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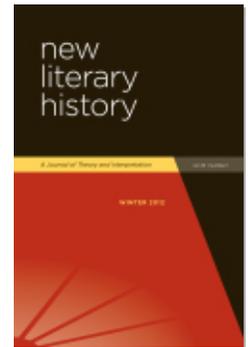
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New Literary History, Volume 43, Number 1, Winter 2012, pp. 159-178 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2012.0008>



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“Prestige of a Momentary Diamond”: Economies of Distinction in Proust

Hannah Freed-Thall

IN 1908, A DIAMOND-FABRICATION scam captured the French popular imagination. The intrigue, sensationally recounted in all the newspapers, featured a con artist named Henri Lemoine who claimed to have invented a method of manufacturing diamonds.¹ Lemoine defrauded the De Beers diamond company out of nearly 1.6 million francs by performing a carefully choreographed trick: he invited company executives to observe as he made a show of cooking up diamonds in an electric furnace, in the nude, with the aid—unbeknownst to De Beers—of a false-bottomed crucible. The diamond company paid Lemoine to keep his “formula” secret (he was to stash it in an English bank), and invested in a diamond factory he pretended to build in the Pyrenees. The hoax only became public knowledge when De Beers grew suspicious and pressed charges for fraud, effectively calling Lemoine’s bluff.² Throughout the highly publicized trial that ensued, Lemoine continued to play the part of the great inventor, insisting that he really could fabricate diamonds, and pleading for the opportunity to perform the experiment again.³ For several weeks, a public debate raged over whether Lemoine was a clever impostor or a misunderstood inventor: “Un imposteur de génie ou un grand inventeur méconnu.”⁴ Despite Lemoine’s unflinching performance, his trial revealed that the diamonds he claimed to have created had jewelers’ marks on them—proving they had been bought in Paris and originated in De Beers’ own South African mines.⁵ In other words, Lemoine had passed off “real” diamonds as fake ones: his genuine synthetic diamond turned out to be just a genuine diamond.

If people know about the Lemoine Affair today, it is largely thanks to Proust, who was so intrigued by what he termed “the prestige of a momentary diamond” that he made the affair the subject and guiding thread of a series of pastiches published in *Le Figaro* in February and March of 1908. In the year before he began drafting *In Search of Lost Time*, Proust composed accounts of Lemoine’s hoax in the styles of Balzac, Flaubert, Sainte-Beuve, Michelet, Renan, Goncourt, and the literary critic Emile

Faguet. In March of 1909, after Lemoine had skipped bail and fled to Eastern Europe (he would be recaptured in April), Proust published a Lemoine Affair pastiche of the symbolist poet Henri de Régnier. In the summer of 1909, Proust planned to publish pastiches of Chateaubriand and Maeterlinck, as well as a second Sainte-Beuve, but he missed his deadline at the *Figaro*, so these did not appear in print at the time.⁶

While a wealth of recent criticism investigates convergences between high modernism and mass cultural forms, Proust's participation in public life and his fascination with the mundane details of modernist material culture remain largely unexplored in Proust scholarship.⁷ Few critics have written about Proust's journalistic and pastiche activities; those who have tend to take the position that the practice of strategically counterfeiting the styles of celebrated authors enabled Proust to purge external influences and find his own voice.⁸ I propose that we might, instead, view the Lemoine Affair pastiches as modernist experiments in the production of value—test cases exploring the phenomenology of “convulsive” and “unstable” preciousness (*CSB* 23). These ventriloquistic exercises highlight Proust's fascination with the volatility of value and with the peculiar status of the aesthetic object in modernity. Casting himself in the role of the performance artist alternately described in the papers as an “alchemist,” an “illusionist,” and an “ingenious swindler,” Proust simultaneously flaunts and mocks his own cultivation of sophisticated discourses. As he delves into the shimmering substance of Lemoine's real/fake diamond, he plays on the conceptual kinship between precious stones and pure art, demonstrating high modernism's capacity to ironize and deconstruct its own claim to aesthetic autonomy.

These outrageous imitations also reveal a Proust whose habits of perception and of composition were conditioned by the spatial and temporal rhythms and textures of the daily newspaper. “Prestidigitator,” journalist, stock-market speculator, and literary ventriloquist, the Proust of the Lemoine Affair pastiches is unabashedly connected to the worldly networks of his day. This essay approaches Proust's experiments with the production and circulation of aesthetic value and authorial distinction from two points of view. The first section investigates Proust's enthusiastic participation in the Lemoine Affair, and the second explores the importance of newspaper reading and writing to Proust's aesthetic imagination more broadly.

I. Synthetic Diamonds

Proust is famous for championing an economy of aesthetic redemption, which we might call, following Pierre Bourdieu, an ideology of charisma.⁹ According to this logic, the most mundane objects conceal secret aesthetic riches that can be mined by those endowed with special powers of perception. The Proustian narrator calls this trick “translation,” “deciphering,” or “conversion,” and suggests that by mastering the magic of “involuntary memory,” one can conjure treasures out of the “waste product of experience.” The true meaning of things lies hidden from most people, but the exceptional perceiver can learn to convert visible “hieroglyphics” into their “spiritual equivalent,” distilling lasting subjective “truth” from mere materiality.¹⁰

Proustian involuntary memory is a trick that really pays off in the *Search*: the narrator manages to pull his entire childhood out of a cup of tea, the beach at Balbec out of a starched napkin, and the city of Venice out of a cobblestone. The Lemoine Affair pastiches also bundle together the mundane and the marvelous, but they reveal a Proust who is less interested in the redemptive or sublimatory power of art than in discredited performances of sophistication and spoiled economies of distinction. In his Lemoine Affair pastiches, Proust is enchanted not so much by alchemy and miraculous transformations, but by the failed bluff—the conjuring trick that falls flat, humiliating the credulous executive even more than the would-be magician. (Lemoine’s main line of defense was that his procedure had to be authentic, because if it were a hoax, it would mean that the world’s great diamond experts were idiots for having believed him.¹¹)

In 1919, when Proust had become famous, he published his Lemoine Affair pastiches as a volume. He contended at this time that the affair had been an insignificant subject chosen at random. The few critics who write about the pastiches have taken him at his word—the Lemoine Affair itself has attracted no critical attention. Perhaps this is because it is difficult to reconcile Proust’s fascination with the hoax—which he spent months writing and rewriting from various points of view—with his reputation as the highest of high modernists. Indeed, while the *Search* has been mythologized as a paragon of cultural distinction—a “monumental expression” of “supersophistication,” as Joseph Litvak wryly puts it—Proust is often imagined as a sickly esthete walled up in a cork-lined room.¹² This mythology is undercut by the image of Proust as an avid newspaper reader and writer, as a speculator, and a scandal- and gossip-monger who followed every detail of Lemoine’s trial as it played

out in the paper—and then brought the affair back to the front page by publishing his own lovingly mocking accounts.

