MODERN CLASSICS

Marcel Proust

In Search of Lost Time

Volume 6

Finding Time Again

margins and on the additional pieces of paper glued to the edges of pages, or interleaved between them. It fell to his editors – his brother Robert, and Jean Paulhan (who had succeeded Jacques Rivière as editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in 1925) – to produce a coherent text for publication, which they achieved with a certain amount of cutting and pasting, omitting illegible passages, and adjusting many of the points where repetition or inconsistency occurred. Consequently, the text published in 1927, and translated into English in 1931, was not entirely an accurate presentation of what Proust had written. When Clarac and Ferré published their revised text in 1954, they made a number of changes and corrections, most noticeably in the starting-point for the book, which they moved back some seven pages to the beginning of the narrator's stay at Tansonville. (The 1988 Pléiade edition under the general editorship of Yves Tadié restores the original beginning, on both internal editorial and aesthetic grounds.) A massive and lengthy process of re-evaluation of all Proust's manuscript corrections, insertions, additions and probable intentions resulted in the 1988 edition of the text with its variants, along with a great number of preliminary draft sketches, and although this text itself is not uncontroversial, it has provided the basis for all editorial decisions in this translation.

The translation history of *Finding Time Again* differs considerably from that of the earlier volumes. C. K. Scott Moncrieff died before he was able to begin translating it, in 1930, and the task was taken on by Sydney Schiff, a wealthy patron of the arts, a novelist under the name of Stephen Hudson, and a friend of Proust. (His grief at Proust's death was so demonstrative, and his devotion to Proust's memory so well-known in Paris, that he was nicknamed '*la veuve Proust*', Proust's widow.) For copyright reasons, his translation, though, was not published in America, where a separate translation was made by Frederick A. Blossom, a professor of French. In 1970, Chatto published a new translation, based on the 1954 Pléiade edition, by Andreas Mayor, and it is this translation which was reprinted unrevised in the Terence Kilmartin edition, and again, lightly revised by D. J. Enright, in 1992. Mayor had planned to make a complete revision of Scott Moncrieff's translation, but died before he was able to do so: his preparatory notes

provided the basis for Kilmartin's revision. Although the revisions were ostensibly done in order to take account of the 1988 Pléiade edition, there are numerous points at which no alterations were made, or where errors were allowed to stand uncorrected. The most noticeable difference is in the division between *The Fugitive* and the last volume, where both Mayor and his followers retained the 1954 division, beginning *Finding Time Again* with the narrator's visit to Tansonville, rather than dividing that episode in two, as the first edition did and as the 1988 edition, on persuasive evidence, also does. I have followed the 1988 edition in reinstating the original opening. Mayor also did quite a lot of unacknowledged editing of his own, transposing the order of sentences or omitting words or phrases, occasionally sentences. Enright did not correct all these. Another characteristic feature of Mayor's translation is that he persistently extends or enlarges what Proust actually wrote in order to interpret or clarify his sentences. Sometimes this entails inserting some explanatory reference, sometimes spelling out a metaphor, sometimes expanding a pronoun into a recapitulatory phrase, sometimes merely varying nouns or verbs where Proust uses the same one a number of times. There is hardly a sentence without at least a trace of the rewriting of Proust's text. Allusions are spelled out, lexical neutrality (Proust's frequent use of 'avoir' for example) abandoned in favour of greater specificity. While this can occasionally be helpful, the cumulative effect is to add a layer of rather pedantic information, often too ornately phrased, which obscures the idiosyncratic precision of Proust's own style. In this translation I have tried to aim for equivalence rather than explanation.

Equivalence is a mark of recognition of the endless possibilities of interpretation, a quality that is inherent in both the thought-processes and the writing of the novel. The narrator's encounter with the Baron de Charlus on his way to the Guermantes' stands at the gateway to the novel's climax. It marks his first profound encounter with the process of ageing, which, as Walter Benjamin pointed out, is the external counterpart to the interior process of remembrance. 'To observe the interaction of ageing and remembering means to penetrate to the heart of Proust's world, to the universe of convolution. It is the world in a state of resemblances, the domain of the *correspondences*;

