, from which he never recovered, his mother's death freed him with regard to his homosexual way of life, and allowed him to address same-sex love in his writing, albeit in a form which treated such experiences as happening to others rather than to himself.

In 1907 he moved into an apartment in the Boulevard Haussmann where, in the bedroom which he had had lined with cork to keep out noise, he embarked upon his great work *À la Recherche du Temps*

Perdu (Remembrance of Things Past). In it the minuteness of his observation, the depth of his psychological understanding and the vividness of his descriptive powers combined to create one of the most poetic and magical works in all literature.

Publication of *Remembrance of Things Past*

This long autobiographical cycle was originally published in eight sections: *Du Côté de Chez Swann* (Swann's Way) in 1913; *A L'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* (Within a Budding Grove) in 1918; *Le Côté de Guermantes I* (The Guermantes Way I) in 1920; *Le Côté de Guermantes II* and *Sodom et Gomorrhe I* (Cities of the Plain I) in 1921; *Sodom et Gomorrhe II* in 1922; *La Prisonnière* (The Captive) in 1923; *Albertine Disparue* (The Sweet Cheat Gone/The Fugitive) in 1925 and *Le Temps Retrouvé* (Time Regained) in 1927.

Proust was obliged to publish *Swann's Way* at his own expense, and even after it had appeared, had trouble finding a publisher for the next part, *A L'Ombre des*

Jeunes Filles en Fleurs. However, when it appeared in 1918 it received considerable acclaim, and was awarded the Prix Goncourt the following year.

By the time Proust died, on 18 November, 1922, the first four parts of the cycle had been published, leaving the others to appear posthumously.

The Guermantes Way – Part I

In *The Guermantes Way*, Marcel penetrates the inner sanctum of Paris high society, the circle of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, which he has hitherto viewed as both unattainable and quasi-magical; a place inhabited by beings who lead lives completely unlike his own and those of other ordinary mortals.

Marcel's unexpected social advancement is brought about by a combination of circumstances. His family has moved to an apartment which forms part of the Hotel de Guermantes, the Paris residence of the Duc and Duchesse de Guermantes, whose country estates are at Combray, where Marcel's family used to spend their summers when he was a child.

More recently, while Marcel was on holiday at the seaside resort of Balbec with his grandmother, the old lady renewed the acquaintance of a friend of her youth, the Marquise de Villeparisis, aunt of the Duchesse de Guermantes. The Marquise has introduced Marcel to her nephew, Robert de Saint-Loup, a stylish young officer cadet who delights in the intellectual and artistic stimulation he finds in Marcel's conversation.

Marcel's new neighbour in Paris, the Duchesse de Guermantes, is sufficiently young, attractive and unobtainable to become the safe object of his youthful adoration, and although he is unable to avoid noticing that she is a real woman with a disagreeable expression and a faulty complexion, fantasy outweighs reality. Marcel has long been obsessed by the grandeur of the Guermantes family, and in his imagination the Duchess becomes a magical being. Marcel's obsession drives him to take his morning walk at the same time as the Duchess takes hers, in order to meet her as though by accident. However, the Duchess appears, if anything, rather

more annoyed than pleased by his attentions.

Having been invited by the officer cadet Robert de Saint-Loup to visit him in the garrison town where he is stationed, Marcel finds fascination in army life, with its physical rigour and rough camaraderie. He is reminded that Oriane, Duchesse de Guermites, is Robert's cousin, and although reluctant to admit to Robert the extent of his love for her, he obtains from him the promise of an introduction on their return to Paris.

Robert's mistress is an aspiring young actress, and he is impatient for Marcel to meet her. When they are introduced Marcel is shocked to realise that he has seen her before. This woman so adored and admired by Robert, on whom he lavishes priceless jewels and for whom he defies his family's displeasure, turns out to be 'Rachel when from the Lord', the intelligent Jewish prostitute he first met in a brothel. Despite his view of Rachel as unworthy of Robert's love, Marcel can see that the emotions she engenders in him are both genuine and devastating.

When they pay a visit to the theatre to

see Rachel perform, Marcel observes with fascination the magical transformation made by distance and art, and begins to understand Robert's passion for her. Robert's relationship with Rachel is a stormy one, due to his jealous nature and her seeming need to provoke it, and Marcel is made an unwilling witness of their complicated emotional life.

The scene of Marcel's introduction to high society is the salon of the Marquise de Villeparisis. Not only is the Marquise Robert's aunt and his grandmother's old friend, but Marcel discovers another link between them, in that the Marquise's lover of many years' standing is the Baron de Norpois, his father's old friend and colleague.