The term “pastiche” is often used to refer to the characteristic style (or stylelessness) of postmodernity. Fredric Jameson famously defined postmodern pastiche as “blank parody”—a depthless, ahistorical, random cannibalization of all the styles of the past.¹³ Modernist pastiche, on the other hand, was a particular practice of writing, popular in France around the turn of the century, which required its practitioners to give themselves up to the rhythm and feel of another writer’s voice.¹⁴ Anticipating surrealist automatic writing, the belle époque fad for pastiche can also be tied to modernism’s broader interest in travesty, masks, animal mimicry, and emotional contagion, from Gabriel Tarde’s fin-de-siècle theory of imitation as the foundation of social cohesion, to Marcel Mauss’s 1934 theory of “habitus” as “a prestigious imitation” whereby the individual “borrows” his corporeal dispositions.¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, Roger Caillois, and Jacques Lacan were all taken by the notion that identity might be fundamentally imitative, based in a sort of mimetic compulsion to “become other.”¹⁶

Pastiche was a widely practiced school exercise during the French Third Republic, and by the early twentieth century there was a market for pastiche compilations, like the multivolume series, *A la manière de . . .*, edited by Paul Reboux and Charles Müller and published in five installments between 1908 and 1950. Pastiche as practiced by Reboux and Müller is caricatural in tone: it mocks the very concept of stylistic novelty, and denigrates the authors it imitates.¹⁷ But Proustian pastiche is not simply parodic—it is not just about surpassing more powerful authors, or becoming free from literary influence. Rather, Proustian pastiche is a rehearsal of tonal flexibility and plasticity, a practice of intimacy with a variety of styles and generic norms. Bourdieu has suggested that Proustian pastiche is not caricature or parody—it does not simply reproduce the most salient characteristics of a style. Rather, Proust’s pastiches reproduce the *habitus* of other writers—Proust gets inside those writers’ tastes, reproducing their dispositions, their habits of perception and interpretation, the quasi-corporeal rhythms they cultivate, their manner of orienting the reader through time and space.¹⁸

Proust embeds Lemoine’s fantasmatic artificial diamond differently in each pastiche. Sandwiched amidst news of romantic deception, financial speculation, and international diplomatic intrigue, the affair is at first one more piece of gossip passed around in a Balzacian salon. The synthetic jewel then undergoes numerous transformations, appearing as the collective dream of a dusty courtroom crowd in a Flaubertian trial scene, as the perfect theatrical subject for Edmond de Goncourt, and even as

a glistening bit of snot hanging from Lemoine's collar in a pastiche of the symbolist poet Henri de Régnier: "One could make out just the one single succulent, quivering mass, transparent and hardening and in the ephemeral brilliance with which it decorated Lemoine's attire, it seemed to have fixed the prestige of a momentary diamond there, still hot, so to speak, from the oven from which it had emerged, and for which this unstable jelly, corrosive and alive as it was for one more instant, seemed at once, by its deceitful, fascinating beauty, to present both a mockery and a symbol."¹⁹ In this deliciously revolting pastiche, the diamond is presented as a sign of distinction that "quivers" precariously on the border between the delectable and the disgusting. Pairing Régnier's rarefied syntax with the image of Lemoine's leaking body, Proust dares his reader to relish this conjunction of refinement and vulgarity.

Proust said that he composed his pastiches by setting an "internal metronome," and indeed, we can feel him practicing his act in these pieces.²⁰ He tests out the limits of different generic norms, alternating between fiction and criticism, presenting the affair as a vaudevillian tragedy that "abounds with improbabilities"—"fourmille d'inraisemblances"—but also as a historical topic that gives Michelet a headache.²¹ The pastiches are joyfully anachronistic: representing his contemporary moment as a present bristling with temporal contradictions and overlaps, Proust revels in inserting Lemoine's fabricated diamond into incongruous epochs. In the most outrageously anachronistic of the pastiches, Proust imagines Ruskin traveling by airplane in order to look at Giotto's Lemoine Affair frescoes. Experimenting with narrative conventions, Proust repeatedly oversteps the border between diegetic and extradiegetic worlds: he blurs the line between the fictional and the real by introducing his own friends and acquaintances into established literary frames and by confounding novelistic and historical personages.²² In the Balzac pastiche, for example, Proust describes Lemoine as "one of those extraordinary men" who could either be celebrated, like Ivan the Terrible or Peter the Great, or disgraced, like the fictional Balthazar Claës or Vautrin (*LA* 15, *CSB* 12). Proust also stretches the bounds of his reader's credulity by constructing pastiches that critique other pastiches. He plays on the fictionality of the entire exercise, for example, when he ventriloquizes Sainte-Beuve in order to critique his own invented Flaubert (Sainte-Beuve quibbles with Flaubert's lack of verisimilitude), and when he ventriloquizes the critic Emile Faguet in order to "cite" lines from a play of his own invention—a vaudevillian tragedy about Lemoine's hoax by the playwright Henri Bernstein. Proust even writes himself into the affair as a character: Goncourt happily receives the news of Lemoine's discovery along with news of Marcel Proust's suicide—he has allegedly

killed himself due to the devaluation of his stock portfolio. (Goncourt is disappointed to learn the next day that Lemoine is a con-artist and Proust is still alive.)

In a 1919 review of the pastiches (which Proust had collected and published as *Pastiches et mélanges*), Louis Aragon praises Proust's skill, but notes that "the game ran the risk of being vulgar" ("le jeu risquait d'être vulgaire"). He also admits that he doesn't really have the stomach for such a medley: "À vrai dire, mon estomac supporte mal les mélanges" (qtd. in *CSB* 693). Aragon is playing here on the etymology of "pastiche," which derives from the Italian "pasticcio," a pie made of various ingredients. Proust exploits this etymology as well, returning in several of the pastiches to the image of the diamond being cooked in the oven. His Renan dramatically exclaims, for example: "Rekindle tomorrow the furnace that has already gone out a thousand times whence the diamond might one day emerge!"²³ In the unpublished pastiche of Ruskin, the baked diamond as aesthetic object is replaced by a tuber: Giotto's painting technique is analogized as a procedure of drawing perspective lines on a potato fresh out of the oven (*CSB* 204). In the Régnier pastiche, as we have seen, the special diamond-cooking oven is actually Lemoine's nose. Anticipating the conjunction of high art and everyday culinary arts so central to his novel, Proust savors Lemoine's blatantly home-cooked "scientific" experiment. In response to the prosecutor's query as to why no one else had been able to manufacture diamonds using his method, Lemoine cheekily responded that perhaps they simply failed to cook their diamonds long enough: "La cuisson n'avait pas dû être suffisante."²⁴

My wager is that Proust's Lemoine Affair pastiches reveal something crucial about the precarious distinction between art and the ordinary in modernity. The diamond, after all, suggests the fantasy of aesthetic autonomy. The ultimate luxury item, an object Adam Smith described as "the greatest of all superfluities,"²⁵ the diamond is a gleaming chunk of pure form. Its dazzle obscures its material origins, the labor that drew it from the earth, and the economic networks that maintain the illusion of its rarity.

