

The Proust Project



EDITED BY ANDRÉ ACIMAN

## The Proust Project

From Farrar, Straus & Giroux

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"Discovering Proust is like wandering through a totally unfamiliar land and finding it peopled with kindred spirits and sister souls and fellow countrymen . . . They speak our language, our dialect, share our blind-spots and are awkward in exactly the same way we are, just as their manner of lacing every access of sorrow with slapstick reminds us so much of how we do it when we are sad and wish to hide it, that surely we are not alone and not as strange as we feared we were. And here lies the paradox. So long as a writer tells us what he and only he can see, then surely he speaks our language." --from the preface by André Aciman

For *The Proust Project*, editor André Aciman asked twenty-eight writers--Shirley Hazzard, Lydia Davis, Richard Howard, Alain de Botton, Diane Johnson, Edmund White, and others--to choose a favorite passage from *In Search of Lost Time* and introduce it in a brief essay. Gathered together, along with the passages themselves (and a synopsis that guides the reader from one passage to the next), these essays form the perfect introduction to the greatest novel of the last century, and the perfect gift for any Proustian.

FSG will co-publish *The Proust Project* in a deluxe edition with Turtle Point Press, Books & Co., and Helen Marx Books.

**André Aciman** is the author of *Out of Egypt* and *False Papers*. He is also a frequent contributor to *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review of Books*. Aciman teaches comparative literature at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

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"Editor Andre Aciman's introductory essays gracefully place the individual passages in the larger context of the multivolume novel with great skill. He also provides the most penetrating essay on *In Search of Lost Time* in his preface."—**Barbara Fisher, *The Boston Globe***



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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

Editor Aciman (*Out of Egypt*) asked 28 writers who share a deep appreciation of Proust—Alain de Botton, Lydia Davis, Richard Howard, Susan Minot, Colm Tóibín and Edmund White, among others—to choose and comment on their favorite passages from *In Search of Lost Time*. These passages are reprinted in English (using primarily D.M. Enright's 1993 translation) with the essays they inspired, linked by plot synopsis. Each writer brings to bear aspects of his or her own area of expertise—be it cultural criticism, poetry, musicology or translation. Reflections tend to be personal and autobiographical, a tone set by Aciman in his preface when he charmingly writes of how Proust invites us to " 'bookmark' our own past onto his." Almost all of the contributors attempt to define Proustian sensibility and to register its effects on the life of the mind. Olivier Bernier discusses how reading Proust helped him to assert his own aesthetic values, and Wayne Koestenbaum acutely reflects on Proust's wisdom regarding love objects and the imagination. In a more informative mode, Edmund White discusses Proust's apparent homophobia and sexual identity; and Richard Howard analyzes the "coiling elaboration" of a classic Proustian sentence. This title is full of intriguing moments of appreciation, ripe for sampling by seasoned Proustians, but not intended as an introduction to the great author.

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#### From [Booklist](#)

Those who comment here very briefly on their favorite passages from Proust, which accompany the comments, remind themselves and us how a writer leads a reader. For the novelist Alain de Botton, Proust does it by describing "small, heroic aspects of experience," and "far better than we would have," rescuing them from "our customary inattention." For the poet Richard Howard, Proust leads with the sentence, "analogizing the structure of consciousness itself" with a "coiling elaboration." And subtly, the music critic Jeremy Eichler suggests, "Proust is the poet of listening," whose phrases tend to behave like music even when not explicitly evoking musical themes or scenes; reading him, we are led inevitably by the ear. Nevertheless, the lot of a Proust commentator is a difficult one, as anybody who stoops to paraphrase (or praise) *In Search of Lost Time* may learn. For to write "after" him exposes a vacant field between Proust's sensibility and our relative want of any. If this volume exposes that vacancy, it succeeds in its basic mission of driving readers back to Proust. *Molly McQuade*

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#### About the Author

**André Aciman** is the author of *Out of Egypt* (FSG, 1994) and *False Papers* (FSG, 2000). He is a frequent contributor to *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review of Books*. He teaches literature at Bard.

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**Helen Noyola:**

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