The Marquise's salon represents the 'Guermites Way' of the title – the way of the aristocracy. At Combray, Marcel and his parents were in the habit of taking two country walks; one, Swann's Way, which led past the property of Swann, his wife Odette and their daughter Gilberte, and the other, the Méséglise Way, which skirted the Guermites family's extensive estates. These two different routes came

to symbolise two ways of life for Marcel: the bourgeois life of love and family, and the life of power and influence which comes with noble birth.

In *The Guermantes Way*, Proust shows us the struggles for political and social supremacy; the ebb and flow of power and influence being played out in the Marquise's drawing room beneath a veneer of elegant manners, almost Oriental in their subtlety.

Characters from former books are reintroduced, and among them we meet once again the arch snob and flatterer Legrandin who, having warned Marcel about the dangers of going into society, is found to have been tirelessly attempting to obtain entry himself; Marcel's old friend, the scholarly and brilliant but socially inept Bloch; and the predatory Baron de Charlus, whose homosexual interest in the innocent Marcel excites his hostess's concern.

Amongst the subjects currently under discussion in the Marquise's salon is the Dreyfus case. Bloch, who is attending the trial of Emile Zola, eminent champion of Dreyfus, is anxious to sound out the

company's opinions. The case has divided France into two opposing camps – with the aristocrats of the Faubourg Saint-Germain solidly arrayed on the anti-Dreyfus side. The opinion expressed by one nobleman present is that Dreyfus can be neither patriot nor traitor, because as a Jew he is not a Frenchman. This argument must have been particularly offensive to the half-Jewish Proust.

Part One of *The Guermantes Way* ends with the illness of Marcel's grandmother, whose selfless love has been as important to him as that of his mother, and his dawning realisation that the time is approaching when he must lose her.

The Guermantes Way – Part II

Marcel's grandmother is in failing health. Having been advised by an important consultant that, despite her inclinations to the contrary, she is well enough to take some fresh air, she sets out for a walk in the Champs Élysées with Marcel, during the course of which she is taken ill.

Marcel, who guesses his grandmother

has suffered a stroke, seeks assistance from an eminent doctor, Professor E., an acquaintance of his parents whom he meets by chance in the street.

Proust's somewhat cynical attitude to doctors is exemplified by his description of the character of the Professor, as it is in his treatment of other members of the medical profession elsewhere in the novel. Vain, fussy and opinionated, the Professor may be professionally competent but he lacks real human sympathy and understanding. His power to cure, too, is extremely limited. However, as Proust remarks of humanity's eternal optimism: 'we continue to light candles and to consult doctors.'

Proust's father was a distinguished physician and public health official, and the medical members of his father's circle, together with the numerous doctors Proust himself was obliged to consult as a result of his poor health, would have provided the author with ample opportunity to study the profession at first hand. His detailed account of sickroom procedure and of the physical decline of Marcel's grandmother indicates his

familiarity with the treatment of a chronic invalid.

Marcel's beloved grandmother dies. After a period of mourning, youth and nature combine to assist Marcel in his recovery, and a change of season brings a change of mood. Physical desire prompts thoughts of encounters with the female sex, and he plans a romantic dinner with Mme de Stermaria, an attractive young divorcée whose acquaintance he made at Balbec, and whose sexual availability has been hinted at by Robert de Saint-Loup. But his plans misfire and, surprisingly, it is with Albertine that the sexual encounter takes place. Although Marcel is no longer in love with her, as he was at Balbec, Albertine appears to have matured physically and in other ways, which leads Marcel to believe (as it turns out correctly) that she would not, as before, repel his advances.

Robert de Saint-Loup, just returned from Morocco on leave, takes Marcel off to dine. The café to which they go numbers among its clients a group of young intellectuals, of whom Marcel's old friend Bloch is a member, and a sprinkling

of young aristocrats, of whose arrogance and anti-Semitism Marcel is made aware but against which his friendship with Saint-Loup provides protection.

During his grandmother's illness, Marcel's mother has taken him to task for making a fool of himself chasing after the Duchesse de Guermantes, and Marcel's infatuation with the unattainable older woman fades. But once the spell is broken and Marcel's assumed indifference becomes genuine, the Duchess begins to take an interest in him and invites him to dine with her and her husband the Duke.

This gives Marcel the opportunity of which he has always dreamt: witnessing the charmed life of the members of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, that almost hermetically sealed circle of France's noblest aristocracy. But this experience proves very different from the one he has anticipated, and Marcel is forced to observe the chasm between the resounding titles which symbolise France's historic greatness, and the fallible personalities who inhabit them.

