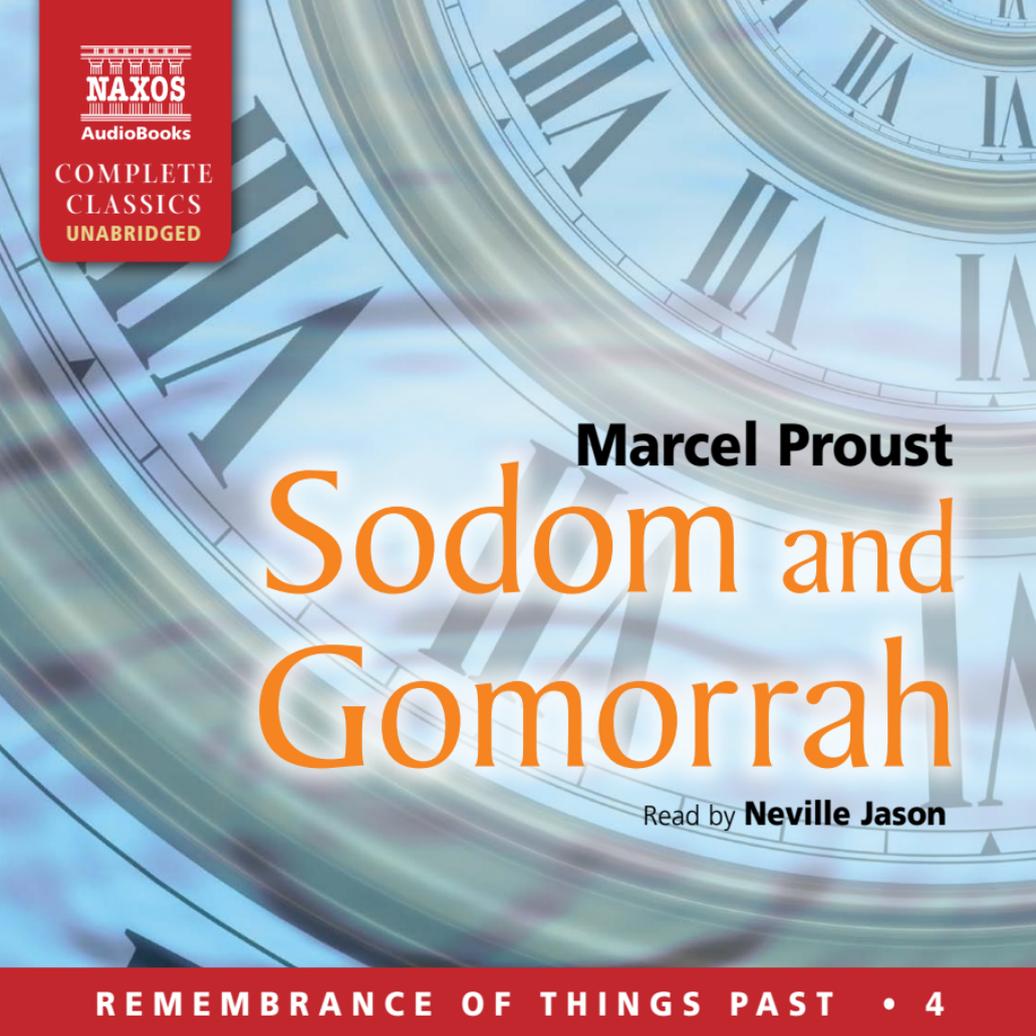
The logo features the word "NAXOS" in a bold, serif font, with "AudioBooks" in a smaller, sans-serif font below it. The text is centered within a red rectangular background that has a decorative border of small white squares.

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The background is a close-up, slightly blurred image of a clock face with Roman numerals. The clock is circular and occupies most of the frame, with the numbers appearing in a light blue or grey color against a darker background. The overall tone is cool and artistic.