subject's appearance but at a depth where appearance hardly matters, as in the case of its symbolization by the sound of the spoon on a plate, or the starched stiffness of the napkin, which had been more valuable for my spiritual renewal than any number of humanitarian, patriotic, internationalist or metaphysical conversations. 'No more style, was what I had heard people say in those days, no more literature, what we want is life.' It is easy to see how even M. de Norpois's simple theories in opposition to 'flute-players' had taken on a new lease of life since the war. For all those who do not have an artistic sense, by which I mean the submission to an interior reality, may still be endowed with the capacity to argue about art till the cows come home. And to the extent that they are also diplomats or financiers, deeply involved in the 'realities' of the present time, they are all the more willing to believe that literature is just a form of intellectual amusement destined to be gradually eliminated. Some even wanted the novel to be a sort of cinematographic stream of things. This was an absurd idea. Nothing sets us further apart from what we have really perceived than that sort of cinematographic approach.

On the subject of books, I had remembered as I came into the library what the Goncourts say about the fine editions it contains, and had promised myself that I would look at them while I was closeted here. So all the time I had been following my line of thought, I had been taking down the precious volumes at random until, absent-mindedly opening one of them, *François le Champi* by George Sand,[81] I felt unpleasantly struck by some impression which seemed to have too little in common with my current thoughts, until I realized a moment later, with an emotion which brought tears to my eyes, how much in accord with them this impression actually was. In a room where somebody has died, the undertaker's men are getting ready to bring down the coffin, while the son of a man who has done his country some service shakes hands with the last friends as they file out; if a fanfare suddenly sounds beneath the windows, he is horrified and thinks that some mockery is being made of his grief. At this, although he has until then remained in control of himself, he can suddenly no longer restrain his tears; because he has just realized that what he is hearing is the band of a regiment that is sharing his mourning and

paying its last respects to his father's mortal remains. In the same way, I had just recognized how well suited my current feelings were to the painful impression I had experienced when I read the title of a book in the Prince de Guermantes's library; a title which had given me the idea that literature really did give us that world of mystery which I no longer found in it. And yet it was not a particularly outstanding book, it was only *François le Champi*. But that name, like the Guermantes' name, was not like all the other names I have come across since: the memory of what had seemed inexplicable to me in the subject of *François le Champi* when Mama was reading me George Sand's book was re-awoken by the title (just as the Guermantes' name, when I had not seen them for such a long time, contained the essence of the feudal system for me – so *François le Champi* contained the essence of the novel), and for a moment took the place of the generally accepted idea of what George Sand's rural Berry novels are about. At a dinner-party, where thought always remains close to the surface of things, I would probably have been able to talk about *François le Champi* and the Guermantes without either of them meaning what they had meant in Combray. But when I was alone, as at this moment, I was plunged down to a much greater depth. In those moments, the idea that some woman I had met in society was a cousin of Mme de Guermantes, that is, the cousin of a magic-lantern character, seemed incomprehensible, and it seemed equally incomprehensible that the finest books that I had read might be – I do not say better than, which of course they were – but even equal to the extraordinary *François le Champi*. This was an impression from long ago, in which my memories of childhood and family were affectionately mingled and which I had not immediately recognized. For a moment I had angrily wondered who the stranger was who had just upset me. But the stranger was myself, it was the child I was then, whom the book had just brought back to life within me because, knowing nothing of me except this child, it was this child that the book had immediately summoned, wanting to be looked at only by his eyes, loved only by his heart, and wanting to speak only to him. So this book which my mother had read aloud to me in Combray until it was almost morning had retained for me all the wonder of that night. It is true that the 'pen' of George Sand, to

use an expression of Brichot's, who was so fond of saying that a book had been written 'with a nimble pen', did not at all seem to me, as it had seemed so long ago to my mother before she slowly began to model her literary tastes on mine, a magical pen. But it was a pen which, without meaning to, I had charged with electricity, as schoolboys often do for fun, and now a thousand insignificant details from Combray, unglimpsed for a very long time, came tumbling helter-skelter of their own accord to hang from the magnetized nib in an endless, flickering line of memories.

