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**Music as a call to creation**

**Strefezza-Incantalupo, Rose, Ph.D.**

**City University of New York, 1987**

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MUSIC AS A CALL TO CREATION

by

ROSE STREFEZZA-INCANTALUPO

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1987

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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### Dedication

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my husband, Mr. Ralph Incantalupo, and to my mother, Mrs. Angelina Strefezza, in sincere appreciation of their support and encouragement, which enabled me to complete this project.

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## Introduction

As the title of his monumental work suggests, Marcel Proust's A la Recherche du temps perdu is primarily concerned with the Narrator's search for "sa vocation" as a writer and traces the evolution of Marcel's thoughts during the years of his apprenticeship. The progression from doubt to understanding which characterizes this apprenticeship and permeates the course of the narrative has led certain critics, including Gérard Genette, to view A la Recherche as an important contribution to the "roman de formation."<sup>1</sup> This conclusion stems from the fact that in his novel, Proust is not presenting the Narrator as the artist who has achieved excellence, but is depicting this individual's spiritual and intellectual growth toward a greater understanding of the importance of art to a more meaningful existence. Neither the child who has idolized Bergotte and attempts to emulate this writer's style, nor the young man who constantly postpones dedicating himself to his work, is aware of the significant role which art will play in his life. In each stage of his development, the Narrator often maintains ideas which are contrary to the nature of creation as seen by Proust himself, but which will not be totally dispelled until the moment of revelation which occurs in Le Temps retrouvé. Although these ideas tend to lead him further astray and only contribute to his doubts concerning art, they are typical of a young man who is desperately searching for truth but has not yet understood where it is to be found. The depiction of Marcel's mistakes and

failures becomes an integral part in the portrayal of his gradual progress toward the fulfillment of his dream, while his errors also help to intensify the total impact of the final revelation which ultimately reveals Proust's ideas concerning the nature of art. It is not until Marcel has completed his apprenticeship and is able to appreciate the message inherent to Vinteuil's septet that Proust's actual ideas do surface: "Ce n'est qu'à la fin du livre, et une fois les leçons de la vie comprises, que ma pensée se dévoilera."<sup>2</sup> In a letter to Jacques Rivière, Proust explains his purpose in structuring A la Recherche as the "evolution" of the artist rather than the depiction of a fait accompli:

Mais cette évolution d'une pensée, je n'ai pas voulu l'analyser abstraitement mais la recréer, la faire vivre. Je suis donc forcé de peindre les erreurs, sans croire devoir dire que je les tiens pour des erreurs; tant pis pour moi si le lecteur croit que je les tiens pour la vérité. Le second volume accentuera ce malentendu. J'espère que le dernier le dissipera (Kolb, p. 28).

Since each of the major art forms plays a significant role in the completion of Marcel's "education" and the ultimate realization of his dream to write a book, Proust explores art in all of its varying manifestations in the course of the narrative. The visual arts, the theatre, literature, and music are examined with the precision and mastery of an expert describing his field of specialization. The artists of A la Recherche, Elstir, La Berma, Bergotte, and Vinteuil, each influence the Narrator's growth at a given moment in his development. In fact, the young Marcel's

impressions and illusions concerning Bergotte tend to incarnate his immature and often mistaken notions regarding art, while Bergotte himself becomes the personification of the child's concept of the ideal writer. Music is especially important in developing the Narrator's outlook toward reality and its relation to the act of "creation," and Vinteuil's presence remains apparent throughout A la Recherche even after the influence of the other artists tends to fade away. "Cette évolution d'une pensée" which Proust sought to trace in the course of the narrative is reflected in a similar progression from doubt to understanding which characterizes the four sections devoted to Vinteuil's music. These sections represent a kind of microcosm of the entire novel and develop ideas concerning music which will eventually be extended to encompass art in general. The Narrator's understanding and appreciation of Vinteuil's music is intrinsically linked to the possibility of fulfilling "a vocation" as an artist; in fact, the two seem to be directly proportional since as Marcel's comprehension of the septet increases, so does his acceptance of the importance of art to a more meaningful existence. In this dissertation, I plan to study the process of evolution which becomes apparent in the four sections devoted to Vinteuil's sonata and septet and relate it to Marcel's ultimate realization of his creative potential. It is through Vinteuil's music that the importance of art and creation is revealed and reinforced in the Narrator's life. Vinteuil is the musician par excellence who has achieved the highest possible

quality of art; he is the artist who Proust would like to be and who is instrumental in the fulfillment of the Narrator's "vocation."

The importance which music plays in the evolution of Marcel's thought reflects a similar influence felt by Proust in his own life: in A la Recherche, music becomes the means by which the Narrator comes to understand that it is only through art that it is possible to transcend time and space and achieve immortality: "La place privilégiée qu'elle (la musique) occupe dans son oeuvre reflète celle, non moins privilégiée, qu'elle tenait dans sa vie. Ce qu'il (Proust) lui demandait c'était bien plus que du plaisir, plus encore que de la joie: une promesse de libération et comme une chance de survie. Chaque fois qu'il aborde ce sujet, c'est avec l'accent inimitable d'un amant parlant de sa maîtresse, d'un mystique parlant de son Dieu."<sup>3</sup> Art might quite easily be considered a kind of religion for Proust which offers similar healing properties and sources of consolation for a broken existence. It incarnates far more than the superficial pleasures of an aristocratic society. In a conversation with Benoist-Méchin, Proust reveals the significance which he places upon the sections of the narrative which are devoted to music:

