

# Pro (ust) crastination

*„All action by the mind is easy, if it is not subjected to the test of reality“. (Cities of the Plain, Chapter 1)*



Regression from oedipal conflict  
as a source of procrastination:

The case of Marcel Proust

# Pro (ust) crastination



- About Proust and procrastination
- Proust's oedipal dilemma
- Procrastination as the effect of regression
- Proust overcoming procrastination

MARCEL PROUST

# A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU



*nrf*

GALLIMARD

*”Had I been less firmly resolved upon setting myself definitely to work, I should perhaps have made an effort to begin at once. But since my resolution was explicit, since within twenty-four hours, in the empty frame of that long morrow in which everything was so well arranged because I myself had not yet entered it, my good intentions would be realised without difficulty, it was better not to select an evening on which I was ill-disposed for a beginning for which the following days were not, alas, to show themselves any more propitious.”*

*Within a Budding Grove, Chapter 1*

*“What rendered my mother desperate was my lack of will-power. Everything I did was inspired by momentary impulses... The realisation of all these beautiful plans, work, peace of mind, reason, occupied us, my mother and me, more than anything else; because we sensed, she more clearly, I more obscurely, but nonetheless very powerfully, that it would be nothing else but the projection of an image into my life, the image of creating myself and within myself that kind of will she had imagined and portrayed. But I always postponed it until tomorrow. ... „*

*Les plaisir et les jours*

*“Perhaps the habit that I had formed of nursing in my bosom several simultaneous desires...perhaps the habit of storing up, without assuaging any of them, all these desires, contenting myself with the promise, made to myself, that I would not forget to satisfy them one day, perhaps this habit, so many years old already, of perpetual postponement, of what M. de Charlus used to castigate under the name of procrastination...”*

*The Captive, Chapter 1*

*“I have tried...to show the consciousness  
unconscious phenomena which, completely  
forgotten, sometimes stem from way back in the  
past”.*

*Letter to André Lang, cited by Haymann, 1990, 602*

*“The idea of preliminary suffering is associated with that of work, we dread every fresh undertaking because we are thereby reminded of the pain in store for us before we can conceive it. And, realising that suffering is the best thing life has to offer, we think of death without horror and almost as a deliverance.”*

*Time regained, Chapter 3*

*“Having got into the habit, through idleness, of postponing my work from day to day, I doubtless supposed death might deal in the same way with me”.*

*Time regained, Chapter 2*

*“Thus I who, from infancy, had lived from day to day, with a sort of fixed idea of myself derived from others as well as myself, perceived for the first time, after witnessing the metamorphosis of all these people, that the time which had gone by for them, had gone by for me also and this revelation threw me into consternation...*

*Finally, this idea of Time had the ultimate value of the hand of a clock. It told me it was time to begin if I meant to attain that ...indefinable something which had made me think life worth living.”*

*Time regained, Chapter 3*

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