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Bette H. Lustig, *The Concept of the Soul in Marcel Proust: Homophilia, Misogyny, and the Time-Memory Correlative*. New York and Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, 2016. ix + 169 pp. Bibliography and index. \$78.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-4331-3189-9.

Author's response by Bette H. Lustig, Independent Scholar.

It was with great interest that I read Professor Casey Walker's review of my latest book, *The Concept of the Soul in Marcel Proust*. He very kindly commented on my methodology of close textual interpretative analysis, known among literary critics as hermeneutics. I would have appreciated it immensely if he had used the same methodology in analyzing my book, rather than using broad generalizations with accumulations of names or terms. For example, he states that "Lustig's key texts are excerpts from Cicero, Plato, Rabbinical sources, and Maurice Maeterlinck—an 'author closer to Proust's time, whom Proust read and who influenced him.'" He then states that "none of these lineages of the 'soul'—not even Maeterlinck's—predominates in *A la Recherche*. Rather in Lustig's telling, Proust is engaged in a kind of bricolage." Parenthetically, I would respectfully correct this misnomer to "collage" to communicate the idea that in regard to the Classic, Rabbinic, and Celtic traditions, and continuing up through Maeterlinck, there are references to the soul. The soul, incidentally, is a perfectly fine English word; thus there is no need for Professor Walker to keep enclosing it in quotation marks as if it were my neologism. I have introduced these writers in this way, not like a collection of names or as "something of a muddle," as Professor Walker states, nor to suggest any correlation among them other than the spiritual, but rather to respect their chronology and to connect them to the Proust texts in which they occur with relevant commentary, since these references, although none of them predominates, are systemic to Proust's writings.

My occasional use of "long block quotations," to which Professor Walker alludes, daunting perhaps to the non-specialist, are included and analyzed or explicated with terms extracted from the various texts to document the points made in the argument, and in classical academic style, are listed with the most cogent one last. They are thus surely illuminating and pleasurable to the Proust scholar and "Proustophile" alike. I regret that Professor Walker did not understand this approach, which I hope is now perfectly clear.

Another example of Professor Walker's sweeping generalized collections of terms is his comment that I "lumped together," as he expresses it, a whole string of female characters drawn from the second chapter of my book: thus Odette, Albertine, Gilberte, Rachel, and Vinteuil's daughter, who, although they have been discussed in detail separately and are, indeed, very distinct characters, do exhibit certain commonalities and parallels, such as their victimhood of misogynistic behavior (pp. 68-70). They also document and reinforce the stated theme of "negative perceptions of women," which is the reason for their being included in this chapter. Mlle Vinteuil is also particularly interesting for other reasons, partly because of the socio-historical cadre of women in general in that period, but partly also because of the lesbian and homosexual context in particular and the disparaging, indeed mocking, way in which gay people were depicted, as exemplified by the comments I discussed in the larger context about Mlle

Vinteuil. One of the key points that Professor Walker neglected to mention, found in the texts about Mlle Vinteuil, is her courteous manners and other personal traits of kindness passed on to her through metempsychosis from her paternal grandmother by her father, just as her jewel-like blue eyes were passed on to her through the same route genetically. Moreover, right from the first chapter the concept of metempsychosis is introduced and illustrated most poignantly by the magnetic, almost miraculous, attraction between Charlus and Jupien, which is traced back through metempsychosis to their socially disparate ancestry. Overtones of Maeterlinck and the well-known metaphor, considered by Jean-Yves Tadié the most beautiful image in Proust's *Sodome I* (Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust* [Paris: Gallimard, 1999], p. 518), of the attraction of the orchid and the bumblebee form the subtext of this attraction in Proust's brilliant text. Metempsychosis is, indeed, a central theme in *The Concept of the Soul in Marcel Proust*. It recurs throughout the book. With my deepest respect for the memory and scholarship of Juliette Hassine, I believe, however, that my interpretation of metempsychosis is an important contribution to Proustian scholarship. Yet Professor Walker says nary a word about it anywhere in his entire review.

Conversely, Professor Walker does correctly recognize the dual theme of the imprisonment and deliverance of the soul which is threaded throughout Proust's writings, from the Celtic tradition discussed in chapter one, to the constraining, indeed imprisoning, and abusive treatment of women's souls described in chapter two, to the necessity of liberating the soul from the shackles of time to enable the creative process to happen, described in chapter three and which Professor Walker duly notes. Rather than a disjointed rendition of the subject, however, as Professor Walker would seem to suggest, the chapters describe different aspects of the same subject, and the book's subtitle, *Homophilia, Misogyny, and the Time-Memory Correlative*, is what Professor Walker might reference as the "overarching architecture" that holds them all together.

Professor Walker queries, in reference to Plato, whether we should "in fact be searching further back into the history of this concept of the 'soul' to explicate the ways that concept itself might have given rise to certain forms of misogyny? This is a promising line of inquiry," states Professor Walker, "that is largely allowed to drop." This "promising line of inquiry" is a most interesting theory and could perhaps be developed into the subject of a different book, not a monograph limited to 150-160 pages (or as Professor Walker phrases it, "a slim book of three chapters"), in which the focus is thus constrained to be strictly relevant to the stated subject, namely the concept of the soul in Marcel Proust.

Professor Walker also has some misgivings about my second chapter: "[the second chapter] delves less successfully into Proust's conception of the souls of women," he states. I believe that the second chapter of my book, contrary to Professor Walker's viewpoint, is most carefully developed with statements documented by texts that are followed by detailed explications of extracted words and terms. As just one example, I would reference Professor Walker to the texts about the theme of the aquarium (pp. 56-57). Women's souls, because of the subjugating treatment and disparagement (in the etymological sense of "unequal treatment") that they endure, like the imprisoned souls that Proust discusses in the Celtic tradition, long to be delivered and are, of course, presented from the male viewpoint. I would sincerely advise Professor Walker to re-read this chapter more closely and, in addition to the several texts from Plato, which I cited, to consult the articles by Eliane Bouquey, Pascal Ifri, Hélène Vial and others in my bibliography for further corroboration of these ideas. Then he would understand more fully the portrayal in Proust of the evolution of the unequal treatment of women's souls in contrast to that of men's souls.

Moreover, Professor Walker's comment about "the comparatively thin bibliography" in this book needs to be addressed. The "heterogeneous and dazzling compendium of writers and scholars" that Professor Walker references to stud his review like a constellation, including Julia Kristeva, Georges Poulet, Gilles Deleuze, and other "scholars too numerous to name," are not mentioned because, to the best of my knowledge, they do not contribute to the focus of my book. Those who were relevant to my other writings, such as *Judaism in Marcel Proust* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), were duly credited in those

contexts. Rather than strewing a collection of names around, however, *pour jeter la poudre aux yeux du lecteur*, i.e. to impress the reader, I have listed only those sources, writers and scholars, who have written on the subject of the soul, and/or germane aspects of it, in the works of Marcel Proust. Moreover, it should be pointed out that, even after considerable research, I discovered that the number of scholars and works treating the subject of the soul in Marcel Proust is severely limited. Thus my bibliography endeavors to be genuine, relevant, and, above all, honest. Perhaps Professor Walker would like to examine more closely the interesting and informative list of sources I did include as well as my original interpretations of the texts in my study of *The Concept of the Soul in Marcel Proust: Homophilia, Misogyny, and the Time-Memory Correlative*.

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