The diamond has been described as a "super-commodity": a commodity without planned obsolescence.²⁶ The same might be said of the work of art in modernity. Bourdieu describes the work of art as a "fetish": an object that exists only by virtue of the collective belief—or rather, "collective misrecognition"—which acknowledges it as a work of art.²⁷ Metaphorizing the artist as an illusionist, Bourdieu notes that works of art exist as symbolic objects only if they are received by spectators capable of legitimating them as such. According to Mauss's 1903 analysis of the social basis of magic, the magician's "legitimate imposture" is dependent

on the “magic group.”²⁸ Similarly, the production of the work of art as a “sacred and consecrated object” involves, as Bourdieu puts it, an “immense enterprise of *symbolic alchemy* involving the collaboration . . . of a whole set of agents engaged in the field of production.”²⁹ Hence the avant-garde artist who offers up a “ready-made” object as his own original artwork is effectively testing the power of the spell.³⁰ When Lemoine tries to pass off De Beers’s diamonds as his own creation (claiming “I recreate the diamond as nature makes it”), he presents himself as a sort of unwitting Duchamp: an artist investigating the limits of modernist magical thinking (in this case, the collective investment of belief enabling the gross overvaluation of certain shiny rocks). Just as Lemoine’s hoax tested the elasticity of the system that produces and maintains faith in the diamond’s uniqueness, Proust’s pastiches are experiments in the production and circulation of aesthetic value. In his ventriloquist’s act, Proust is not simply demystifying the authority of consecrated nineteenth-century authorial voices; he is simultaneously dismantling this edifice of prestige and luxuriating in it. In the Lemoine Affair pastiches, we see Proust practicing his tonal and generic flexibility as he investigates the mixture of incredulity and magical thinking that shores up the fantasy of aesthetic autonomy in modernity. As he tries out various points of view on Lemoine’s manufactured diamond, Proust plays at the limit between enchantment and disenchantment, illusion and disillusion, knowledge and belief. This capacity to shuttle back and forth between a position of sociological demystification and an attitude of aesthetic captivation becomes one of the most striking features of *In Search of Lost Time*.³¹

A January 31, 1908, cartoon in *Le Figaro* (titled “Great Attraction”) shows a wealthy couple luring a lady to their salon by boasting that their guest list includes a countess, an “unheard-of cinematographer,” “two fakirs,” and the “prestidigitator Lemoine.” “We’ll make money and diamonds!” the couple exclaims (“on fera du blé et des diamants!”). As a number of recent accounts have shown, belle époque illusionists (“prestidigitators”) fostered in their audiences a state of “lucid self-delusion.”³² With his mixture of science, performance skills, and rhetorical dazzle, Lemoine played on the appeal of the modernist prestidigitator—an association Proust exploits when he has Goncourt describe Lemoine as an awkward conjurer, “a sort of Robert-Houdin with no hands” (*LA* 40, *CSB* 26). Just as trick cinema and magic-show audiences enjoyed cultivating a special mixture of credulous incredulity, the public both knew Lemoine was a fake, and took great pleasure in believing his act all the same. As a January 13, 1908 editorial in the socialist daily *L’Humanité* puts it (speaking of the diamond recipe that Lemoine had placed in a safe-deposit box in a London bank, in order to keep it safe from the

prying hands of De Beers executives): “We know perfectly well that the envelope deposited in a London Bank contains nothing, or that if it does contain a formula, it is worth nothing, we know this. . . and nonetheless we love to hear ourselves repeat that perhaps there could be something in it . . .” (original ellipses).³³ It was precisely the excitement of investing belief in an apparent fiction that made the Lemoine Affair so compelling.

The Lemoine Affair was an event that both demystified and remystified the diamond. First the diamond’s uniqueness is threatened when it is imagined to be artificially reproducible. Later it turns out not to be reproducible—and De Beers stockholders everywhere breathe a sigh of relief.³⁴ Nonetheless, the diamond emerges from the Lemoine Affair looking like an unstable apparition: a fiction of investor confidence and controlled scarcity. Lemoine’s trick of cooking up synthetic diamonds, after all, offered the paradoxical lure of a preciousness so easy to reproduce that it wouldn’t be worth much at all.³⁵ Proust’s pastiches experiment with the wavering prestige of Lemoine’s “momentary” synthetic diamond, which appears in the pastiches as miraculous and abject, precious and banal.

Proust is famously interested in sublimatory economies that transform unremarkable everyday things into rare treasures. But he is also fascinated by objects that appear simultaneously invaluable and valueless—at once incomparable and perfectly forgettable. He is drawn, for example, to characters that seem to oscillate between the poles of originality and banality, appearing alternately singular and utterly typified. His novel simultaneously celebrates and denigrates Odette (a demi-mondaine with a Botticelli face); Rachel (an actress at once ordinary and invaluable—a “femme quelconque” who is also “une femme d’un grand prix”); Charlus (a prince so distinguished that he prefers to go by the lowly title of “baron”); and Albertine (an incomparably desirable lover who is also just an undistinguished-looking middle-class girl). In a draft of *The Fugitive*, the narrator describes a woman (Madame de Putbus’s maid) whom he desperately desires but has never met. He imagines her as singularly ordinary: her smile expresses “the most common commonplaces of the most banal stupidity” (*ALR* 4:725). This paradox of superlative ordinarieness, or of uniqueness indistinguishable from utter nonuniqueness, is also what attracts Proust to the fantasy of mass-produced diamonds.

Modernist writers love these strangely ordinary, overdetermined, yet unreadable signs. The momentary snot-diamond that Proust tenderly serves up in his pastiche of Régnier is something like Woolf’s “solid object”—an inestimable “drop of solid matter” that washes up on shore, a mere “large irregular lump” that is “nothing but glass” but appears

nonetheless to be “almost a precious stone.”³⁶ Similarly, Woolf’s “mark on the wall” resembles a jewel lying about “at the roots of turnips,” and sparks innumerable fantasies before it turns out to be a mere snail.³⁷ Proust’s conjunction of the precious and the worthless is reminiscent, too, of James’s “figure in the carpet,” a hypermeaningful and yet meaningless metatextual index that vaguely signifies “something or other,” and is metaphorized, variously, as a “little point,” a “foot in a shoe,” a “piece of cheese in a mouse-trap,” a “little trick” an “exquisite scheme,” a “silver lining,” a “buried treasure,” or simply “*that!*”³⁸

In the pastiches and throughout *In Search of Lost Time*, Proust demonstrates that the signs of distinction are difficult to handle. Art is both enchanting and embarrassing in Proust. His characters frequently make fools of themselves when they try to derive cultural capital from performances of “disinterested” aesthetic pleasure. They froth at the mouth while waxing poetic about Chopin, make absurdly exaggerated claims to musical sensitivity, mispronounce names, knock objects off the table, lose track of time and hold up a fancy dinner party for forty-five minutes, and so on. This may be because they lack the training and rhetorical skills necessary to manipulate complex and shifting aesthetic discourses—like Lemoine, their bluff just isn’t quite practiced enough. On the other hand, there is something inherently discomfiting about art in modernity. It’s the ultimate luxury item, reflecting the good taste of the select few who know how to enjoy it, but it’s also troublingly unremarkable—an object defined by its explicit lack of established criteria, set content, or precise purpose, and which is supposed to incite not intelligence or wittiness, but states of unthinkingness. This dazzling emptiness makes the artwork in modernity a perilous investment—like the diamond, circa 1908.