Some mystery-loving minds maintain that objects retain something of the eyes that have looked at them, that we can see monuments and pictures only through an almost tangible veil woven over them through the centuries by the love and contemplation of so many admirers. This fantasy would become truth if they transposed it into the realm of the only reality each person knows, into the domain of their own sensitivity. Yes, in that sense and that sense only (but it is much the more important one), a thing which we have looked at long ago, if we see it again, brings back to us, along with our original gaze, all the images which that gaze contained. This is because things – a book in its red binding, like the rest – at the moment we notice them, turn within us into something immaterial, akin to all the preoccupations or sensations we have at that particular time, and mingle indissolubly with them. Some name, read long ago in a book, contains among its syllables the strong wind and bright sunlight of the day when we were reading it. Thus the sort of literature which is content to 'describe things', to provide nothing more of them than a miserable list of lines and surfaces, despite calling itself realist, is the furthest away from reality, the most impoverishing and depressing, because it unceremoniously cuts all communication between our present self and the past, the essence of which is retained in things, and the future, where things prompt us to enjoy it afresh. It is this that any art worthy of the name must express, and, if it fails in this, we can still draw a lesson from its incapacity (whereas there is none to be drawn even from the successes of realism), namely that this essence is, in part, subjective and impossible to communicate.

More than that, a thing which we saw at a certain time in our lives,

train of thought which I had just begun by the fact that a fashionable party, my return to society, had provided me with my point of departure for a new life which I had not been able to find in solitude. There was nothing extraordinary about this fact, an impression capable of resuscitating the eternal man in me not necessarily being linked to solitude any more than to society (as I had once thought it was, as had perhaps once been the case for me, as ought still perhaps to be the case if I had developed harmoniously, instead of experiencing this long intermission, which seemed only now to be ending). For experiencing this impression of beauty only when, in the grip of some immediate sensation, however insignificant, a similar sensation, spontaneously re-arising within me, had just extended the first over several periods of time at once, and filled my soul, where individual sensations usually left so much emptiness, with a general essence, there was no reason why I should not receive sensations of this kind in society as much as in the natural world, since they are produced by chance, helped doubtless by the particular excitement which, on the days when one finds oneself outside the regular tenor of life, makes even the simplest things start to give us sensations which habit usually makes us spare our nervous system. I was going to try to find the objective reason why it should be precisely and uniquely this kind of sensation which led to the work of art, by continuing the thoughts which had come to me in such rapid sequence in the library; for I felt that the impetus given to my intellectual life was now strong enough for me to be able to continue as successfully in the drawing-room, among all the guests, as alone in the library; it seemed that, from this point of view, even in the midst of this large gathering I should be able to retain my solitude. Because for the same reason that great events do not impinge from outside on our mental powers, and that a third-rate writer living in an epic epoch will remain just as poor a writer, what was really dangerous in society was the socialite attitude one brings to it. By itself it was no more capable of rendering you third-rate than a heroic war was capable of making a third-rate poet sublime.

In any case, whether it was theoretically useful or not that the work of art was constituted in this fashion, and while I was waiting until I had examined this point as fully as I was intending to, I could not deny

that so far as I was concerned, whenever truly aesthetic impressions had come to me, it had always been after sensations of this kind. They had, admittedly, been rather rare in my life, but they dominated it, and I was able to rediscover in the past some of those peaks which I had made the mistake of losing sight of (something I was intending not to do from now on). And already I could say that, although this characteristic might in my case, by the exclusive importance it assumed, have appeared personal to me, I had been reassured to discover that it was related to other, less marked but discernible characteristics, at bottom quite similar, in certain other writers. Is it not from a sensation of the same sort as that of the madeleine that the finest part of the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* depends: 'Yesterday in the evening I was walking alone . . . I was roused from my reflections by the twittering of a thrush perched in the highest branch of a birch tree. Instantly, the magical sound made my father's estate reappear before my eyes; I forgot the catastrophes I had just witnessed, and, transported suddenly into the past, saw once again the countryside where so often I heard the thrush's piping song.' And is not this one of the two or three most beautiful passages in those memoirs: 'A delicate, sweet scent of heliotrope wafted from a little patch of beans in full flower; it was brought to us not by a breeze from our own land, but by a wild wind from Newfoundland, unconnected to the exiled plant, without congenial reminiscence and pleasure. In this perfume not breathed by beauty, not purified in her bosom, not scattered in her path, in this perfume of a new dawn, new cultivation and new world, there was all the melancholy of regret, of absence and of youth.'[92] One of the masterpieces of French literature, Gérard de Nerval's *Sylvie*, just like the book of *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* which deals with Combourg, contains a sensation of the same sort as the taste of the madeleine and the 'twittering of the thrush'. And above all in Baudelaire these reminiscences, more numerous still, are clearly less fortuitous and therefore, in my opinion, conclusive. Here it is the poet himself who with a more indolent resolution seeks deliberately, in the scent of a woman, for instance, of her hair and her breast, the analogies which will inspire him and evoke for him '*l'azur du ciel immense et rond*' and '*un port rempli de flammes et de mâts*'.[93] I was about to try to remember