Il (Proust) les considérait, lui aussi, comme ceux où il avait exprimé le plus profond de lui-même. "La musique", me dit-il, "a été une des plus grandes passions de ma vie. Je dis a été, car à présent je n'ai plus guère l'occasion d'en entendre, autrement que dans mon souvenir. Elle m'a apporté des joies et des certitudes ineffables, la preuve qu'il existe autre chose que le néant auquel je me

suis heurté partout ailleurs. Elle court comme un fil conducteur à travers toute mon oeuvre. Dans un des prochains volumes qui n'est pas encore paru (il s'agissait de La Prisonnière), vous verrez réapparaître la petite phrase de Vinteuil, mais sous un jour nouveau, plus ample et plus solennel. J'ai voulu qu'elle apporte à celui qui dit "Je" dans le cours de mon récit--et qui est moi, bien entendu, sans être tout à fait moi--le même message qu'elle avait apporté à Swann, dans un volume antérieur. Pourtant, vous remarquerez qu'elle parle le même langage, qu'elle dit la même chose à deux êtres qui ne se sont pour ainsi dire pas connus, car ils n'appartenaient pas à la même génération. L'expérience du premier se situe vingt ans avant celle du second.

...C'était la seule façon pour moi de dire certaines choses, de faire comprendre que la musique est douée d'un vrai pouvoir de résurrection (Benoist-Méchin, p. 192).

Music offers proof that art corresponds to a spiritual reality which transcends the abyss of nothingness which characterizes our earthly existence: it offers the possibility for a greater sense of fulfillment to a life saturated with the materialism of society. However, accepting art as a manifestation of a transcendent reality will continue to contribute to the doubt and confusion which Marcel experiences throughout the narrative until that all-important moment of revelation in Le Temps retrouvé.

In Proust, the possibility of recognizing the essence of reality and consequently of attaining immortality resides in the ability of the individual to liberate himself from the confines of time and space through art. In literature, the possibility of bypassing the moment in order to attain "essences" depends upon the use of the metaphor: "Thus metaphor is not an ornament, but

the necessary instrument for a recovery, through style, of the vision of essences, because it is the stylistic equivalent of the psychological experience of involuntary memory, which alone, by bringing together two sensations separated in time, is able to release their common essence through the miracle of an analogy.<sup>14</sup> The metaphoric leap and the process of involuntary memory are each contingent upon the juxtaposition of two entities: in the literary device, two words, ideas, or concepts are compared in order to afford greater comprehension to the reader of what lies beyond the two specific things being compared. As a result of involuntary memory, two moments in time are joined in order to reach a moment which may be characterized as extratemporal, neither past nor present but an incarnation of essence. Only by liberating himself from the confines of time and space, can the individual hope to achieve immortality and the essence of reality. In each case the limits of time and space can only be transcended indirectly. In contrast, music is the only art form whose very nature defies the limits of time and space to achieve a communication of souls: "Ce rôle libérateur du son, par rapport à l'inertie et au vieillissement, culmine dans le Septuor de Vinteuil. Bien des révélations se sont produites dans l'instant d'un éclair, mais ont disparu presque aussitôt, vaincues par l'habitude et l'urgence vaine. Dans la musique du vieux monsieur de son enfance, ce qui est rendu c'est le caractère de certitude et de vérité de toutes ces 'impressions', ce qui lui est donné c'est la possibilité de les

rendre à nouveau présentes."<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is quite fitting that Proust chooses to have his message of immortality and renewal surface through music, since music, more than any of the other arts, offers the possibility of attaining the essence of reality through its ability to transcend the moment and constantly renew itself. Since only an auditory sensation can be totally separated from the physical cause of its origin, music becomes the essence, the impression or sensation itself, devoid of any material intermediary. Music can in itself become a stimulus for involuntary memory: a composition which has been heard in the past will become associated to a particular moment in time and will be recalled each time the piece is heard in the present. The moment which is evoked, however, is neither past nor present but the incarnation of an extratemporal moment, an incarnation of essence. Music produces similar impressions in Marcel to those experienced at Martinville, to those evoked as he stumbles on the uneven pavement stone in the courtyard of la Princesse de Guermantes, to the madeleine dipped in tea and as the other "moments" of A la Recherche which result from the effects of involuntary memory. Vinteuil's music incarnates the joy characteristic of each of these experiences with the essential difference that the impressions captured within the septet have been translated into a more permanent form which can be recalled at will, whereas the "moments" of involuntary memory are often due to chance occurrences. The effects of music as a stimulus for involuntary memory will be crucial in the character of Swann,

although he never recognizes the presence of the essence of reality in the moment which is evoked.

Since music need not pass through the realm of thought in order to be appreciated, the listener's response should be of a sensual nature rather than intellectual; once he subjects it to analytic scrutiny, the composition leaves the sphere of "pure music." If literature can be viewed as un "discours sur les passions"<sup>6</sup> music becomes "les passions" themselves, rather than a discussion or description of them. Of course, in the sections devoted to Vinteuil's sonata and septet, we are no longer dealing with "pure music" but with a metaphoric representation of the musician's composition; by necessity, the music has been reduced to the realm of language since literature is Proust's medium of expression. However, through the use of the metaphor and the images of intangibility and effervescence applied to the compositions, Proust achieves as faithful a representation of the spiritual essence of music as is possible through language. The fluidity and harmony of the phrases produces a musical quality which rivals the phrases he attempts to describe. There is an attempt to exploit the musical quality of the language in order to have the language become music (Genette, Figures, III, 178).