II. Reading the Newspaper in Proust

The Lemoine Affair pastiches present a case study in modernist value production. These pastiches also enable us to see Proust as a writer whose practices of composition and habits of perception and interpretation were bound up in the circuits and rhythms of early twentieth-century material culture—and especially, those of the daily newspaper. Indeed, as this section will demonstrate, the newspaper is crucial to *In Search of Lost Time*: it functions as both a miniature version of the novel and as an orienting device—a compass enabling characters to trace their position in the marketplace of social prestige.³⁹

For Proust, the Lemoine Affair was entirely mediated by the newspaper: he followed the developments of the scandal in early 1908 as it played out in the pages of *Le Figaro*. The pastiches he then published in that paper are performances that not only riff on the styles of a particular set of authors, but also play on the articles that ran throughout the month of January. The *Figaro* articles about what it dramatically calls “L’Affaire des diamants” include a hodge podge of voices and opinions: the articles already read like a set of pastiches. They shift from one point of view to the next, quoting Lemoine’s supporters and detractors at length, citing scientists, jewelers, lawyers, Lemoine’s wife, amateur chemists, gem enthusiasts, and even letters that were sent to Lemoine in prison from enthusiastic fans hopeful that he might be willing to cook them up a diamond or two. Like Proust, the *Figaro* journalists are enchanted by the details of Lemoine’s performance; they want to know everything about the mysterious “substance” he allegedly transformed into diamonds: “What did it look like, what was its size, what was its consistency? Was it hard or soft, powdery or sticky, amorphous or crystalline, heavy or light?”⁴⁰

Roland Barthes has suggested that Proust only began serious work on his novel after his critical essay, *Against Sainte-Beuve*, was rejected by *Le Figaro* in 1909. This rejection, according to Barthes, was the force that propelled Proust out of journalistic, episodic writing and into an entirely different rhythm of prose—“une écriture longue.”⁴¹ It is tempting to think of Proust’s monumental novel, launched in response to a journalistic failure, as the ultimate anti-newspaper. The newspaper, after all, deals in daily humdrum; it is composed of disconnected information bound together only by the idea of “today”—information rendered obsolete by the mere act of reading it. *In Search of Lost Time*, on the other hand, is famous for celebrating what Deleuze calls the “true signs” of art.⁴² Proust’s novel supposedly demonstrates the power of art to overcome the passing of time; it valorizes the cultivation of a perceptual disposition capable of transforming merely ephemeral apparitions into lasting aesthetic riches.

Yet Proust’s novel valorizes not only redeemed time—the eternal, the monumental, Art with a capital A—but also the contingent and episodic, the forgettable and forgotten. The Proustian narrator describes the newspaper as precisely the medium in which these temporal modes overlap: as he puts it, the newspaper presents “the incalculable proportions of absence and presence of mind, of recollection and forgetfulness, of which the human mind is composed” (*ISLT* 2:68, *ALR* 1:478). Two opposing temporal orders exist within the newspaper, one privileging continuity, the other obsolescence: “In the same newspaper in which the moralist of the leader column says to us of an event, of a work of art, *a fortiori* of

a singer who has enjoyed her ‘hour of fame’: ‘Who will remember this in ten years’ time?’, on page three, does not the report of the Académie des Inscriptions speak often of a fact in itself of smaller importance, of a poem of little merit, which dates from the epoch of the Pharaohs and is still known in its entirety?’⁴³ In the pages of the mass daily, the “philosophy of the serial novelist” (“philosophie du feuilletoniste”) according to which “all is doomed to oblivion,” is on equal footing with its opposite: “A contrary philosophy which would predict the conservation of all things” (*ISLT* 2:67, *ALR* 1:477).

One way to understand the distinction between high-culture and mass-culture literary production and consumption is in terms of two opposing temporal regimes. As Bourdieu points out, so-called “pure art” privileges production and slow time, while the literary industry privileges dissemination and temporal immediacy. The fantasy of pure art requires a delay in publishing success; the work must be imagined as a priceless “symbolic offering,” a gift met with the most precious counter gift: name recognition.⁴⁴ Essential to this symbolic economy is the time lag between offering and counter offering. On the other hand, the literary and artistic industries privilege immediate and temporary success, measured by sales, and adjusted according to client demand. What I want to show here is that Proust does not simply dismiss the instantaneity of diffusion in favor of the *longue durée*—the “time regained”—of elite literary production: he explores the interstice between these two temporal economies, and is as intrigued by the possibility of an instantly disseminated “high” literature as he is by the possibility of a mass-produced precious gem.

In Search of Lost Time is a novel about someone who wants to write a novel, but it began as a newspaper article about someone who wants to write a newspaper article. In late 1908, when Proust began working on the project that would become his novel, he conceived of it as a newspaper piece. It would open with a man tossing and turning in bed, wondering what happened to the article he submitted so long ago; then in the morning, thrilled to find that his article has finally been published on the front page of the *Figaro*, he has a conversation with his mother about another newspaper article he plans to write.⁴⁵ This newspaper frame, I would argue, did not really drop out of Proust’s *Search* but was absorbed into and scattered throughout the three-thousand-page novel.

Proust had a real penchant for the newspaper. Open the first volume of the *Search* and you get a sense of his affinity for the press right way, since this volume is dedicated to Gaston Calmette, editor in chief of *Le Figaro*. When you turn the page, however, you might be jarred by the apparent contrast between that publication-world dedication, and the

elaboration of the time-and space-expanding, metamorphic force of reading that famously opens the novel. In the celebrated first paragraph, the narrator's literary reflections take a "rather peculiar turn" when he falls asleep perusing an anonymous "volume" and imagines himself absorbed into the text he has been reading. The narrator/reader's personality and will are scattered as he *becomes* the heterogeneous subjects of his book:

For a long time I would go to bed early. Sometimes, the candle barely out, my eyes closed so quickly that I did not have time to tell myself: 'I'm falling asleep.' And half an hour later the thought that it was time to look for sleep would awaken me; I would make as if to put away the book which I imagined was still in my hands, and to blow out the light; I had gone on thinking, while I was asleep, about what I had just been reading, but these thoughts had taken a rather peculiar turn; it seemed to me that I myself was the immediate subject of my book: a church, a quartet, the rivalry between François I and Charles V.⁴⁶