Marcel Proust
**Sodom and
Gomorrah**

Read by **Neville Jason**

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST • 4

CD 1

| | | |
|----------|---|-------|
| 1 | Sodom and Gomorrah: Part 1 | 9:35 |
| 2 | I was about to change my position again... | 9:49 |
| 3 | All that I have just said... | 10:07 |
| 4 | 'So as not to lose the trail,' he went on... | 9:55 |
| 5 | Those of my readers who do not care to refer... | 6:30 |
| 6 | Their honour precarious... | 11:28 |
| 7 | It is with these professional organisations... | 10:41 |
| 8 | We need not pause here to consider... | 10:08 |

Total Time on CD 1: 78:19

CD 2

| | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | Then the solitary languishes alone. | 10:11 |
| 2 | It is true that inverts... | 9:30 |
| 3 | Sodom and Gomorrah: Part 2 – Chapter 1 | 9:01 |
| 4 | The person immediately in front of me... | 10:34 |
| 5 | I was buttonholed at that moment... | 10:43 |
| 6 | But in default of the pleasures sacrificed... | 10:35 |
| 7 | The distance between me and the garden door... | 10:19 |
| 8 | In any case, if there are transitions... | 7:00 |

Total Time on CD 2: 78:00

CD 3

| | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | It was not so difficult... | 10:49 |
| 2 | One of these little accidents... | 9:26 |
| 3 | It was not so very long since... | 9:34 |
| 4 | While, before she had even left the entrance hall... | 10:27 |
| 5 | In any event, the names of Ibsen and D'Annunzio... | 10:50 |
| 6 | Assuredly, if it had been only Oriane... | 9:50 |
| 7 | M. de Charlus would, no doubt, readily have compromised... | 9:59 |
| 8 | 'Talking of Dreyfusards,' I said... | 6:59 |

Total Time on CD 3: 77:59

CD 4

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | I was longing to know... | 9:43 |
| 2 | 'Well, the fact is, I shall not be in Paris,' the Duchess answered... | 9:07 |
| 3 | Just as I reached this room... | 11:03 |
| 4 | There are certain Israelites... | 10:53 |
| 5 | At this moment, Mme de Surgis entered the room... | 9:59 |
| 6 | Swann having caught sight of me came over... | 10:22 |
| 7 | For my part, I was furious... | 7:52 |
| 8 | 'Suppose we took a turn in the garden, Sir,' I said to Swann... | 9:11 |

Total Time on CD 4: 78:16

CD 5

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | As for the great nobles, her kinsmen... | 9:59 |
| 2 | To give an example of quite secondary importance... | 10:44 |
| 3 | And so, seeking now only to give myself... | 10:18 |
| 4 | 'You must make up your mind to let me fix up...' | 9:24 |
| 5 | While we were going downstairs... | 9:50 |
| 6 | 'Well!' said the Duchess to me... | 10:45 |
| 7 | Such was, in addition to great honesty... | 9:56 |
| 8 | I was tortured by the incessant recurrence... | 7:46 |

Total Time on CD 5: 78:46

CD 6

| | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | Lives entrenched behind five or six lines of defence... | 10:00 |
| 2 | When I discovered afterwards... | 11:17 |
| 3 | I ceased for some time to see Albertine... | 9:21 |
| 4 | It is true that the Verdurins... | 9:34 |
| 5 | Gilberte, too, helped to strengthen her mother's position... | 11:03 |
| 6 | The Heart's Intermissions | 8:59 |
| 7 | But I had long since given up trying... | 9:47 |
| 8 | Now, inasmuch as the self... | 9:23 |

Total Time on CD 6: 79:29

CD 7

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | But as soon as I had succeeded in falling asleep... | 10:30 |
| 2 | And yet the day before, on my arrival... | 10:55 |
| 3 | On the card that was brought me... | 11:06 |
| 4 | She had the misfortune... | 10:58 |
| 5 | I went straight up to my room... | 9:42 |
| 6 | To be sure, I suffered agonies all that day... | 10:05 |
| 7 | Chapter 2 | 8:03 |
| 8 | I, who in my childhood... | 6:26 |

Total Time on CD 7: 77:50

CD 8

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | It would be untrue... | 9:57 |
| 2 | This pride did not prevent him from accepting... | 11:10 |
| 3 | It was not this evening... | 9:52 |
| 4 | From, however, not one o'clock in the morning... | 10:13 |
| 5 | 'Very well, that's settled, I'm off,' she said... | 9:27 |
| 6 | One day, outside the Grand Hotel... | 10:07 |
| 7 | The dowager Marquise could not find words... | 8:31 |
| 8 | But I might have been far more familiar still... | 9:54 |