In his discussions of Vinteuil's sonata and septet and even of Saint-Saëns sonata in Jean Santeuil, Proust never presents any of the technical aspects of the music he is describing: the presentation of the composition depends solely upon the expression of the impressions which are evoked within the

listener. If one examines the section describing Marcel's initial exposure to the sonata, one finds an example of the importance of impressions in the description of Vinteuil's music. Since music, by nature, becomes the impressions themselves, by evoking these emotions and sensations within the narrative Proust attains the essence of Vinteuil's art without describing a single note of the piece's theoretical composition. For Swann, it is the stillness and beauty of nature which surfaces through the phrases of the sonata: "...il y a là tout le côté statique du clair de lune, qui est le côté essentiel...C'est cela qui est si bien peint dans cette petite phrase, c'est le Bois de Boulogne tombé en catalepsie."<sup>7</sup> In contrast, Marcel is unable to draw any conclusions concerning the music, but experiences a purely sensual response as a result of the aura and mystique which surrounds Mme Swann: "Si je ne compris pas la Sonate, je fus ravi d'entendre jouer Mme Swann. Son toucher me paraissait, comme son peignoir, comme le parfum de son escalier, comme ses manteaux, comme ses chrysanthèmes, faire partie d'un tout individuel et mystérieux, dans un monde infiniment supérieur à celui où la raison peut analyser le talent" (I, 532-533). In both cases, the intangible quality of the music is stressed through the purely personal impressions it incarnates. Swann never appreciates the sonata for its esthetic or philosophic value, but merely as a means to recall a certain period in his life which has become associated with the composition: "Je voulais dire simplement à ce jeune homme que ce

que la musique montre--du moins à moi--ce n'est pas du tout la "Volonté en soi" et la "Synthèse de l'infini", mais, par exemple, le père Verdurin en redingote dans le *Palmarium* du Jardin d'Acclimatation" (I, 534). It is through his thoughts and impressions that the sonata is evoked in the narrative.

In Jean Santeuil, when the music ceases to be associated with his love for Françoise, Jean responds to the sonata quite similarly to Swann: the music evokes the impressions of a particular period in his life, and incarnates the beauty of nature which went unnoticed at that moment: "Et il n'essaya pas de penser à elle. Mais il pensait sans fin avec un grand désir, avec un grand bonheur, avec un grand amour, à l'été de cette année-là, à la douceur profonde des heures au bord du lac du bois de Boulogne, sur la terrasse de Saint-Germain, à Versailles, à tous les lieux où elle avait joué cette phrase, où il s'était souvenu de cette phrase, où il avait désiré d'aller, pendant qu'elle la lui jouait souvent chez elle avant de partir, quand il faisait encore trop chaud pour ces promenades."<sup>8</sup> Here, too, the music is never described theoretically, but is evoked through the memories and emotions which are manifested within Jean.

The problems which Proust encounters in describing Vinteuil's music through words is expanded in terms of the difficulties which the painter must overcome in order to capture the essence of reality on his canvas. In A la Recherche, painting becomes a kind of physical manifestation of the importance of essences, while the painter, Elstir, strives to capture not necessarily

what is seen, but what is felt. The use of the image of a fog or mist which descends upon the surroundings and reduces the observer's perception of what lies before him, emphasizes the thought that vision and understanding is improved by impairing physical sight.<sup>9</sup> Elstir stresses the importance of impressions and of what lies below the surface rather than the object in order to achieve a semblance, on canvas, of what lies beyond the limits of time and space. Elstir attempts to escape from the fixity of time and space and to make physical reality as formless as possible by suppressing all lines of demarcation in his paintings; there is no longer any boundary between earth and sea, but a kind of unity of vision. This lack of fixity which results from the suppression of all physical boundaries is reminiscent of the changing perspective from which the steeples at Martinville are viewed. The shifting positions of the cathedral create a sense of extratemporality similar to the movement of land and sea within Elstir's painting. Although the painting is static in itself, and cannot physically be changed without destroying the artist's conception of it, an illusion of motion is evoked within the work through color and a deliberate use of brush stroke. The marine imagery which is essential to the painter's work is also used in conjunction with the sonata and adds to the feeling of fluidity and intangibility which is characteristic of the sections of A la Recherche devoted to Vinteuil's music. The sea carries an aura of mystery which surrounds the descriptions of the sonata and septet. The rejuvenation and regeneration which

is intrinsic to the nature of music cannot be achieved within a given painting, but depends upon the admirer's impressions of the work and the growth they stimulate within the individual.

Despite the fact that painting serves a function similar to music, in the course of the narrative, its role, and the role of the painter, Elstir, are eventually undermined in relation to the importance of Vinteuil. It is through music that the individual is able to attain an extratemporal moment which transcends the fixity of time and space, a moment comparable to those experienced as a result of involuntary memory. Music becomes the essence itself and depends upon no physical properties; it even transcends the instruments which produce its strains. Music must be released from a physical object in order for its existence to be recognized and appreciated.

Although a great deal of discussion has centered around attempts to uncover the true identity of Vinteuil, a question which has intrigued scholars for decades, this composer's importance lies not in the possibility of linking him to one of the giants of modern music, but in the message which his compositions reveal. In fact, in keeping with the notion that music transcends the limits of time and space by its very nature, Vinteuil is the composer who is not confined to any particular moment in time, but reaches the proportions of the ideal artist; his compositions become a symbol for all music, and for art in general: "De même, le Vinteuil du Temps perdu n'est pas tel ou tel musicien dont on pourrait finir par connaître la date et le

lieu de naissance, mais l'image idéale que Proust s'est faite de celui dont la vocation est de s'exprimer au moyen des sons" (Benoist-Méchin, p. 26). Vinteuil's sonata, and his "petite phrase" in particular, incorporate elements from some of Proust's favorite composers: Beethoven, Saint-Saëns, Wagner, Franck, Schubert, and Fauré (Benoist-Méchin, p. 25). The evolution of his works represent the evolution of the artist himself.