Strangely enough, in drafts, this potent, liminal state of subjective dispersal is sparked not by a "volume," but by the newspaper that the narrator is reading: "~~I thought that I was still reading the newspaper and I told myself that~~ an hour had passed, and thus the thought that it was time to go to sleep woke me | ~~I I woke without realizing that I had just been asleep~~ + I wanted to toss away the newspaper that I thought I still held in my hands."⁴⁷ This newspaper is replaced by a book in the published version of the *Search*. Nonetheless, the newspaper, allied with threshold states of consciousness, and with the scattering and dispersal of attention, remains a phantom presence in the overture and throughout the novel.⁴⁸

In Search of Lost Time is not only a celebration of the death-defying essence of art, but a semiotic laboratory that multiplies and accumulates interpretive and phenomenological possibilities. Early in the novel, Charles Swann advocates a reversal of the "essential" and the "insignificant," whereby newspapers would publish philosophy, and salon gossip would only appear in a gold-embossed volume published once a decade.⁴⁹ *In Search of Lost Time* celebrates precisely this marriage of the ordinary and the esteemed. This patchwork novel orients us toward numerous points of view and modalities of attention, oscillating between gossip and philosophy, melancholia and euphoria, sleepiness and wakefulness, solipsism and schizophrenic multivoicedness. From this point of view, the newspaper—and especially *Le Figaro*—is quite possibly the most significant and critically overlooked intertext in the novel. In its very first issue, published in 1826, *Le Figaro* calls itself a literary paper with a satirical bent, and declares that it will investigate "theater, criticism, science, art, customs, news, scandals, domestic economy, biography, bibliography, fashion, etc, etc." You couldn't ask for a more apt description

of the subject matter of Proust's novel.⁵⁰ Indeed, Proust's name became so associated with this publication that when André Gide apologized in a January 11, 1914, letter for having refused to publish *Swann's Way*, he explained that the mistake was due to his perception of Proust as "the one who writes in *Le Figaro*." Proust evidently did not mind the association; in 1918 he vied to become the literary critic for *Le Figaro*, but was passed over for the position.⁵¹

Everyone reads the newspaper in Proust—from aristocrats to cooks.⁵² Newspapers circulate throughout the novel—marking parties, deaths, wars, theatrical performances, and art exhibitions, and even allowing the narrator to track his lover's movements without leaving his bed. *Le Figaro* is an important catalyst in the plot of Proust's novel: the narrator's initiation into the literary world is marked by the publication of his front-page *Figaro* article. He anxiously awaits this publication for hundreds of pages, and when it finally appears, it turns out to be a broken-off piece of the novel that we are reading—a prose poem that we witnessed the child narrator penning five volumes earlier.⁵³ The narrator suggests that seeing one's name printed in the newspaper is equivalent to seeing oneself in a mirror, and indeed, the newspaper does function as a mirror in Proust: or rather, it is both a miniature version of the novel and a supplement, filling in information to which the not-quite-omniscient first person narrator does not have access. Hence, in *Sodom and Gomorrah*, the narrator treats the newspaper as a narrative prosthesis, borrowing from the newspaper description of a party he has attended in order to add details missing from his own limited account (*ISLT* 4:75, *ALR* 3:46).

Walter Benjamin has suggested that the newspaper erodes the divide between readers and writers, making "public property" of literary competence.⁵⁴ Juxtaposing literary compositions and weather reports, jokes, advertisements, pastiches, musical scores, and obituaries, war news and society gossip, the newspaper's multidirectional reading pathways and incessantly renewed, incessantly annulled present orient us away from the dynamics of private temporal redemption for which Proust is so famous. In Proustian involuntary memory, the force of analogy conquers the passage of time, as lasting aesthetic profit is drawn from spent quotidian experience. Involuntary memory takes place on a vertical axis, and it permits the perceiving subject to cast away the outside world and retreat into the sphere of his imagination. The experience of newspaper reading, on the other hand, is heterogeneous, and involves perpetual reorientation in relation to the outside world and its various overlapping circuits. In *The Captive*, for example, the narrator becomes flustered while attempting to flirt with a stranger, and so he makes a show of reading *Le Figaro* in order to regain his composure. The newspaper gives him a

“countenance,” he explains; it is not only an emblem of his ideal social self, but an extension of his body, a second skin. Both a shield and a conduit, the newspaper plugs its reader into multiple narrative trajectories and social worlds: even as the narrator pretends to skim the paper in order to cover his embarrassment, he cannot help but read it, and his attention is immediately oriented away from the flirtation at hand and toward an alternate intrigue (*ISLT* 5:184–85, *ALR* 3:650).

My objective in this essay has been to demonstrate that Proust is not exclusively interested in the cultivation of distinction and the monumentalizing power of art. Rather, he is attuned to the circuits of investment and exchange necessary to the production and maintenance of literary prestige and authority. His pastiches and his novel simultaneously mystify and demystify the time lags and practiced sleights of hand that subtend the cultural fantasy of aesthetic autonomy. In 1908, when he published his Lemoine Affair pastiches in *Le Figaro*, Proust was not exorcising influences—he was rehearsing the various styles and perceptual modes that he would activate throughout his novel. There was no end to this practice for Proust, and he never “outgrew” his love of gossip, scandal, newspapers, and ventriloquistic experimentation. The pastiches help us to recognize the affective, sensory, and epistemological heterogeneity of the *Search* itself, showing us just how elastic, expansive, and variegated Proust’s fictional world can be.

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NOTES

1 Beginning on January 10, 1908, the scam was reported in newspapers ranging from the elite, literary *Le Figaro* and the serious, governmental mouthpiece *Le Temps* to the popular *Le Petit Parisien*, with sensationalizing titles like “The Diamond Affair,” “The Alchemist’s Diamonds,” and “Lemoine’s Secret.” For a brief synopsis of the story as *Le Figaro* presented it, see Jean Milly, *Les pastiches de Proust* (Paris: Colin, 1970), 16–17. See also Georges Grison’s summary: “L’Affaire Lemoine,” *Le Figaro*, April 15, 1909. Stefan Kanfer also offers a dramatic retelling of Lemoine’s exploits in *The Last Empire: De Beers, Diamonds, and the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1993), 161–65.

2 According to a January 26, 1909 article in *Le Figaro*, a De Beers executive, Sir Julius Wernher, paid 1,575,000 francs while another investor (a London-based diamond trader named Feldenheimer) was duped into investing 96,488 francs into Lemoine’s invention. Wernher states in interviews published in *Le Gaulois* and *Le Figaro* that he went to court to stop Lemoine from publicizing his contract with De Beers; the inventor had begun flaunting the contract as a means of persuading others to invest. See L. de Vignogne, “Trente minutes en taxi-auto avec Sir Julius Wernher: L’affaire des diamants,” *Le Gaulois*, January 12, 1908, and “Interview de M. Werhner [sic],” *Le Figaro*, June 19, 1908.