Total Time on CD 8: 79:17

CD 9

| | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | 'I should be delighted to play to you,' Mme de Cambremer said... | 10:11 |
| 2 | 'Good heavens,' Mme de Cambremer-Legrandin remarked to me... | 9:54 |
| 3 | As at that time I had no definite opinion... | 9:46 |
| 4 | 'Shan't we see you again this evening?' | 9:55 |
| 5 | As soon as we were alone... | 10:03 |
| 6 | Making an abstraction of my love... | 10:15 |
| 7 | I ought to have left the place that evening... | 8:55 |
| 8 | There were still but a few people at Balbec... | 9:42 |

Total Time on CD 9: 78:46

CD 10

| | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | I would have liked to be sure... | 8:28 |
| 2 | The post of wine waiter... | 8:24 |
| 3 | Here it was not only Marie that protested... | 9:48 |
| 4 | Another incident turned my thoughts... | 9:35 |
| 5 | We were waiting, Albertine and I, at the Balbec station... | 10:06 |
| 6 | We hastened in search of an empty carriage... | 9:41 |
| 7 | While I stood talking to him... | 11:14 |
| 8 | A change in our perspective... | 12:05 |

Total Time on CD 10: 79:26

CD 11

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | They were dazzled by the accounts... | 10:07 |
| 2 | Sometimes, giving him credit for the comic... | 11:00 |
| 3 | An intelligent man of the world... | 10:48 |
| 4 | Cottard said far more often... | 9:00 |
| 5 | At Saint-Pierre-des-Iles... | 10:00 |
| 6 | For their part, the Cambremers... | 9:47 |
| 7 | These names made me think of the day... | 9:21 |
| 8 | 'The Princess must be on the train...' | 8:04 |

Total Time on CD 11: 78:14

CD 12

| | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | Forgetting her attachment... | 9:24 |
| 2 | After the toll-house... | 9:49 |
| 3 | 'What, are you still talking about Dechambre,' said M. Verdurin... | 9:35 |
| 4 | Mme Verdurin who, to welcome us... | 10:14 |
| 5 | One would have thought... | 10:48 |
| 6 | I had just given Mme Verdurin the message... | 10:04 |
| 7 | As I listened to him and promised the silence... | 10:17 |
| 8 | Mme Verdurin was annoyed that M. de Cambremer should pretend... | 9:15 |

Total Time on CD 12: 79:32

CD 13

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | 'Do you shoot much, Sir?' said M. Verdurin... | 10:50 |
| 2 | 'I must tell you, all the same...' | 9:30 |
| 3 | Hardly ever do we hear anything... | 10:37 |
| 4 | 'You said that Cholet was derived from chou,' I remarked... | 9:55 |
| 5 | 'It is true,' he replied to M. Verdurin... | 10:30 |
| 6 | 'I should think,' said I... | 9:43 |
| 7 | M. de Charlus, who gave a widely different meaning... | 10:09 |
| 8 | And, so as not to criticise merely... | 8:12 |

Total Time on CD 13: 79:32

CD 14

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | 'As a man, he is vile...' | 10:12 |
| 2 | We may judge by these temporary discomfitures... | 10:05 |
| 3 | When the piece came to an end... | 9:53 |
| 4 | Saniette, summoned to make a fourth... | 9:40 |
| 5 | 'It is easy to see,' Cottard went on... | 10:20 |
| 6 | 'This young man is astonishing,' M. de Charlus interrupted... | 10:11 |
| 7 | 'By the way, Charlus,' said Mme Verdurin... | 10:28 |
| 8 | And, as I expressed a contrary opinion... | 8:20 |

Total Time on CD 14: 79:13

CD 15

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | One could barely make out the sea... | 7:06 |
| 2 | But, from the air which Cottard assumed... | 7:47 |
| 3 | Chapter 3 | 10:33 |
| 4 | Two times, I have said... | 9:53 |
| 5 | I should greatly have astonished my mother... | 10:47 |
| 6 | I was all the more astonished... | 11:06 |
| 7 | Every day I went out with Albertine... | 10:13 |
| 8 | Coming to the foot of the cliff road... | 11:34 |