In contrast, in Jean Santeuil, the sonata which becomes the incarnation of the love between Jean and Françoise is specifically attributed to Saint-Saëns. However, just as common elements have become much more complex in the transformation from Jean Santeuil to A la Recherche, so too, Saint-Saëns' sonata has undergone a heightening effect in its evolution into Vinteuil's, a movement which ultimately ends in the septet. In Vinteuil's music elements from many compositions conglomerate in order to create a new whole: "Les individualités...sont dans un livre faites d'impressions nombreuses qui, prises de bien des jeunes filles, de bien des églises, de bien des sonates, servent à faire une seule sonate, une seule église, une seule jeune fille" (III, 1034-1035). The progression from Saint-Saëns' sonata to Vinteuil's sonata and eventually to Vinteuil's septet is characteristic of the palimpsestic quality which is evident throughout A la Recherche. These three compositions are an example of the "multiple images" (Genette, "Proust Palimpsest," p. 223) which an entity may assume in the course of the narrative--of the doubling effect which is prevalent throughout

the work. Although themes from Vinteuil's sonata can be recognized in his septet, the latter reaches a height of passion as it progresses to the final revelation which is unknown in the earlier piece. Jean Santeuil exemplifies the questioning and doubt which is also apparent in Vinteuil's early work and is ultimately reconciled in order to attain total understanding in the septet. In a later chapter I will explore the development which the sonata in Jean Santeuil undergoes to become Vinteuil's sonata by examining the sections of the earlier work which center around the original version of the "petite phrase."

In addition to the timeless quality which is achieved by the introduction of a fictitious composer, Vinteuil becomes even more elusive since he never really develops as a character nor does he appear in society as the other artists of A la Recherche do. In fact, he is dead by the end of Du Côté de chez Swann, and it is only through his music that we gain any insight into his personality. Just as his music transcends the mundane and reaches the realm of the spirit, as an individual he never makes much of an impact upon the society of his time; it is his spirit and soul that are remembered long after his memory has fallen into oblivion: "Ce n'est pas lui qui fait la conquête de Paris, mais seulement son oeuvre."<sup>10</sup> "Vinteuil est un mythe d'enfance intégralement transporté dans l'art musical, sans avoir dû passer, tout au moins aux yeux des lecteurs que nous sommes, par l'épreuve de l'existence terrestre" (Piroué, p. 89). The only events of Vinteuil's life which are related are associated with

his relationship with his daughter, which in turn becomes the stimulus behind his work; these are incidents in his life which evoke impressions which are captured within his music. In fact, although we do meet him on several occasions, Swann never associates the composer of the sonata with the old music tutor of Combray. He considers Vinteuil, the tutor, to be too much of an old fool to even entertain the possibility that the two may be one and the same individual. However, they may, in fact be related. This too would be a shame, although a definite advantage in trying to make the acquaintance of the composer: "--Mais ce pourrait être un parent, reprit Swann, cela serait assez triste, mais enfin un homme de génie peut être le cousin d'une vieille bête. Si cela était, j'avoue qu'il n'y a pas de supplice que je ne m'imposerais pour que la vieille bête me présentât à l'auteur de la sonate: d'abord le supplice de fréquenter la vieille bête, et qui doit être affreux" (I, 214). It never occurs to Swann that the man with whom he is acquainted might be the composer himself. He confuses physical appearance with artistic capabilities; he is unable to appreciate the essence of spirit which lies below the physical appearance of the individual. By having Swann dissociate Vinteuil into two separate individuals: the composer and Combray's music tutor, Proust is superimposing contradictory roles within the same character. In fact, Swann himself assumes different roles according to the milieu in which he appears: "Indeed, many of the characters assume contradictory roles simultaneously:

Vinteuil, the ridiculous neighbor and the famous composer: ...Swann, the intimate of the Prince of Wales and the butt of Madame Verdurin's jokes" (Genette, "Proust Palimpsest," p. 216). As we will see later, Swann's superficial approach of the composer's music is reminiscent of his relationship with Vinteuil himself. In both cases, he fails to recognize the existence of a spiritual reality which lies below the physical embodiment of an individual or an object; he disregards the existence of the essence of reality within the external world.

Although Proust never characterizes Vinteuil in a conventional fashion, we come to understand the workings of his personality. His compositions become the crucial point to which we must look for the revelation of his character, and the picture we receive is not a superficial look at his physical appearance, but the portrait of an individual's ability to overcome his sorrows and frustrations in order to achieve immortality; a picture which very often contradicts any preconceived ideas we might have had. Below the calm and reserved exterior which seems so characteristic of his nature lies a passionate and emotional spirit which has been captured faithfully through his music. The method which Proust uses for developing the character of Vinteuil reflects his concept of the act of creation: the artist never actually "creates" anything, he merely translates, into a more permanent form, the feelings and impressions which reality evokes in him. Therefore, by examining the artist's work we can receive a true picture of his identity. The progression from doubt to

understanding which characterizes the evolution of the Narrator's creative potential and his understanding of Vinteuil's music, is also apparent within the composer, himself, and his sonata and septet. The greater intensity of the later work reflects a growth in the artist's degree of maturity and his increasing understanding as to where the essence of reality can be found. Vinteuil's music is his "raison de vivre" (I, 160) sacrificed only to the composer's passion for his daughter.