3 Lemoine’s act was so convincing that the jewelers’ syndicate soon came forward with a civil suit of its own, citing the damages the engineer’s claims had done to the diamond business. On Jan. 13, 1908, *Le Figaro* cites Lemoine’s request to replay the spectacle: “En

présence des experts, du juge, de toutes les personnes qu'on voudra, je ferai l'expérience définitive." Finally, the judge, Le Poittevin, granted Lemoine's request to be released on bail for two months; the condition was that Lemoine would make a massive synthetic diamond—larger than any on the market—and present it to the court. Lemoine took the opportunity to flee instead. Under the pseudonym Hans Leitner, Lemoine took a long jaunt through Eastern Europe and London before settling into a Paris hotel, where he was apprehended by the police in April of 1909, and eventually sentenced to six years in prison. See Louis Latzarus, "Lemoine à Paris: il est arrêté," *Le Figaro*, April 15, 1909.

4 Georges Grison, "L'Affaire des diamants: Au Parquet," *Le Figaro*, January 15, 1908.

5 "Un détail bien curieux, c'est qu'il paraît que les diamants . . . provenaient des mines de Jagersfontein (Etat d'Orange) et avaient été achetés par M. De Haan à la Société De Beers, dont M. Julius Wernher est, on le sait, le gouverneur. De sorte que Lemoine apportait à M. Wernher, comme le produit de sa fabrication, des diamants achetés chez M. Wernher avec le propre argent de celui-ci." ("A very curious detail is that it seems the diamonds . . . came from the Jagersfontein mines (State of Orange), and had been bought by M. Haan [a Parisian lapidary testifying against Lemoine] from the De Beers Company, which M. Wernher heads, as we know. This means that Lemoine presented to Wernher, as the product of his own workmanship, diamonds bought from Wernher's company with Wernher's own money.") Georges Grison, "La Réponse de Lemoine," *Le Figaro*, February 26, 1908. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

6 Proust continued to write Lemoine Affair pastiches through the summer of 1908: Jean Milly notes that he promised (but never delivered) a Nietzsche pastiche to *Le Figaro* in April, 1909. See *Les pastiches de Proust*, 19–20. Proust republished his *Figaro* pastiches in *Pastiches et mélanges* in 1919, adding a Saint-Simon imitation to those he had previously completed; these, as well as drafted pastiches of Ruskin, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Sainte-Beuve, are now collected in *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 7–59, 195–205 (hereafter cited as *CSB*).

7 A notable exception to this rule is Sara Danius's study of Proust's attraction to modernist technologies of velocity. See her "Aesthetics of the Windshield," in *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2002), 91–146. Others have examined the importance of photographic rhetoric in Proust. See, for example, Mieke Bal, *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1997); Kaja Silverman, "Je Vous," *Art History* 30, no. 3 (2007): 451–67; Rebecca Comay, "Impressions: Proust, Photography, Trauma," *Discourse* 31, nos. 1 & 2 (2009): 86–105; Suzanne Guerlac, "Visual Dust: On Time, Memory, and Photography in Proust," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 13, no. 4 (2009): 397–404; and Dora Zhang, "A Lens for an Eye: Proust and Photography," forthcoming in *Representations* 118 (Spring 2012). For an overview of scholarship on mass media rhetorics within the "new modernist studies," see Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies," *PMLA* 123, no. 3 (2008): 742–45.

8 See, for example, Annick Bouillaguet, *Proust lecteur de Balzac et Flaubert: l'imitation cryptée* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000); Michael Finn, *Proust, the Body, and Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), chap. 3; Jean Milly, *Les pastiches de Proust*; and the notes to the *Pléiade* edition of the pastiches in *CSB*, 690. (The *Pléiade* editors make the dismally homophobic suggestion that Proust's homosexuality and his inclination toward pastiche are "concordant symptoms of a state of psychosomatic disequilibrium.") In contrast, Gérard Genette suggests that pastiche for Proust is not "an incidental practice, a purely stylistic catharsis, or a simple prenovelistic exercise. It is, along with reminiscence and metaphor, one of the privileged—and in truth, necessary—modes of his relationship to the world and to art." *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1997), 120. Jean-Yves Tadié

briefly addresses the centrality of pastiche to Proust's novelistic imagination in *Marcel Proust* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 605.

9 As Bourdieu puts it, charismatic ideology legitimizes social privilege by pretending that it is a gift of nature. It "concedes to the work of art a magical power of conversion capable of awakening the potentialities latent in a few of the elect." See "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception," in *The Sociology of Art: A Reader*, ed. Jeremy Tanner (London: Routledge, 2003), 164–77, 174.

10 Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, rev. D. J. Enright (New York: Random House, 1992), 7:290 (hereafter cited as *ISLT*). *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954–1989), 4:457 (hereafter cited as *ALR*).

11 It is "materially impossible to believe," Lemoine declared in a January 31 statement (printed in *Le Figaro*), that "the greatest experts in the world" could have overlooked the jewelers' marks on the diamonds that De Beers was now claiming the engineer had tried to pass off as his own. No one could possibly swallow De Beers's story ("personne ne voudra avaler pareille couleuvre").

12 See Litvak's "Taste, Waste, Proust" for a refreshingly irreverent take on Proust's insatiable taste for "bad objects." *Strange Gourmets: Sophistication, Theory, and the Novel* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1997), 77–111.

13 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1991), 17–18.

14 Paul Aron discusses this trend in *Histoire du pastiche: le pastiche littéraire français, de la Renaissance à nos jours* (Paris: PUF, 2008).

15 Marcel Mauss, "The Notion of Bodily Techniques," *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Routledge, 1979), 97–105, 101–102.

16 Taussig notes that for these thinkers, "the wonder of mimesis lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and that power." *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), xii. On the importance of trance, possession, and passivity in the French avant-garde, see Joyce Cheng's "Mask, Mimicry, Metamorphosis: Roger Caillou, Walter Benjamin and Surrealism in the 1930s," *Modernism/Modernity* 16, no. 1 (2009): 61–86.

17 For example, in the 1910 edition of Müller and Reboux's compilation, the pastiche of Tolstoy is full of comically unpronounceable names ("Ivan Labibine Ossouzoff, du Gouvernement de Kartimskrasolvitchegosk, district de Vokovosnesensk-Anskrevsantchoursk," etc.). *A La Manière De. . .*, ed. Charles Müller and Paul Reboux (Paris: Grasset, 1910), 33–43.

18 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984), 173.

19 "On ne distinguait plus qu'une seule masse juteuse, convulsive, transparente et durcie; et dans l'éphémère éclat dont elle décorait l'habit de Lemoine, elle semblait y avoir immobilisé le prestige d'un diamant momentané, encore chaud, si l'on peut dire, du four dont il était sorti, et dont cette gelée instable, corrosive et vivante qu'elle était pour un instant encore, semblait à la fois, par sa beauté menteuse et fascinatrice, présenter la moquerie et l'emblème." Proust, *The Lemoine Affair*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2008), 35 (hereafter cited as *LA*); *CSB*, 23.

20 In a March 21, 1908 letter to Robert Dreyfus, Proust writes (in reference to his pastiche of Renan): "J'avais réglé mon métronome intérieur à son rythme et j'aurais [pu] écrire dix volumes comme cela."