the passages in Baudelaire at the heart of which there is this sort of transposed sensation, in order finally to establish a place for myself in such a noble tradition, and thereby to give myself the assurance that the work which I no longer had the slightest hesitation in undertaking was worth the effort I was going to devote to it, when having arrived at the foot of the staircase leading down from the library, I found myself suddenly in the great drawing-room and in the midst of a party which was going to seem very different from any I had been present at before, and for me was going to take an unusual turn and assume a new meaning. In fact, as soon as I entered the great drawing-room, although my mind was still firmly fixed on the plan I had just reached the point of formulating, a dramatic turn of events occurred which seemed to raise the gravest of objections to my undertaking. An objection which I would probably overcome but which, as I continued to reflect inwardly on the conditions necessary for the work of art, was at any moment, through the hundredfold repetition of instances of the one consideration most likely to make me hesitate, about to interrupt the course of my thinking.

To begin with I did not understand why I was so slow to recognize the master of the house and the guests nor why everybody seemed to have put on make-up, in most cases with powdered hair which changed them completely. The Prince, as he received his guests, still had that air of a genial, fairy-tale king which I had noticed the first time I met him, but this time, as if he had submitted himself to the stipulations of dress he had imposed on his guests, he had decked himself out in a white beard and, dragging his feet along as though they were weighing him down like lead boots, seemed to have taken on the task of representing one of the 'Ages of Man'. His moustaches were white, too, as though still dusted with the frost of Hop o' my Thumb's forest. They seemed uncomfortable for his tightening mouth and, once the effect had been achieved, as if they ought to have been taken off. To be quite honest, I recognized him only by a process of logical deduction, by deciding on the identity of the person on the simple basis of a few recognizable features. I do not know what young Fezensac had put on his face, but while others had whitened, in some cases half their beard, in others just their moustache, he had not bothered himself with dyes

of that sort, but had found a way of covering his face with wrinkles, his eyebrows with bristling hairs, although that did not suit him in the least, making his face look as if it had been hardened, rigidified, made solemn, ageing him so much that no one could possibly have taken him for a young man. I was even more astonished a moment later when I heard somebody address as Duc de Châtellerault a little old man with a silvery, ambassadorial moustache, in whom only some lingering remnant of the way he glanced around enabled me to recognize him as the young man whom I had met once when I had called on Mme de Villeparisis. In the case of the first person whom I thus succeeded in identifying, by trying to forget the disguise and then, by an effort of memory, adding to the features which were still unchanged, my first thought ought to have been, and for less than a second perhaps was, to congratulate him on being so marvellously made up that one felt at first, before recognizing him, the same hesitancy that great actors, appearing in a role in which they are very different from their usual selves, as they make their first entry, create in the audience, who, despite being forewarned by the programme, remain for a moment dumbfounded before bursting into applause.

Most extraordinary of all, from this standpoint, was my personal enemy, M. d'Argencourt, the real star of the party. Not only, in place of his scarcely even pepper-and-salt beard, had he donned an extraordinary beard of improbable whiteness, but additionally (so much can little physical changes shrink or enlarge a person and, more broadly, change their apparent character, their personality) the man had become an old beggar, no longer commanding the slightest respect, although his solemn appearance, and starchy inflexibility, were still fresh in my memory, who brought to the part of decrepit old man such credibility that his limbs were quivering, and the slack lines of his face, which always used to be so haughty, were set in a permanent smile of beatific inanity. Taken to this extreme, the art of disguise becomes something more than that, it becomes a complete transformation of the personality. And indeed, although a few little details confirmed that it really was Argencourt who was putting on this hilarious and colourful show, I would have had to work back through I do not know how many successive states of that face if I wanted to rediscover that