Marcel is invited to a late night rendez-vous with the Baron de Charlus,

which turns out to be a very unpleasant meeting. In his innocence, Marcel has unwittingly rejected the advances of the Baron, which puts the Baron in a rage. In a hilarious episode, Marcel reacts to the Baron's unjust attack with a furious display of temper, and trashes the Baron's new hat. The Baron, taken aback, softens his manner, and an uneasy truce is reached.

De Charlus was based by Proust on two real-life models, but nonetheless remains a wonderfully imaginative creation. Proust's description of the tension caused in the personality of Charlus by the repression of his publicly unacknowledged homosexuality; his need to emphasise his masculinity through acts of physical virility; his attempt to counteract feelings of shame through asserting his social and intellectual superiority over others and his vicious attacks on the weakness he observes in others but so strenuously denies in himself, shows the author to be not only a great writer, but a remarkable psychologist.

The final section of Part Two of *The*

Guermantes Way reintroduces the figure of Swann, now much altered by a life-threatening disease. Swann pays a visit to the Duchesse de Guermantes, with whom he shares the wit and intelligence that has made them allies in the past. In the face of Swann's revelation regarding the state of his health, the Duchess is torn between her social obligation to be on time for a dinner party and the necessity of considering Swann's news with appropriate seriousness. She opts for the former, despite eventually being obliged to delay her exit for a much more mundane reason: the necessity of changing her shoes. In making her decision to ignore Swann's illness in favour of a dinner engagement, she is following not only her husband's wishes, but the dictates of a social order which override her personal inclination, a fact recognised by Swann, who has led his life according to the same rules. The Duke and Duchess's outer forms of courtesy and consideration hide a deep selfishness, the result of their self-indulgent manner of living and an ingrained conviction that they are different from, and superior to,

other people – especially those who do not inhabit their world.

We are left with the feeling that Proust may not approve of the people who inhabit the upper reaches of society, but that, like Swann, he understands them. Marcel may have discovered that they are not the magic figures he imagined them to be, but he sees them nonetheless as part of a historical continuum, and finds the same fascination in their world as in 'a herbarium, filled with plants of another day'.

The author is well aware that snobbery, arrogance, pride, selfishness and cruelty are not unique to the aristocracy. We may not share the wealth and privilege of the gently-born, but as human beings we share their failings, and Proust appears to invite those among us without sin to cast the first stone.

The Life and Work of Marcel Proust

To avoid any confusion, it may be helpful to point out that Proust's great work, *À La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, was originally translated into English by Charles K. Scott-

Moncrieff and published in 1922 under the title, *Remembrance of Things Past*. It was subsequently re-translated by Terence Kilmartin and appeared in 1981 as *In Search of Lost Time*. In 2002 a new edition appeared under the same title, with each volume assigned to a different translator. The Naxos AudioBooks recordings use the Scott-Moncrieff text and, in references to the work, I use Scott-Moncrieff's title.

My own contact with Proust began when, as a 17-year-old schoolboy, I first read *Swann's Way*. I could not have guessed then that, many years into the future, Proust would take over my life to such an extent. Over a six year period during the 1990s, I abridged and recorded *Remembrance of Things Past* for Naxos Audiobooks, for whom I have now recorded this entire, uncut text.

When I was asked to write *The Life and Work of Marcel Proust* (see www.naxosaudiobooks.com), it occurred to me that, although the people on whom Proust based his characters were no longer living, the places he wrote about were still there, and so I travelled to France to see them.

I was delighted to discover that Illiers, where Marcel Proust spent his holidays as a child, and which figures in the book as Combray, is now marked on maps and road signs as Illiers-Combray, in official recognition of the reason for this sleepy village's wider fame.

In a narrow street just off the market square in Illiers-Combray is the house in which Proust's father, Adrien Proust, was born, and further along is the house of his aunt Élisabeth, now a Proust museum, where Élisabeth's fictional counterpart, the bedridden Aunt Léonie, watched the world go by from her bedroom window. Around the corner from the house is a little boulangerie with a sign in the window announcing proudly: 'This is where Aunt Léonie bought her madeleines'. It only occurs to me as I buy a packet of the scallop-shaped cakes, that Aunt Léonie is a creature of fiction. Never mind, Aunt Élisabeth might well have patronised the establishment, or one very like it. Up the hill there is a real house called Tansonville, the name of the house occupied by Charles Swann, and later by his daughter Gilberte and her husband

Robert de Saint-Loup, and further on there is a real village called Méréglise, a name almost identical to the fictional Méséglise.