Total Time on CD 15: 79:06

CD 16

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | No doubt this was because the rustic setting was different... | 10:07 |
| 2 | I knew that Beaumont was something very special... | 10:08 |
| 3 | 'Listen,' said Morel, anxious to excite... | 10:54 |
| 4 | When Albertine thought it better... | 10:03 |
| 5 | On leaving Marcouville... | 10:19 |
| 6 | Unfortunately this life so closely involved with Albertine's... | 9:59 |
| 7 | In the past, when I thought with longing... | 9:56 |
| 8 | On the days following those... | 7:30 |

Total Time on CD 16: 79:01

CD 17

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | There was a 'Combray spirit'... | 9:49 |
| 2 | During our walk, dropping his voice... | 10:06 |
| 3 | But it is perhaps crediting Morel's brain... | 10:18 |
| 4 | The faithful were all the more convinced... | 9:04 |
| 5 | But presently, without any need to be guided... | 9:43 |
| 6 | For M. de Charlus had for the moment... | 9:07 |
| 7 | A great musician, a member of the Institute... | 9:25 |
| 8 | When M. de Charlus was not speaking... | 11:15 |

Total Time on CD 17: 78:52

CD 18

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | Ski having shewn some determination... | 10:19 |
| 2 | Some of these affectionate allusions... | 9:20 |
| 3 | Morel, feeling that I bore him... | 10:40 |
| 4 | In the meantime, and as though he had been dealing... | 8:50 |
| 5 | If M. de Charlus, in dashing this letter down... | 10:12 |
| 6 | 'I hope at least that my two adversaries...' | 11:27 |
| 7 | Presently the party broke up... | 9:08 |
| 8 | The incident that concerns Morel... | 8:48 |

Total Time on CD 18: 78:49

CD 19

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | However great his alarm... | 9:53 |
| 2 | At Grattevast, where his sister lived... | 10:44 |
| 3 | At Hermenonville... | 9:49 |
| 4 | 'There are a certain number of outstanding families,'... | 10:05 |
| 5 | In the eyes of those who so defined them... | 9:56 |
| 6 | The latter indeed obliged... | 10:36 |
| 7 | 'What I should like to have is an explanation of Thorpehomme,'... | 9:08 |
| 8 | Friendships more precious than Bloch's is not... | 9:07 |

Total Time on CD 19: 79:23

CD 20

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | 'Where does your friend live, in Paris?' | 10:39 |
| 2 | 'But I cannot believe that it is good for you...' | 8:30 |
| 3 | Chapter 4 | 10:19 |
| 4 | The train had stopped at Parville... | 10:11 |
| 5 | The mysterious passion... | 9:59 |
| 6 | Did Albertine realise later on... | 10:59 |
| 7 | Two or three times it occurred to me... | 9:51 |
| 8 | But beyond the beach of Balbec... | 5:04 |

Total Time on CD 20: 75:38

Total time on CDs 1–20: 26:13:28

Marcel Proust

(1871–1922)

Sodom and Gomorrah

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.

Sodom and Gomorrah – Part I

Sodom and Gomorrah (Cities of the Plain) Part I opens with the Narrator, Marcel, awaiting the return of the Duke and Duchess of Guermantes in the Hotel de Guermantes, their mansion in Paris, in which Marcel's family occupies an apartment. The ducal premises also provide accommodation for Madame de Villeparisis, aunt of the Duke and Duchess, while on a lower level, both architecturally and socially, the tailor Jupien runs his business with the help of his niece.

The Duke's brother, the Baron de Charlus, arrives to visit Madame de Villeparisis, and finding her out or indisposed, is about to leave when he finds himself confronted by Jupien.

Their meeting provides the occasion

for Marcel to witness a homosexual encounter which opens his eyes to the Baron's sexual proclivities, and enlightens him regarding de Charlus's hitherto inexplicable behaviour towards himself. It also affords the author the opportunity of drawing a skilful and witty parallel between a horticultural and a human conjunction, as Marcel's absorption in the scene between Charlus and Jupien leads to his missing the possible fertilisation of the Duchess's orchid, which has been left out in the courtyard in the hope of attracting the attentions of a passing bee.