of the Argencourt I had known, who, with nothing but his own body to work with, had become so different from himself! This was evidently the furthest extremity to which he had been able to bring it without its collapsing entirely: the proudest face and the most jutting chest were now no more than a bunch of disintegrating rags, shaken in every direction. Only by recalling, with some difficulty, the occasional smile which in the past had for a moment tempered his aloofness, could one find in the living Argencourt the man whom I had seen so often, and understand how this daft old-clothes-merchant's smile might have existed within the correct gentleman of earlier days. But, even supposing that a similar intention to Argencourt's lay behind this smile, the very substance of the eye through which he expressed the smile was so changed, because of the extraordinary transformation of his face, that the expression itself became quite different and even appeared to belong to a different person. I was seized by giggles at the sight of this sublime dodderer, rendered as affable in this benevolent caricature of himself as was, in more tragic mode, the stricken and well-mannered M. de Charlus. M. d'Argencourt, in his incarnation as a comic ancient in a play by Regnard, exaggeratedly reworked by Labiche,[94] was as approachable and as courteous as the King Lear version of M. de Charlus, who carefully doffed his hat to even the most obsequious of those he encountered. None the less it did not occur to me to tell him how much I admired the extraordinary sight he presented. It was not my old antipathy that held me back, for he had contrived to look so different from himself that I had the illusion of being in the presence of another person altogether, as kindly, helpless and inoffensive as the usual Argencourt was contemptuous, hostile and dangerous. So different a person that the sight of this ludicrously grimacing, white, comical character, this snowman looking like a childlike Général Dourakine,[95] made me reflect that the human being could go through metamorphoses as total as those of some insects. I had a sense that I was looking through the plate glass of a natural history museum display at an example of what the speediest and surest insect may turn into, and standing in front of this limp chrysalis, vibratile rather than capable of movement, I was unable to experience any of the feelings that M. d'Argencourt had always inspired in me. But I said nothing, I

progress of my work, from the hope of glory, reached me except as very weak, pale sunshine, not strong enough to warm me, to bring me to life, to give me any kind of desire, and yet it was still too bright, wan as it was, for my eyes, which preferred to close, and I turned my face to the wall. It seemed, from the slight movement I felt in my lips, that I must have had a little smile right at the corner of my mouth when a lady wrote to me: 'I was *very surprised* to receive no reply to my letter.' None the less, that would remind me of her letter, and I would answer it. In order that people should not think me ungrateful, I wanted to try to show the same level of politeness as that which people must have shown to me. And I was overwhelmed by the imposition on my failing existence of the superhuman fatigues of life. The loss of my memory helped me somewhat by cutting out some of my obligations; my work replaced them.

This idea of death established itself permanently within me, in the way that love does. Not that I was in love with death, I hated it. But after having contemplated it from time to time, as one does a woman with whom one is not yet in love, the thought of it adhered to the deepest stratum of my brain so completely that I could not think about anything without its first passing through the idea of death, and even if I was doing nothing, remaining in a state of complete repose, the idea of death kept me company as ceaselessly as the idea of my self. I do not think that, on the day when I became half-dead, it was the accidents which characterized that state, the incapacity to descend a staircase, to recall a name, to get up, that had even unconsciously caused this idea of death, the idea that I was already practically dead, so much as that they had both come together and the great mirror of the mind had inevitably reflected a new reality. Yet I did not see how one could pass from the ailments that I had to total death without any warning. But then I thought about other people, about all the people who die every day without the hiatus between their illness and their death seeming at all extraordinary to us. I even thought that it was only because I was seeing them from within (even more than through the illusions of hope) that certain ailments, taken one by one, did not seem fatal, even though I believed that I was dying, just as those who are most convinced that their time has come are nevertheless easily

persuaded that their inability to pronounce certain words has nothing at all to do with a stroke or aphasia but stems from a tiredness of the tongue, a nervous state akin to stammering, or exhaustion following a bout of indigestion.

For myself, what I had to write was something different from a dying man's farewell, longer, and for more than one person. Longer to write. In the daytime, at best, I could try to sleep. If I worked, it would be only at night. But I would need a good number of nights, perhaps a hundred, perhaps a thousand. And I would be living with the anxiety of not knowing whether the Master of my destiny, less indulgent than the Sultan Shahriyar, when I broke off my story each morning, would stay my death sentence, and permit me to take up the continuation again the following evening. Not that I was claiming in any way to be rewriting the *Arabian Nights*, any more than the *Mémoires* of Saint-Simon, both of them books written at night, nor any of the other books that I had loved in the naïvety of my childhood, when I had become as superstitiously attached to them as I would be to my loves, and was unable to imagine without horror any book that was different from them. But, as Elstir found with Chardin, one can remake something one loves only by renouncing it. No doubt my books too, like my mortal being, would eventually die, one day. But one has to resign oneself to dying. One accepts the thought that in ten years oneself, in a hundred years one's books, will not exist. Eternal duration is no more promised to books than it is to men.