Water lilies are still reflected in the glassy surface of the river Loir, which in the book bears the more poetic name the Vivonne, and beyond the stream lies the Pré Catalan, the enchanting park created by Proust's horticulturally minded Uncle Jules. From Illiers I travelled on to Cabourg, a seaside resort on the Normandy coast, the original of the fictional Balbec. Here I found the Grand Hotel in all its Edwardian splendour. It was rebuilt after Proust spent holidays there as a child, but he returned as an adult, and sections of *Remembrance of Things Past* were written beneath its roof. As in *Within a Budding Grove*, the great glass windows of the restaurant look out over the promenade to the beach below, and with a little imagination, that group of budding young girls in bikinis is transformed into the little band of 'jeunes filles en fleurs' outlined against the sea.

I travelled on to Paris, visiting 102 Boulevard Haussmann, Proust's home for

many years, where he wrote so much of *Remembrance of Things Past*. The building is still owned by the same bank that purchased it from Proust's aunt, when her inconsiderate decision to sell it forced him to move. His bedroom is still there, but unfurnished, and to see the room as it was, one is obliged to visit the Musée Carnavalet, where his bed, chaise-longue and other effects are displayed in a reconstruction of the famous cork-lined room.

A walk to the gardens of the Champs Élysées brought me to an area with a sign announcing that I am in the Allée Marcel Proust. Children chase each other – perhaps playing the modern equivalent of 'prisoners base', the game played by Gilberte and her friends. This is where the real Marcel played as a child with the real Marie de Benardaky, with whom he fell in love, just as the fictional Marcel falls in love with the fictional Gilberte Swann.

In the real world the same spaces are occupied now by different people. Time has moved on, but places remain, and we have the privilege of being present in not only the imaginary world Proust created,

but that portion of the real world which had a part in its creation. His presence has left behind a trace of magic, and we see places differently, because we see them through his eyes. One day those places will have crumbled into dust, as will we ourselves, and the space we now consider ours will be occupied by others. But as long as civilisation remains, those who come after us will be able to share Proust's vision and enter his world. Proust was aware that art is the only true reality, and that through his creations the artist continues to live after his death, beyond space and beyond time.

Notes by Neville Jason



Marcel Proust (right) and his younger brother Robert, c. 1877

A Proust Chronology

1871, July 10	Marcel Proust born
1873, May 24	Robert Proust born
1878–1886	holiday visits to Illiers (now Illiers-Combray)
1880, spring	Marcel's first attack of asthma
1882–1888	attends the Lycée Condorcet
1888	contributed to <i>La Revue Lilas</i> and <i>La Revue Verte</i>
1889–1890	military service at Orléans
1890, January 3	death of maternal grandmother, Adèle Weil
1890, August	holiday at Cabourg
1890, November	enrols as a student in the Faculty of Law and at the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques
1890, November – 1891, September	contributes to <i>Le Mensuel</i>
1892, March	first edition of <i>Le Banquet</i>
1893, March	last edition of <i>Le Banquet</i>
1893, April 13	meets Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac
1893	contributes to <i>La Revue Blanche</i> ; degree in law

1894, May 22	meets Reynaldo Hahn
1894, December	trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus
1895, March	degree in philosophy
1895, summer	holiday in Brittany with Reynaldo Hahn
1896	publication of <i>Les Plaisirs et Les Jours</i> ; writing <i>Jean Santeuil</i>
1897, February 6	duel with Jean Lorrain
1898, January 13	Emile Zola's article <i>J'Accuse</i> published
1899	begins translation of Ruskin's <i>Our Fathers Have Told Us</i> (<i>La Bible d'Amiens</i>)
1899, summer	holiday at Evian-les-Bains, visits the Brancovan family at Amphion
1900, June and October	visits Venice
1902	abandons work on <i>Jean Santeuil</i>
1903, November 26	death of Adrien Proust
1904	publication of <i>La Bible d'Amiens</i>

1905, September 26	death of Jeanne Proust
1906, June	publication of <i>Sesame and Lilies</i> (<i>Sésame et les Lys</i>)
1906, July	Dreyfus declared innocent
1906, December	moves to 102 Boulevard Haussmann
1907, summer	holiday at Cabourg, where he will spend the next seven summers. Meets Alfred Agostinelli
1908–09	begins writing <i>À la Recherche du Temps Perdu</i>
1913	Agostinelli re-enters Proust's life. Employs Celeste Albaret
1913, November	<i>Du Côté de Chez Swann</i> (<i>Swann's Way</i>) published
1914, May 30	Alfred Agostinelli dies in an aircraft accident
1918, June	publication of <i>A L'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs</i> (<i>Within a Budding Grove</i>), <i>Pastiches et Melanges</i> and new edition of <i>Swann's Way</i>
1919, June	moves to 8, rue Laurent-Pichat
1919, December	<i>Within a Budding Grove</i> awarded the Prix Goncourt