In this way, Proust introduces us to the theme of homosexuality, male and female, announced in the title. It is a subject on which Proust speaks with an understanding and sympathy born of his own homosexual way of life, which he felt obliged to keep secret, and which he carefully disguises in his autobiographical novel, where the Narrator, who is undoubtedly based on Proust himself, falls in love only with women.

Proust scholars and researchers have identified female characters in the book

as disguised versions of men with whom Proust had had love affairs, although it is also suggested that his relationships with certain women are unlikely to have been entirely platonic. However, these speculations are of interest principally in explaining the depth of understanding Proust shows in his exposition of the theme of same-sex love, and his sympathy for the pain and frustration it causes those whose sexual nature is condemned by society and who are obliged to live lives of secrecy and duplicity.

There is particular poignancy in Proust's reference to 'sons without a mother, to whom they are obliged to lie all her life long and even in the hour when they close her dying eyes', in view of his own need to hide his private life from his adored mother, and to his description of 'the poet who one day was feasted at every table, applauded in every theatre in London, and on the next was driven from every lodging, unable to find a pillow upon which to lay his head', a clear reference to Oscar Wilde, who had been a friend of the young Proust, and was then living out the remains of his life as an exile in Paris.

And perhaps it is as well for those who would condemn Proust for his lack of openness regarding his sexuality, to be reminded of the distance society has travelled since his lifetime, and of the legal punishment and social ostracism which then awaited those who were known to transgress the accepted norms of sexual behaviour.

If the activities of the Baron de Charlus serve as an introduction to the world of Sodom, it is the Narrator's love for Albertine which takes us into the realm of Gomorrah, or female homosexuality.

The subject of unrequited love is no novelty in literature, and yet in Proust's hands it is fashioned anew. It would be a remarkable psychologist who was able to analyse Proust more perceptively than he analyses himself.

He unerringly connects the painful sense of exclusion Marcel feels when he fears Albertine does not love him, with the childhood experience of his mother's refusal at Combray to give him the benediction of her goodnight kiss. Here is the classic Oedipal situation in which his wish to have his mother entirely to himself

is thwarted by the existence of his father.

Adding to the pain which is felt by every rejected lover is the knowledge that he has no chance of possessing Albertine if his suspicions about her 'Sapphism' are confirmed. He would, in that case, be constitutionally unable ever to satisfy her desires.

If it is true, as has been suggested, that the character of Albertine is a disguised version of Proust's real life male lover, the author's own situation will be seen as equally impossible – that of a man in love with a man who preferred women. And it is Proust's personal experience of an anguished yearning for love he can never obtain which invests his fictional study with such compelling authenticity.

But not only Oedipal frustration and gender preference stand between the Narrator/Proust and the unconditional love he craves, there is also that last and greatest obstacle of them all – death. On the occasion of his second visit to Balbec, memories of the first visit undertaken in the company of his grandmother suddenly overwhelm Marcel, and he is faced for the first time with the irreversible reality of the

death of the person who, after his mother, he loved most in the world.

Here again Proust displays the depth of his psychological insight as he charts Marcel's slow progress from despair to resignation in observing the workings of his unconscious mind through the medium of his dreams.

Once more the reader is privileged to witness the miracle performed by the author of turning the events of his transient life into an enduring work of art.

Sodom and Gomorrah – Part II

Part II continues the story of the Narrator Marcel's second visit to the coastal visit of Balbec, where he makes further discoveries relating to the homosexual behaviour of his acquaintances.

The ageing Baron de Charlus, in love with the gifted but unscrupulous violinist Charles Morel, continues to search for casual sexual encounters elsewhere and dines openly at the hotel with a Duchess's footman. Morel, apparently bisexual, either gives or withholds his favours from male admirers, according to how it

will benefit him. Bloch's uncle M. Nissim Bernard, infatuated with a young waiter, mistakes the young man's identical twin, who does not share his brother's sexual taste, for the object of his passion, with disastrous results. The Prince de Guermantes, whom we have previously met at a brilliant ball given by him and his wife in their mansion, the magnificent Hotel de Guermantes, engages the services of Morel in the somewhat less salubrious surroundings of a seaside brothel, once again with unforeseen and hilarious consequences.