Much of what Marcel knows about Vinteuil reflects childhood impressions and prejudices overheard from his parents and comments made by Swann and Odette. His mother's thoughts concerning Vinteuil are influential in the development of his own. Years later he will exhibit surprise upon hearing the composer's music since he had thought it was not available in any form to be performed. For in fact, after his death, it seems almost inevitable that Vinteuil's music must be condemned to oblivion since all that remains of his music are illegible notes some of which don't even contain complete phrases. Vinteuil's music is born of the suffering incurred by reason of his daughter's relationship with her friend: not only is Mlle Vinteuil's friend the spiritual stimulus behind the composer's work, but is responsible for the physical transcriptions of his compositions. Before his death, the public has only been introduced to Vinteuil's sonata for piano and violin. However, through the arduous efforts of Mlle Vinteuil's friend in deciphering his "indéchiffrables notations" (III, 261), his

septet is published. The septet becomes his masterpiece and unites all the elements that had originally appeared in his other works, including the sonata.

Only Mlle Vinteuil's friend is aware of the composer's talent and has confidence in his creative genius. She devotes her time to transcribing his notes and in turn, to immortalizing his name; from the desecration of his memory, her attitude turns to dedication to the composer. Ironically, in defense of the reputation of Mlle Vinteuil's friend, the composer had said, "qu'elle aurait eu des dispositions extraordinaires pour la musique si elle les avait cultivées" (I, 147). This statement is true, since Vinteuil's claim to immortality rests upon his septet, transcribed by this young lady of questionable virtue. Their relationship will be further discussed at several points a little later in this study. In a sense, Marcel also owes his vocation to Mlle Vinteuil's friend since it is through her efforts that the composer's music, and specifically his septet, is performed, and it is through this composition that the Narrator will ultimately understand the importance of art in his life.

The discussions of Vinteuil's music are primarily related to the following four episodes: the evening at Mme Verdurin's when Swann is introduced to the sonata (I, 206-214); the evening at Mme de Saint-Euverte's when Swann hears the sonata and associates it with his disillusioned love for Odette (I, 345-353); the afternoon when Marcel hears Mme Swann play the sonata (I,

529-534); and finally when all Proust's previous ideas culminate in the performance of the septet at the Verdurin's (III, 248-264). These four episodes represent a linear progression from doubt to understanding which closely parallels the spiritual and intellectual growth which permeates the entire length of the narrative. In the course of his discussions of Vinteuil's sonata and septet, Proust examines the philosophical and psychological nature of music: his discussions never center around any theory of music nor its technical aspects since his primary concern is not to give a lesson in methodology. Music offers the vehicle to introduce introspection into the subconsciousness of the individual, and advises the listener as to the possibility of attaining a higher, transcendent reality through art. Music becomes the basis for drawing psychological, moral and esthetic conclusions concerning art (Piroué, p. 186). By examining these episodes and the impressions evoked by Vinteuil's music within the overlapping characters of Swann and Marcel, the reader can achieve a better understanding of the evolution of thought which characterizes A la Recherche, and ends in the eventual reconciliation of all of Marcel's doubts concerning the nature of art and his own ability to write.

The sense of development which is representative of these four episodes is achieved within a symmetrical and circular structure: the composition is circular in that both the first and last episodes take place at the Verdurin's. The symmetrical arrangement is more pronounced: the first and second episodes

both deal predominantly with Swann and the course of his love for Odette, with the emphasis in part two on the loss of this love and his subsequent despair. The third and fourth episodes focus upon Marcel as the listener, part four dealing with his lost love for Albertine. In the course of the first and third episodes, the sonata for piano and violin is performed as a piano arrangement. In the second and fourth episodes, the compositions are presented in their entirety and in their actual form. In fact, the concert at which the septet is performed "est la reprise amplifiée et orchestrée du concert Saint-Euverte" (Piroué, p. 68). What is stated in the course of the fourth evening does not so much repeat what has already been stated in the second one, but "la continue et la complète d'éléments nouveaux" (Piroué, p. 75). The greater depth and penetration which characterizes the composer's later work stems from his increasing maturity and growing insight concerning where the essence of reality is to be found. In both of these sections, the listener has been disillusioned by his love affair and is offered the possibility of transcendence through music.

Although A la Recherche deals primarily with the evolution of the Narrator's creative potential, a significant portion of these four episodes describes Swann's reactions to Vinteuil's music. On the surface, Swann seems to be portrayed as the artist-manqué who nevertheless becomes a kind of mentor for Marcel and shares a great deal in common with his "pupil." Both Swann and Marcel seem to exhibit the same lack of dedication to any specific form

of work; they both move in the same circles, know the same people, have visited the same places, and both experience various turmoils through their romantic relationships which become associated to Vinteuil's music. Each professes a basic appreciation for art, and in fact, it is Swann who introduces Marcel to Bergotte, the works of the painter, Elstir, and the music of Vinteuil.<sup>11</sup> When considering the progression from doubt to understanding that becomes apparent in the sections devoted to Vinteuil's music, the relationship which exists between these two characters extends far beyond the similarities which seem to arise from their respective characterizations. In keeping with the palimpsestic quality which permeates the narrative, Swann may be considered an extension of Marcel's personality since no clear line of separation can be drawn between the experiences of the two: "...the feelings, memories, and even things forgotten slip from one character to another..." (Genette, "Proust Palimpsest," p. 219). In fact in the same article quoted above, Genette describes Swann and Marcel as being "telescoped" (Genette, p. 216). They are a prime example of the "multiple images" which occur throughout A la Recherche; although their lives are basically the same a diversification is seen in their portrayals. Their development is similar to the variations a theme may undergo as a musical composition progresses or to the similarities which occur between different pieces of the same composer. Swann may be considered the initial stages in the process of evolution which leads to Marcel's total understanding

