Anagrams

The passage quoted in the lecture about Charlus trying to persuade Morel to change his name to “Charmel,” reminds us of Proust’s great fondness for anagrams and nicknames. His letters are filled with them. Reynaldo Hahn has by far the largest number of these. Here are a few, the origin of which is obscure: Buncht, Bunchtbuls, Bunibuls, Bunimels, and so on. As for anagrams, Marcel was Lecram; Fénelon was Nonelef, and Bibesco was Ocsebib. Here is the passage again about the proposal that Morel change his name:

To the young violinist, on the contrary, the name Morel was inseparably linked with his first prize for the violin, and so impossible to alter. M. de Charlus would have liked Morel to owe everything to him, including his name. Reflecting that Morel’s Christian name was Charles, which resembled Charlus, and that the house where they usually met was called les Charmes, he sought to persuade Morel that, a pretty name that is agreeable to pronounce being half the battle in establishing an artistic reputation, the virtuoso ought without hesitation to take the name Charmel, a discreet allusion to the scene of their assignations. Morel shrugged his shoulders. As a conclusive argument, M. de Charlus was unfortunately inspired to add that he had a valet of that name. He succeeded only in arousing the furious indignation of the young man. —Sodom and Gomorrah 4: 628

Proust in Normandy

The country inn where Marcel and Albertine stop for cider and other refreshments was likely inspired by the Auberge Guillaume, named for Guillaume le Conquérant (William the Conqueror), who set sail to conquer England from Dives, which is adjacent
to Cabourg, the model for Balbec and where the Grand-Hôtel, where Proust stayed every summer from 1907-1914, is a must-see stop on your trip to France. Proust, like Marcel and Albertine, frequented the Auberge Guillaume, which still exists and has become a “village d’art.” Here is the link: http://www.sol-and-si.fr/village.html