These episodes are at once both comic and tragic. In other hands they might be the stuff of a Feydeau-style farce. But Proust is no *farceur*. Whilst he has a keen appreciation of the humour implicit in these situations, he is too sensitive and complex an artist not to be aware of their dark side. He knows too well the pain of being forced to hide his sexual nature, even from those dearest to him, and the loneliness of feeling different from other men. Humour is there, but tempered with compassion for the powerlessness of men swept away by a passion which, in

a society which permits them no outlet, becomes so urgent it breaches the barriers of their lives and precipitates them into ludicrous and embarrassing situations.

Female homosexuality, for the Narrator, has no such comic side. In the face of his love for Albertine it exists as a terrible threat against which he is powerless. As long as he feels Albertine is faithful to him he is able to consider parting with her, but once she is revealed as a lover of women, he is tormented with the passionate need to make her his own.

For Marcel the Narrator, as in the case of Marcel his creator, is one of those doomed to yearn after phantoms. The incident in his childhood, recounted in *Swann's Way*, where he refuses to go to sleep until his mother comes to kiss him goodnight, and then is granted more than his wish when his father allows her to spend the night in his room, creates a terrible tension between the desire to have his mother to himself, and the guilt and fear caused by having his wish to exclude his father granted. This powerful Oedipal struggle has set up a subconscious need to repeat the painful experience endlessly

in a vain effort to try to come to terms with it.

In real life, Proust's passionate attachment to his mother appears to have led to psychosomatic illness, homosexual desire, and the inability to form lasting and satisfactory relationships. When his fictional alter ego falls in love with Albertine, he unconsciously chooses a woman with homosexual desires, and therefore one incapable of giving herself completely to him. As he imagines her caressing other women, or hears her over the telephone enjoying herself with her friends in a café, he suffers the same painful sense of exclusion – of the woman he loves enjoying herself with others rather than with him – that he felt as a child lying in bed on a summer's night with the window open, listening to the sounds of chatting and laughter wafting up to him, whilst his mother entertained guests in the garden below.

Whilst homosexuality is the principal theme of *Sodom and Gomorrah*, it is by no means the only one, and Proust's fascination with human behaviour finds much to interest him in other sections

of society, particularly in the bohemian circle of M. and Mme Verdurin, which has moved down to the seaside for the summer. Proust paints a vividly observant picture of the little clique of 'the faithful', held together by its overbearing 'Mistress' who lives in terror of being abandoned by its members. He shows us the cruelty of M. Verdurin as he tortures the awkward and diffident Saniette, the social pretensions of Mme Verdurin for whom 'bores' become 'amusing' once they begin to attend her Wednesdays, the arrogance of the local aristocracy who consider they do her a favour in accepting her invitations, the affectation of the 'faithful' who pride themselves on being artistically 'advanced', and their pretence that they have rejected other salons, which in reality they would have no chance of entering, in favour of this one.

All this is presented by the Narrator with a lack of condemnation. He not only observes the faults and pretensions of others, but is not afraid to acknowledge them in himself. Proust holds up a mirror to us in which we cannot help but see our own image. In his flawed characters

we recognise ourselves, and are obliged to accept that, in our own way, we all possess our share of human failings.

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 (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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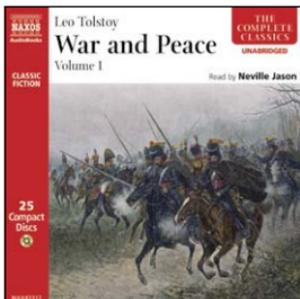
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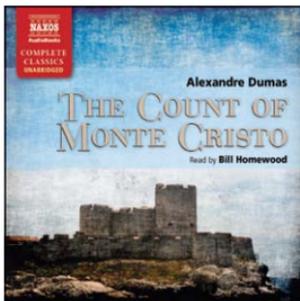
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