

In Search of Lost Time

by *Marcel Proust*

Excerpt 1:

I would now happily remain at the table while it was being cleared, and, if it was not a moment at which the girls of the little band might be passing, it was no longer solely towards the sea that I would turn my eyes. Since I had seen such things depicted in water-colours by Elstir, I sought to find again in reality, I cherished as though for their poetic beauty, the broken gestures of the knives still lying across one another, the swollen convexity of a discarded napkin into which the sun introduced a patch of yellow velvet, the half-empty glass which thus showed to greater advantage the noble sweep of its curved sides and, in the heart of its translucent crystal, clear as frozen daylight, some dregs of wine, dark but glittering with reflected lights, the displacement of solid objects, the transmutation of liquids by the effect of light and shade, the shifting colours of the plums which passed from green to blue and from blue to golden yellow in the half-plundered dish, the promenade of the antiquated chairs that came twice daily to take their places round the white cloth spread on the table as on an altar at which were celebrated the rites of the palate, and where in the hollows of the oyster-shells a few drops of lustral water had remained as in tiny holy-water stoups of stone; I tried to find beauty there where I had never imagined before that it could exist, in the most ordinary things, in the profundities of “still life.”

Location 15628

Excerpt 2:

But Swann told himself that if he could make Odette feel (by consenting to meet her only after dinner) that there were other pleasures which he preferred to that of her company, then the desire that she felt for his would be all the longer in reaching the point of satiety. Besides, as he infinitely preferred to Odette’s style of beauty that of a young seamstress, as fresh and plump as a rose, with whom he was smitten, he preferred to spend the first part of the evening with her, knowing that he was sure to see Odette later on. It was for the same reason that he never allowed Odette to call for him at his house, to take him on to the Verdurins’. The little seamstress would wait for him at a street corner which Rémi, his coachman, knew; she would jump in beside him, and remain in his arms until the carriage drew up at the Verdurins’. He would enter the drawing-room; and there, while Mme Verdurin, pointing to the roses which he had sent her that morning, said: “I’m furious with you,” and sent him to the place kept for him beside Odette, the pianist would play to them—for their two selves—the little phrase by Vinteuil which was, so to speak, the national anthem of their love. He would begin with the sustained tremolos of the violin part which for several bars were heard alone, filling the whole foreground; until suddenly they seemed to draw aside, and—as in those interiors by Pieter de Hooch which are deepened by the narrow frame of a half-opened door, in the far distance, of a different colour, velvety with the radiance of some intervening light—the little phrase appeared, dancing, pastoral, interpolated,

episodic, belonging to another world. It rippled past, simple and immortal, scattering on every side the bounties of its grace, with the same ineffable smile; but Swann thought that he could now discern in it some disenchantment. It seemed to be aware how vain, how hollow was the happiness to which it showed the way. In its airy grace there was the sense of something over and done with, like the mood of philosophic detachment which follows an outburst of vain regret. But all this mattered little to him; he contemplated the little phrase less in its own light—in what it might express to a musician who knew nothing of the existence of him and Odette when he had composed it, and to all those who would hear it in centuries to come—than as a pledge, a token of his love, which made even the Verdurins and their young pianist think of Odette at the same time as himself—which bound her to him by a lasting tie; so much so that (whimsically entreated by Odette) he had abandoned the idea of getting some professional to play over to him the whole sonata, of which he still knew no more than this one passage. “Why do you want the rest?” she had asked him. “Our little bit; that’s all we need.” Indeed, agonised by the reflection, as it floated by, so near and yet so infinitely remote, that while it was addressed to them it did not know them, he almost regretted that it had a meaning of its own, an intrinsic and unalterable beauty, extraneous to themselves, just as in the jewels given to us, or even in the letters written to us by a woman we love, we find fault with the water of the stone, or with the words of the message, because they are not fashioned exclusively from the essence of a transient liaison and a particular person.

Location 4175

Source: Proust, Marcel. The Modern Library In Search of Lost Time, Complete and Unabridged 6-Book Bundle (Modern Library Classics). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Embedded Primal elements

- Lush
- Supreme confidence in frame
- Keeping it coherent, risking greater and more personal ridicule than something fragmented-experimental. Ownership.
- Communicating calmly as-is, allowing the force to emerge from this internality.
- Dimensionality, animism, universal relationality (animate and inanimate, intertwining webs)
- The dynamic, fuzzy, yet eternal and sharp "full context" which the 'still life' art form represents
- Fusion into lived reality
 - Eternity and impermanence fused within lived reality
 - Religion projected into lived existence
 - Beauty and transcendence embedded, not shorn from ongoing reality (especially social reality), with uncontrollable seamless transitions in/out and co-existences
- Always deeply personal, even in abstractions

- The process is the point (which is not a point), coherent stream of consciousness
- Primal beauty-sense, uncorrupted yet sophisticated
- The moves: conjoining + revelation
- Ontological: regularly generalizing in an almost scientific way to overall experience (with the move being always embedded, by nature of the metaphysics).
- More specific aspects:
 - Synaesthesia of artworks
 - Pace doesn't dictate speed, rather verbs do
 - Linting: eg "from X to Y and from Y to Z" structure, very long sentences with many commas