of the nature of art. As was mentioned earlier, in his attempt to present A la Recherche as the evolution of the artist, Proust includes a picture of the errors which accompany Marcel's search for truth, errors which prevail for the greater part of the narrative. A similar approach becomes visible in the sections devoted to music: the depiction of Swann's impressions of Vinteuil's sonata which characterizes the first three sections are basically a portrayal of error with Swann reaching his point of maximum growth in his assumption that the importance of music lies in its ability to incarnate the beauty of nature: it is this conception of the sonata which he strives to relate to Marcel. Although Marcel exhibits an intense appreciation of nature, as is exemplified by the numerous walks along the two "ways" which characterize this period, he is unable to identify with Swann's impressions of the music and achieves no real understanding of the composition. He is merely impressed by the sensual presence of Mme Swann. In his youth, Marcel is always able to respond more easily to something which is able to evoke a sensual response within him, a point which will be further examined in the section describing his introduction to the sonata.

Although the progression of A la Recherche is constantly directed toward the future and a state of greater understanding, Swann allows himself to be trapped in the past. The sonata allows him to reminisce about a particular moment in time which he shared with Odette, but is never recognized to be a vehicle which offers its listeners the possibility to transcend the

confines of time and space in order to attain a state of extratemporality: his impressions are based upon a purely personal interpretation of the music. Swann reduces art to a level of externals as is also seen in his approach to painting: the people depicted by the great masters are always described in relation to their resemblance to individuals he is acquainted with. In the sections devoted to Vinteuil's music, Swann remains a somewhat static character, and in a sense, the point at which his growth ends, is where that of Marcel begins. The process of evolution remains incomplete in the character of Swann and continues with Marcel and the introduction of the septet. The point of transition between the two characters occurs in the third section when Marcel is introduced to the sonata by Swann and Odette. Although the sonata incarnates, in essence, the same message as the septet, it comes to be associated with the misconceptions and growth which accompany a period of initiation: Swann's understanding of the sonata never goes beyond its association with a particular moment in time; Marcel recognizes its importance only in conjunction with the septet; and Vinteuil himself, in a sense, outgrows the sonata with the conception of the septet. The sonata comes to be the initial impressions of the composer which become more refined and mature as he approaches a greater understanding of the essence of reality. The sonata reflects a more superficial level of understanding in both the composer and the listener, while the septet represents the total evolution of Vinteuil's genius.

Interestingly enough, Swann, who comes to be associated with error, is never introduced to the septet, nor does he attain the degree of understanding and maturity characteristic of this piece and of the composer in his later years. Swann is essentially a Marcel who misunderstands the role which art must play in his life and never rectifies or corrects his misconceptions; he reduces art to his level instead of using it to transcend his own mediocrity. Although Marcel is the victim of a similar existence, he eventually corrects his mistakes and reconciles his doubts concerning the validity of art. Swann is the character that Marcel could become, or in fact, that Marcel is, before he achieves an understanding of the message of joy which rings triumphantly through the final passages of Vinteuil's septet.

The spirit of initiation and growth which characterizes the first three sections devoted to music, and the greater part of the narrative are reinforced in the episodes concerning Bergotte and in the pages describing Marcel's impressions at Martinville. In fact, a direct link may be established between the sonata, Bergotte, and Martinville since each incarnates the feeling of doubt and questioning which will eventually be reconciled in the final pages of Le Temps retrouvé; they are an essential part of a period in Marcel's life in which misconceptions concerning art prevail, misconceptions which are nevertheless essential to the total evolution of his thought. Bergotte comes to represent the young Marcel's idealistic conception of the artist, and may be seen as the initial stages in the development of the character of

Vinteuil. The ideas which are introduced in relation to Bergotte are further developed in the sections describing Vinteuil's music: Bergotte becomes the initial phase in the progression which leads to the composer of the sonata and ultimately to a level of genius capable of producing the septet. Once Marcel achieves an understanding of the septet, the ideas developed in conjunction with music are extended to encompass literature; it is at the moment of revelation in Le Temps retrouvé that the cycle is completed and Marcel is able to appreciate the message of the septet in relation to his growing understanding of literature.

Another childhood experience to which Marcel periodically returns throughout his life is his reaction on viewing the steeples at Martinville. The narration of the episode at Martinville depends upon the double perspective of the child who is receiving the initial impressions and the adult who looks back upon the experience with another understanding; Martinville is often viewed as Marcel's initial attempt at writing. The steeples evoke a lasting impression which is even recalled at the moment when Marcel recognizes that the joy which is intrinsic to the final passages of the septet is identical to the emotion he has experienced at certain crucial moments of his life, including Martinville. Vinteuil's music incarnates the inexplicable sense of well-being which is inherent to each of these "moments." It is the joy which the individual experiences when he approaches the essence of reality, an emotion which seems to indicate that

meaning is present and can become an integral part of our existence. Essences which lie hidden behind what can be readily seen by the individual, are what make our mortal existence worthwhile. When these essences become apparent, the possibility of a more fruitful existence becomes more accessible. However, it takes an individual of deep sensitivity to delve below appearances; it is the artist who translates these essences into a tangible form. At Martinville, Marcel recognizes the existence of something beyond the physical presence of the objects he observes but is unable to come to any understanding concerning the emotions he experiences. Although the importance of Vinteuil's music remains quite evident throughout the evolution of Marcel's thought, his impressions at Martinville reveal a greater maturity and a deeper sense of awareness than his initial exposure to the sonata. Marcel's initial reaction to the sonata is characterized by a confusion of impressions from which he is unable to achieve any comprehension; the music does not seem to have anything to offer him. Marcel's impressions of the music seem to be influenced by Swann's own limited perspective and many years must elapse before he is able to appreciate the import of Vinteuil's music. A comparison of the episode at Martinville and of Marcel's response to the sonata might provide some important insight into his early impressions concerning art, impressions which depend largely upon the environment's ability to stimulate the child's senses. Such a comparison will follow a bit later in this study.