21 Proust's Michelet declares that contemplating the affair disturbed his mind, making him feel as unwell as he had felt while researching the absolutist reign of Henri XIV: "[P] eculier headaches every day made me think that I was going to be forced to abandon my

history. I didn't really recover my strength until the Tennis Court Oath (20 June 1789). I felt similarly disturbed before this strange realm of crystallization that is the world of the stone." ("[D]'étranges maux de tête me faisaient croire chaque jour que j'allais être obligé d'interrompre mon histoire. Je ne retrouvai vraiment mes forces qu'au serment du Jeu de Paume (20 juin 1789). Pareillement me sentais-je troublé devant cet étrange règne de la cristallisation qu'est le monde de la pierre.") Proust, *LA*, 45; *CSB*, 28.

22 For an interesting analysis of the queer dynamics of this mode of transgression—what Gérard Genette terms “narrative metalepsis”—see Michael Lucey, *Never Say I: Sexuality and the First Person in Colette, Gide, and Proust* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2006), 193–214.

23 “Rallume encore demain le four éteint mille fois déjà d'où sortira peut-être un jour le diamant!” Proust, *LA*, 59; *CSB*, 36.

24 *Le Figaro*, January 25, 1908.

25 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations: Books 1–3*, ed. Andrew S. Skinner (London: Penguin, 1999), 311.

26 Maurizia Boscagli and Enda Duffy, “Selling Jewels: Modernist Commodification and Disappearance as Style,” *Modernism/modernity* 14, no. 2 (2007): 189–207, 191.

27 Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, 169; *Les règles de l'art*, 240.

28 Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, 169.

29 Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, 170; *Les règles de l'art*, 241.

30 Thierry De Duve suggests that Duchamp's urinal (or “fountain”) “manifests the magic power of the word ‘art.’” Duchamp is therefore playing a game with the notion of aesthetic autonomy: perceiving the urinal as an autonomous artwork requires “an act of faith.” *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 13–14.

31 For a different perspective on the imbrication of enchantment and demystification in Proust, see Eve Sedgwick's compelling essay, “The Weather in Proust,” in *The Weather in Proust*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2011), 1–41.

32 Joshua Landy notes that the famous nineteenth-century “prestidigitateur,” Robert-Houdin, acted the role of professor, presenting his own tricks as experiments or miracles of science, and unmasking the tricks of others in volumes such as *Les Tricheries des Grecs dévoilées* (1861) and *Les Secrets de la prestidigitation et de la magie* (1868). As Landy puts it, “Mid-century prestidigitation was a legerdemain in which what was taken away with one hand was, simultaneously, restored with the other.” Robert-Houdin's show called for new kind of spectatorship: someone with “mental dexterity equal to his manual dexterity.” Robert-Houdin's performances required the spectator's simultaneous conviction and distrust, his or her “aptitude for detached credulity.” Hence the ideal spectators would be “ready to don and doff their lucidity repeatedly throughout the show.” In this sense, Robert-Houdin provided his audiences with “a model for the construction of a belief system that recognizes itself as illusory.” “Modern Magic: Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin and Stéphane Mallarmé,” in *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age*, ed. Joshua Landy and Michael Saler (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2009), 125, 108, 110. For a broader history of secular magic, see Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002) and James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing With Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001). Cook notes that in the nineteenth century, magicians began using exposés and how-to manuals as a promotional tool. “For the first time, explaining the behind-the-scenes workings of one's magical performance was becoming almost as important and as central to the professional magician's craft as the more conventional work of designing and performing tricks” (178). For a discussion of the relation between the fad for theatrical conjuring and the flourishing of trick cinema in the early twentieth century, see Matthew Solomon, “Up-to-Date Magic: Theatrical Conjuring and the Trick Film,” *Theatre Journal* 58, no. 4 (2006): 595–615.

33 “[O]n sait parfaitement que dans le ‘pli’ déposé dans une banque de Londres il n’y a rien, ou que, s’il y a une formule, elle est sans valeur, on le sait . . . et cependant on aime à s’entendre redire que peut-être il se pourrait qu’il y eût quelque chose . . .” *L’Humanité*, January 13, 1908.

34 Proust was one of the relieved shareholders. In a March 26, 1908 letter to Louis d’Albufera, he references the Goncourt pastiche in which his imagined financial ruin provokes his fictional suicide: “Did you see that in my *Figaro* pastiches I spoke of my failure with De Beers?” (“As-tu vu que, dans mes pastiches du *Figaro*, j’ai parlé de ma déconfiture avec la De Beers?”) The journalist Georges Grison notes that Lemoine’s “fantastic discovery” was expected to make diamond prices fall by 80%. “L’Affaire Lemoine,” *Le Figaro*, April 15, 1909.

35 According to the *Figaro*, many people wrote to Lemoine in prison, begging him to send them a few diamonds (since making them was so easy for him, or so they imagined): “Détail amusant: Lemoine reçoit à la prison de la Santé des masses de lettres. Beaucoup sont des demandes d’argent, de gens le suppliant de leur venir en aide. Il y a des commerçants menacés de la faillite, des jeunes filles qui ont besoin d’une petite dot pour se marier. . . . ‘Il vous serait si facile de faire cinq ou six pauvres diamants dont le prix nous tirerait de peine,’ disent-ils.” Georges Grison, “L’Affaire des diamants,” January 27, 2008.

36 Virginia Woolf, “Solid Objects,” *A Haunted House and Other Stories* (London: Harcourt, 1972), 79–86, 80.

37 Woolf, “The Mark on the Wall,” *A Haunted House and Other Stories* (London: Harcourt, 1972), 37–46, 38.

38 Henry James, “The Figure in the Carpet,” *Major Stories and Essays* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 276–312, 282–85.

39 While Proust’s love of the newspaper has largely fallen beneath the critical radar, several interesting recent studies explore the phenomenology of newspaper reading. Sara Danilus discusses the relation between the “fait divers” (random news story) and the modernist novel in “Joyce’s Scissors: Modernism and the Dissolution of the Event,” *New Literary History* 39, no. 4 (2008): 989–1016. Philip Fisher describes the newspaper in modernism as a text that prompts readers to “look around,” rather than looking directly at objects in “Torn Space: James Joyce’s *Ulysses*,” in *The Novel*, vol. 2, *Forms and Themes*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006), 667–86. In a wide-ranging and fascinating study, Kevis Goodman suggests that the rise of “the news” in the eighteenth century ushers in a historically new structure of feeling which precedes and lays the groundwork for Romantic (Kantian) aesthetic “free play.” See her *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004). For a useful discussion of shifts in the visual mapping of newspapers in the U.S. context, see Kevin G. Barnhurst and John Nerone, *The Form of News: A History* (New York: Guilford, 2002) and Elisa Tamarkin, “Losing Perspective in the Age of News,” *PMLA* 125, no. 1 (2010): 192–200.

