A Significant Source for the Madeleine and Other Major Episodes in Combray: Proust's Intertextual Use of Pierre Loti's My Brother Yves

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Abstract
The most famous passage in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, and one of the most famous passages in Western literature, is the moment when the narrator sips tea while eating a shell-shaped pastry called a madeleine and suddenly recalls very vividly an apparently long-forgotten scene from his childhood. From this episode Proust developed his theories about involuntary memory and its important role in our emotional welfare.

Proust was an avid reader of the French novelist Pierre Loti when he was young. Contemporary accounts show that he was able to recite whole passages from Loti's work in public from memory. This article demonstrates the extent to which Proust made intertextual use of scenes from Loti's novel *My Brother Yves* in constructing the madeleine and other famous passages in *Combray*, the first section of *In Search of Lost Time*. It does not attempt to question the originality of Proust's work. Rather, building on previous studies of intertextuality in Proust, it seeks to show how the author went about creating his work and dialoguing with at least some of his potential contemporary readers.

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Proust’s narrator involuntarily recalls an episode from his childhood after tasting a madeleine dipped in tea. “No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me.” There are other versions of the story, but Commercy has claimed the madeleine as its own. There are countless variations on the traditional recipe. Julia Child recommended adding vanilla extract and a pinch of salt, while others opt for finely ground almonds, orange blossom water or even healthy chia seeds. On her Little Paris Kitchen TV show, Rachel Khoo adds honey to the mix and plonks a raspberry on each madeleine before piping lemon curd into the freshly baked article. This article demonstrates the extent to which Proust made intertextual use of scenes from Loti’s novel *My Brother Yves* in constructing the madeleine and other famous passages in *Combray*, the first section of *In Search of Lost Time*. It does not attempt to question the originality of Proust’s work. Rather, building on previous studies of intertextuality in Proust, it seeks to show how the author went about creating his work and dialoguing with at least some of his potential contemporary readers. A Significant Source for the Madeleine and Other Major Episodes in Combray: Proust's Intertextual Use of Pierre Loti's My Brother Yves, Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature, 2014