Since music evokes a sensual rather than an intellectual response in the listener, it is quite natural that the discussions of Vinteuil's compositions are always associated with a character's experiences of love: Swann's relationship with Odette becomes associated with Vinteuil's sonata while the "petite phrase" in particular becomes the "national anthem" of their love; Marcel hears the septet at a concert he attends in order to confirm his suspicions concerning Albertine's relationship with Mlle Vinteuil; Vinteuil's music itself incarnates the passions, joys, and traumas which issue from the composer's love for his daughter. Even the eventual transcription of the musician's compositions is due to the efforts of Mlle Vinteuil's friend whose attempts at the desecration of the composer's memory end in a kind of filial love and veneration. However, the importance of love lies not in the relationship which is established between two individuals but in the character's ability to use this heightened sense of consciousness which he experiences, to bring his impressions of reality to a level of universal importance. In fact, emotions and sensations evoked by love which are not transcended but remain important only in themselves, end in a stagnant condition in the individual, as is evident in the character of Swann. Love produces a certain psychological state in the individual which allows him to be more responsive to the inner workings of his personality and offers him the possibility of a keener awareness of his own feelings and impressions--a condition essential to the

creation of a work of art; love offers the possibility of evoking a multitude of emotions and sensations which might otherwise remain unknown. Each of the relationships mentioned above will be discussed further in light of its implications to the evolution of Marcel's thoughts concerning art.

Music seems to serve a dual purpose: a composition is able to capture a moment in time and become so completely associated with it that this particular moment will be evoked each time the piece is heard. And yet, despite the importance of temporal reality to both the creation of the work and the listener's reaction to the music, reality is only a starting point. The composer realizes the ephemeral nature of all that lies within the confines of time and space and tries to transcend both. Art offers the possibility of establishing a link between two moments in time in order to achieve an extratemporal moment which is neither past, that is the moment when the composition was initially heard, nor present. Only through art can the individual transcend the confines of time and space and achieve immortality. Art offers the only glimpse into "l'au-delà" (III, 261), which the individual can ever hope to attain, and it is the artist who serves as guide through this world of the spirit. However, as Proust points out in the section devoted to the septet, each artist presents his own personal impressions of reality, his own particular glimpse or conception of essence. Only by coming into contact with as many artists as possible, can the individual hope to gain a more comprehensive view of

reality. Swann's impressions relating to Vinteuil's music never extend beyond its association with Odette and his love for her. The sonata never becomes the link between two moments in time, in order to achieve a metaphoric leap beyond time. Instead of using the music as a means to transcend time and space, he reduces it to a particular phrase which reminds him of a moment of happiness; instead of soaring through eternity, he confines himself to a complacent, loveless relationship. There is never any evolution in his thoughts concerning the music. He limits the possibilities which the music opens up for him and never considers that the composer may have discovered some truth which he chose to reveal through his compositions. Swann's response to Vinteuil's sonata is as sterile as his own existence. The first three sections devoted to Vinteuil's music remain static since they describe Swann's limited perspective concerning the sonata. In contrast, in the fourth section, Marcel realizes, that the feeling of joy which pervades the final passages of the septet and culminates in the motif of the triumphant ringing of the bells is indicative of a special resignation and understanding that has allowed the composer to overcome the sadness of his life to achieve immortality. It is in this section that the Narrator achieves a deeper understanding of the message inherent to Vinteuil's music and begins to apply it to his own life in order to realize his creative potential. Although Vinteuil reaches his point of maximum growth in the septet, this composition is the initial step in the evolution of Marcel's thoughts concerning

literature. His ultimate understanding of the importance of literature to a more meaningful existence is achieved in conjunction with an absolute understanding of the message inherent in the final passages of Vinteuil's septet.

The Narrator's literary career is closely linked to his understanding of Vinteuil's music. To Marcel, Vinteuil is the artist who has perfected the art of creation and attained the essence of reality through his work. The composer realizes that art must be a translation of his soul and in fact, his compositions are an incarnation of his innermost self and of his life. Vinteuil's joys and his traumas: the love of a father for his child, the suffering of a father who feels himself betrayed by his child, the quiet moments, the sleeping child, the frenzy of pain; all of these feelings and experiences are captured in his music and are expressed so clearly that they are easily recognizable by the listener. And yet, despite the fact that Marcel has realized that Vinteuil has invested his music with so much of his being, he still does not quite understand that his own work must also be a representation of his soul.

When the realization is reached at the end of Le Temps retrouvé, Marcel is ready to write the novel which we have just completed reading. His life has been a quest for "sa vocation" as an artist, a quest which has been delayed at various points in his life by numerous distractions, both amorous and social. Therefore, the book which he will write must by necessity be an account of his quest and the events and happenings which have

delayed the coming to fruition of his goal; his novel must portray the evolution of the artist. Until the moment of revelation, Marcel has been able to appreciate Vinteuil's music, experience it, perhaps even identify with it. Once his doubts concerning the nature of art have been reconciled, Marcel can summon his power of creation to commit to paper his reactions to the music. Vinteuil's music becomes Marcel's stimulus to creation; the turning point from which his ultimate revelation will spring. For Marcel, Vinteuil becomes the artist who has captured the essence of reality, the artist he must strive to emulate.