40 “Quel était son aspect, quelle était sa grosseur, quelle était sa consistance? Etait-elle dure ou molle, pulvérulente ou cohésive, amorphe ou cristalline, dense ou légère?” Emile Gautier, “L’Affaire du diamant: une hypothèse,” *Le Figaro*, January 15, 1908.

41 Roland Barthes, *La Préparation du roman: notes de cours et de séminaires au Collège de France, 1978–79, 1979–1980* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 154.

42 *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2003), 13.

43 “Dans le même journal où le moraliste du ‘premier Paris’ nous dit d’un événement, d’un chef-d’œuvre, à plus forte raison d’une chanteuse qui eut son heure de Célébrité: ‘qui se souviendra de tout cela dans dix ans?’, à la troisième page, le compte rendu de l’académie des inscriptions ne parle-t-il pas souvent d’un fait par lui-même moins impor-

tant, d'un poème de peu de valeur, qui date de l'époque des Pharaons et qu'on connaît encore intégralement?" Proust, *ISLT*, 2:67 (translation modified); *ALR*, 1:477–78.

44 Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 148; *Les Règles de l'art*, 211.

45 In a December 1908 letter to Georges de Lauris, Proust writes that he is planning a review article about Sainte-Beuve, which will be framed by a fictional bedside conversation with his mother: "[I] débiterait par le récit d'une matinée: maman viendrait près de mon lit, et je lui raconterais l'article que je veux faire sur Sainte-Beuve, et je le lui développerais." In an early draft of his novel, Proust similarly embeds his narrator's literary ambitions in a newspaper context. The editors of the Pléiade edition paraphrase the passage as follows: "il décrit l'émotion que lui a causée la publication d'un article de lui dans *Le Figaro*; après quoi il s'abandonne à des rêves de voyage; enfin, au cours d'une conversation avec sa mère, il lui annonce son intention d'écrire 'un article' contre la méthode de Sainte-Beuve." Proust, *CSB*, 822–23, 830–831, n217.

46 "Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure. Parfois, à peine ma bougie éteinte, mes yeux se fermaient si vite que je n'avais pas le temps de me dire: 'Je m'endors.' Et, une demi-heure après, la pensée qu'il était temps de chercher le sommeil m'éveillait; je voulais poser le volume que je croyais avoir encore dans les mains et souffler ma lumière; je n'avais pas cessé en dormant de faire des réflexions sur ce que je venais de lire, mais ces réflexions avaient pris un tour un peu particulier; il me semblait que j'étais moi-même ce dont parlait l'ouvrage: une église, un quatuor, la rivalité de François I^{er} et de Charles-Quint." Proust, *ISLT*, 1:1; *ALR*, 1:3.

47 "~~je me croyais encore en train de lire le journal et je me disais qu'il était une heure après, et donc la pensée qu'il était temps de m'endormir m'éveillait. Je me m'éveillais sans me rendre compte que je venais de dormir~~+ voulais jeter le journal que je croyais avoir encore en mains." N.a.Fr. 16641, f. 71 v-f 65, quoted in Mireille Naturel, "Le fabuleux destin de l'article dans *Le Figaro*," *Marcel Proust 4: Proust au tournant des siècles*, ed. Bernard Brun and Juliette Hassine (Paris: Minard, 2004), 23–39, 30.

48 Mireille Naturel suggests that in the earliest drafts of the overture of Proust's novel, publication appears as the narrative's central concern: in this first version of the novel, "lost time" is in fact time lost while waiting for publication. Naturel, "Le fabuleux destin,"

24. Jean-Yves Tadié notes that Proust attached great importance to the equilibrium and "dosage" of his own newspaper publications, spreading out articles over several weeks. *Marcel Proust*, 603.

49 "Suppose that, every morning, when we tore the wrapper off our paper with fevered hands, a transmutation were to take place, and we were to find inside it—oh! I don't know; shall we say Pascal's *Pensées*? He articulated the title with an ironic emphasis so as not to appear pedantic. 'And then, in the gilt and tooled volumes which we open once in ten years,' he went on . . . 'we should read that the Queen of the Hellenes had arrived at Cannes, or that the Princesse de Léon had given a fancy dress ball.'" ("Du moment que nous déchirons fiévreusement chaque matin la bande du journal, alors on devrait changer les choses et mettre dans le journal, moi je ne sais pas, les. . . Pensées de Pascal ! (Il détacha ce mot d'un ton d'emphase ironique pour ne pas avoir l'air pédant.) Et c'est dans le volume doré sur tranches que nous n'ouvrons qu'une fois tous les dix ans, ajouta-t-il . . . que nous lirions que la reine de Grèce est allée à Cannes ou que la princesse de Léon a donné un bal costumé.") Proust, *ISLT*, 1:33–34; *ALR*, 1:26.

50 With a largely upper-class readership, *Le Figaro* was known for its society news, literary columns, and theater reviews. But it was also a space for avant-garde manifestos: *Le Figaro* published Baudelaire's "Painter of Modern Life" in 1863, Jean Moréas's symbolist manifesto in 1886, and Marinetti's futurist manifesto in 1909. Elite and conservative, *Le Figaro* was nonetheless pro-Dreyfus early in the Dreyfus affair, a position for which it lost some of its readership. Its price was three times that of the more popular mass dailies.

On the history of this newspaper, see Claire Blandin, *Le Figaro: deux siècles d'histoire* (Paris: Colin, 2007).

51 Tadić, *Marcel Proust*, 793.

52 The Baron de Charlus claims to read newspapers habitually and without the slightest care: "I pay no attention to the newspapers; I read them as I wash my hands, without considering it worth my while to take an interest in what I am doing." ("[J]e ne fais aucune attention aux journaux; je les lis comme je me lave les mains, sans trouver que cela vaille la peine de m'intéresser.") Swann, however, is not only a newspaper enthusiast but a gifted and attentive reader of the newspaper, such that "if he read in a newspaper the names of the people who had been at a dinner-party, could tell at once its exact degree of smartness, just as a man of letters, simply by reading a sentence, can estimate exactly the literary merit of its author." ("[S]il lisait dans un journal les noms des personnes qui se trouvaient à un dîner pouvait dire immédiatement la nuance du chic de ce dîner, comme un lettré, à la simple lecture d'une phrase, apprécie exactement la qualité littéraire de son auteur.") The cook, Françoise, on the other hand, weeps "torrents" of tears over newspaper calamities that would leave her unmoved if they happened to the people she knew in her everyday life. Proust, *ISLT*, 3:390, 1:344, 1: 171; *ALR*, 2:584, 1:242; 1:122.

53 I discuss the conjunction of banality and wonderment marking the scene in which the narrator's article is published in "Zut, zut, zut, zut: Aesthetic Disorientation in Proust," *MLN* 124, no. 4 (2009): 868–900.

54 According to Benjamin, the newspaper-reader is "at all times ready to become a writer." "The Newspaper," *Selected Writings: Volume 2, 1927–1934*, ed. Marcus Paul Bullock, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005), 740–41.