1920, October	moves to 44, rue Hamelin
1920, October	<i>Le Côté de Guermantes I</i> (The Guermantes Way I) published
1920, April	<i>Le Côté de Guermantes II</i> and <i>Sodom et Gomorrhe I</i> (Cities of the Plain I) published
1921, December 11	death of Montesquiou
1922, April	<i>Sodom et Gomorrhe II</i> published
1922, October	awarded the Légion d'Honneur
1922, November 18	death of Marcel Proust
1923	<i>La Prisonnière</i> (<i>The Captive</i>) published
1925	<i>Albertine Disparue</i> (<i>The Fugitive/The Sweet Cheat Gone</i>) published
1952	<i>Jean Santeuil</i> published
1954	<i>Contre Sainte-Beuve</i> (<i>Against Sainte-Beuve</i>) published



Neville Jason trained at RADA where he was awarded the diction prize by Sir John Gielgud. His first appearance in the theatre was in Peter Brook's production of *Titus Andronicus* starring Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. He is a former member of the Old Vic Company, the English Stage Company, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Birmingham Repertory Company. Roles include John Worthing in *The Importance of Being Ernest*, Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, Christian in *Cyrano de Bergerac* and Robert Browning in *Robert and Elizabeth*.

He is a trained singer and has appeared in numerous musicals including *The Great Waltz*, *1776*, *Ambassador*, *Lock Up Your Daughters*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Irma La Douce*, *Robert and Elizabeth* and *Mutiny*.

Television appearances include *Maigret*, *Dr Who* (The Androids of Tara), *Hamlet* (Horatio), *Crime and Punishment* (Zamyatov), *Emergency Ward Ten*, *Dixon of Dock Green*, *When the Boat Comes In*, *Angels*, *Minder*, *Dempsey and Makepeace*, *The Richest Woman in the World*, *The Dancing Years*, *The Magic Barrel* and *Windmill Near a Frontier*. Films include *From Russia with Love* and *The Message*. He has been a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company three times, and may be heard in radio plays, documentaries and arts programmes. For Naxos AudioBooks his readings include Vasari's *Lives of the Great Artists*, *Freud*, *War and Peace*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Once and Future King*, *War and Peace* and *The Castle of Otranto*; he plays Antonio in *The Tempest*, and has directed productions of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

As a director he was awarded Talkies awards for *Great Expectations* and *Poets of the Great War*. As a reader he won AudioFile Earphone awards for *The Captive*, *Time Regained*, *The Once and Future King* and *War and Peace* (Best Audiobooks of the Year 2007 and 2009).

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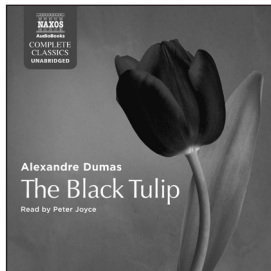
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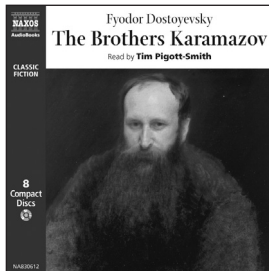
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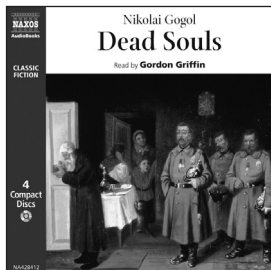
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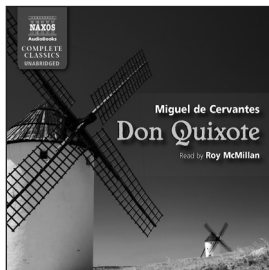
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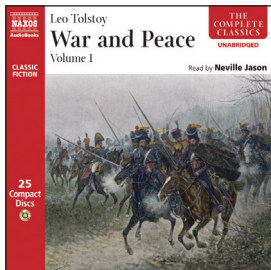
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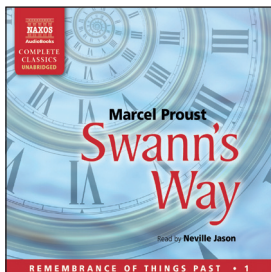
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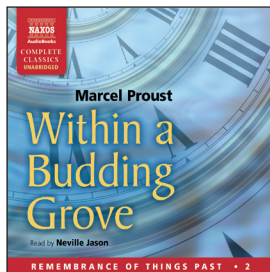
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