It would be a book as long as the *Arabian Nights* perhaps, but quite different. It is probably true that when one is in love with a work of literature one wants to make something as like it as possible, but one needs to sacrifice one's love of the moment, think not of one's own taste, but of a truth which does not ask for your preferences and forbids you to think about them. And only if one follows it will one sometimes find that one has come upon what one abandoned, that, by forgetting them, one has written the *Arabian Nights* or the *Mémoires* of Saint-Simon for a new age. But was there still enough time for me? Was it not too late?

I asked myself not only 'Is there still enough time?' but also 'Am I still in a sufficiently fit condition?' The illness which, by compelling

me, like a severe spiritual adviser, to die to the world, had done me a service for 'except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit',[127] the illness which, after my idleness had protected me from my facility, was now perhaps going to protect me from idleness, had also exhausted my powers and, as I had long observed, particularly at the time when I stopped loving Albertine, my powers of memory. But was not the re-creation through memory of impressions, which then needed to be investigated, illuminated and transformed into intellectual equivalents, one of the preconditions, almost the very essence, of the work of art as I had conceived it just now in the library? Oh, if only I still had the powers that were still intact on the evening which had come back into my mind when I noticed *François le Champi*! It was that evening, when my mother abdicated her authority, that marked the beginning, along with the slow death of my grandmother, of the decline of my will and of my health. Everything had been decided at the moment when, unable to bear the idea of waiting until the next day to set my lips on my mother's face, I had made my resolution, jumped out of bed, and gone, in my nightshirt, to stay by the window through which the moonlight came, until I heard M. Swann go. My parents having gone with him, I heard the garden gate open, the bell ring, the gate close again . . .

Then I suddenly thought that, if I did still have the strength to complete my work, this afternoon party – like certain days long ago at Combray which had influenced me – which had, just today, given me both the idea of my work and the fear of not being able to accomplish it, would be bound to mark it more than anything else with the form that I had sensed long ago in the church at Combray, and which normally remains invisible to us, the form of Time.

There are, of course, many other errors of the senses, and we have seen how various episodes of this narrative had proved this to me, which falsify our perception of the real appearance of the world. But where necessary, by doing everything I could to give the most exact transcription, I would be able to keep the location of sounds unchanged, to abstain from detaching them from their cause, besides which the intellect situates them only after the event, even though to make the

rain sing gently in the middle of the room and to make the bubbling of our tisane fall torrentially in the courtyard ought, after all, to be no more disconcerting than what painters have done so often when they have depicted, very close or very far away, depending on how the laws of perspective, the intensity of colour and our first illusory glance make them appear to us, a sail or a peak, which the rational mind will then relocate, sometimes across enormous distances. I might, even though the error would be more serious, continue the general practice of adding features to the face of a passer-by, although instead of a nose, cheeks and a chin, there should not really be anything except an empty space over which would flicker, at most, the reflection of our desires. And even if I did not have the leisure to prepare, and this was a much more important matter, the hundred masks which ought properly to be attached to a single face, if only because of all the eyes that see it and the different meanings they read into its features, as well as for the same eyes the effect of hope and fear or, on the contrary, of the love and habit which for thirty years can conceal the changes wrought by age; even if I was not in the end proposing, although my relationship with Albertine had been enough to show me that anything else is factitious and untruthful, to represent certain individuals not as outside but as inside us, where their least acts can entail fatal disturbances, and to vary the light of the moral sky, according to the differing pressures of our sensibility or when, disturbing the serene skies of our certainty beneath which an object is so small, the slightest cloud of danger multiplies its size in a moment; if I could not use these changes and many others (the necessity for which, if one intends to depict reality, has become apparent in the course of this narrative) in the transcription of a universe which had to be completely redesigned, at least I would not fail to describe man, within it, as possessing the length not of his body but of his years, and as being obliged, in a task that grows more and more enormous, and which in the end defeats him, to drag them with him whenever he moves.

Moreover, the fact that we occupy an ever larger place in Time is something that everybody feels, and this universality could only delight me, since this was the truth, the truth suspected by everybody, that it was my task to try to elucidate. Not only does everybody feel that we

occupy a place in Time, but the simplest measure it in approximately the same way as they measure the place we occupy in space, so that people of no special perspicacity, seeing two men whom they do not know, both with black moustaches, or both clean-shaven, will say that these are two men, one of about twenty and the other of about forty years old. Of course they will often be wrong in their estimate, but the fact that people think it possible at all shows that age is conceived as something measurable. The second man with the black moustache has effectively had twenty years added on to him.

It was this notion of embodied time, of past years not being separated from us, that it was now my intention to make such a prominent feature in my work, and it was at that very moment of decision, in the *hôtel* of the Princesse de Guermantes, that I heard that sound of my parents' footsteps as they led M. Swann to the gate, heard the tinkling of the bell, resilient, ferruginous, inexhaustible, shrill and fresh, which told me that M. Swann had gone and that Mama was on her way upstairs, heard the very sounds themselves, heard them even though they were situated so far away in the past. Then, as I thought of all the events which had to be set in place between the moment when I heard those sounds and this party at the Guermantes', I was frightened to think that the bell could still be ringing in me without my being able to do anything to alter the shrillness of its tinkling, since, no longer remembering very clearly how it faded away, and wanting to rediscover this, and to listen to it properly, I had to try to block out the sound of the conversations which the masks were holding all around me. In order to try to hear it at closer quarters, I was forced to go back down into myself. It must therefore be that this tinkling was always there, and also, between it and the present moment, the whole of this past, unrolled indefinitely, which I did not know that I was carrying. When it tinkled, I already existed, and for me still to be able to hear the tinkling there must have been no break in continuity, I must not have ceased for a moment, not taken a rest from existing, from thinking, from being conscious of myself, because this moment from long ago still stuck to me, so that I could still find it again, still go back to it, simply by going more deeply back into myself. And it is because they contain in this way every hour of the past that human

bodies can do so much damage to those who love them, because they contain so many memories of joys and desires already effaced from their minds, but cruel indeed for anyone who contemplates and projects back through the array of time the cherished body of which he is jealous, so jealous as to wish for its destruction. For, after death, Time leaves the body, and the memories – so indifferent, so pale now – are effaced from her who no longer exists and soon will be from him whom at present they still torture, but in whom they will eventually die, when the desire of a living body is no longer there to support them. The depths of Albertine, whom I saw sleeping, and who was dead.

I felt a sense of tiredness and fear at the thought that all this length of time had not only uninterruptedly been lived, thought, secreted by me, that it was my life, that it was myself, but also that I had to keep it attached to me at every moment, that it supported me, that I was perched on its vertiginous summit, and that I was unable to move without its collaboration, without taking it with me. The date at which I heard the sound of the garden bell at Combray, so distant and yet still within me, was a benchmark in that vast dimension which I did not know I had. I felt giddy at the sight of so many years below me, yet within me, as if I were miles high.

I finally understood why the Duc de Guermantes, who had caused me to wonder, seeing him sitting on a chair, how he could have aged so little when he had so many more years than I had below him, had, the moment he rose and tried to stand upright, wavered on trembling legs, like those of some ancient archbishop whose metal crucifix is the only solid thing about him, and towards whom hasten a few strapping young seminarists, and could not move forward without shaking like a leaf, on the scarcely manageable summit of his eighty-three years, as if all men are perched on top of living stilts which never stop growing, sometimes becoming taller than church steeples, until eventually they make walking difficult and dangerous, and down from which, all of a sudden, they fall. (Was this the reason why the faces of men over a certain age were, even to the least aware eyes, so impossible to confuse with those of young men, and were visible only through a sort of cloudy aura of seriousness?) I began to be afraid that the stilts on

which I myself was standing had already reached that height, and it did not seem to me that I would for very long have the strength to keep this past attached to me which already stretched so far down. Therefore, if enough time was left to me to complete my work, my first concern would be to describe the people in it, even at the risk of making them seem colossal and unnatural creatures, as occupying a place far larger than the very limited one reserved for them in space, a place in fact almost infinitely extended, since they are in simultaneous contact, like giants immersed in the years, with such distant periods of their lives, between which so many days have taken up their place – in Time.

THE END