In the first section devoted to Vinteuil's music, Swann is introduced to the composer's sonata and begins to associate the happiness which he is experiencing in his relationship with Odette, with the composition which is being performed. Although he detects an air of mystery surrounding the "petite phrase," he is unable to detach himself from his own impressions of the music nor from the moment it recalls to him. For Swann, the sonata and the "petite phrase" in particular, become the incarnation of a moment in his life rather than the means to transcend the fixity of time and space and attain a state of extratemporality. He represents the early stages in the evolution from doubt to understanding, the point when impressions are not seen in terms of a universal equivalent, but are important in themselves.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Gérard Genette, Figures, III (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972 p. 237.

<sup>2</sup>Marcel Proust and Jacques Rivière, Correspondance 1914-1922, Philip Kolb, ed. NRF (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Benoist-Méchin, Retour à Marcel Proust (Paris: Pierre Amiot, 1957), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>Gérard Genette, "Proust Palimpsest," in Figures of Literary Discourse, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 204.

<sup>5</sup>Michel Butor, "Les 'moments' de Marcel Proust," in Essais sur les modernes. Idées NRF (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1964), p. 122.

<sup>6</sup>Jacques Rivière, "Marcel Proust et la tradition classique," in Les Critiques de notre temps et Proust, ed. Jacques Bersani (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1971) p. 31.

<sup>7</sup>Marcel Proust, A la Recherche du temps perdu (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pleiade, 1954), I, 533. All further quotes from this source will be cited within the text.

<sup>8</sup>Marcel Proust, Jean Santeuil (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pleiade, 1971), pp. 818-819.

<sup>9</sup>Michel Butor, "Les Oeuvres d'art imaginaires," in Essais sur les modernes. Idées NRF (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1964), p. 155.

<sup>10</sup>Georges Piroué, Proust et la musique du devenir (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1960), p. 89.

<sup>11</sup>Jean-Yves Tadié, Proust et le roman. Idées NRF (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1971), p. 227.

## Chapter 1

## The Tradition Begins:

Introduction to Vinteuil's Sonata

The evolution from doubt to understanding which characterizes the greater portion of A la Recherche and ends in the realization of Marcel's "vocation" as an artist is reflected, on a smaller scale, in the sections devoted to the music of Vinteuil. Just as Marcel draws various conclusions concerning the nature of art which are eventually refuted in the course of the narrative, so too, are various degrees of comprehension achieved by Swann and Marcel with reference to the sonata, until the moment when the Narrator understands that the septet incarnates a vision of truth which transcends the personal implications which have heretofore been imposed upon the music. The three sections devoted to the sonata are basically a depiction of several erroneous conceptions concerning the music which are then undermined and end in the presentation of the septet and the realization that through his music, the composer is able to transcend the confines of time and space and attain the essence of reality. The evolution of thought which occurs in the transition from Swann to Marcel reflects a similar development which occurs in the composer himself--a growth which is apparent in the greater maturity and understanding which is inherent to the septet. Music is intrinsically linked to the completion of Marcel's apprenticeship, and even the final revelation in Le Temps

retrouvé is given in conjunction with a greater appreciation of Vinteuil's vision. It is only after Marcel has achieved an understanding of the septet's message that he realizes the importance of art to a more meaningful existence and that the redemption of his own life depends upon his ability to devote himself to art.

In the first section devoted to the discussion of Vinteuil's music, Swann is introduced to a piano arrangement of the composer's sonata for piano and violin at one of Mme Verdurin's Wednesday evening gatherings, and begins to experience impressions of the sonata which are of a highly personal nature and reflect his growing preoccupation with Odette. Although Vinteuil's compositions incarnate a message which transcends the trivial pleasures of life, Mme Verdurin and her "petit clan" (I, 188) display an attitude toward music, and art in general, which was characteristic of the society which Proust frequented: music is not appreciated for its esthetic value, but is merely considered a fashionable and accepted form of entertainment. The surroundings from which the sonata emerges reflect the attitude of doubt and confusion concerning art which characterizes Swann's life and Marcel's early years--the early stages in the process of evolution to the fulfillment of Marcel's vocation. Each time the young pianist sits down at the piano at one of her gatherings, Mme Verdurin is given the opportunity to go through the "petite scène" (I, 206) which is intended to prove her appreciation and understanding of music. However, the effect which the music

supposedly produces upon her is typical of the superficiality with which she approaches art; the music does not speak to her soul but produces a physical indisposition: "Je n'ai pas envie à force de pleurer de me fiche un rhume de cerveau avec névralgies faciales" (I, 206). Her scene parodies the message inherent to the "petite phrase" and an understanding of the importance of art in the life of the individual. The clan seems to be more interested in the "petite scène" itself than in the music that is being introduced. Those members that are present express regret that those who were absent have missed the mistress' performance rather than that of the musical composition: "Et le lendemain on donnait des regrets à ceux qui n'avaient pas pu venir en leur disant que la scène avait été encore plus amusante que d'habitude" (I, 206). In Mme Verdurin's group, the mistress' scene is always applauded rather than the music. They demonstrate the confusion which exists concerning where the emphasis should be placed in life. Although the music speaks to the soul and incarnates the innermost feelings and impressions of the composer, the physical effect which the sonata produces on Mme Verdurin is always emphasized: "C'est justement l'andante qui me casse bras et jambes" (I, 206). Mme Verdurin has gone through her act so many times that she has reached the point where she actually believes it herself: "Peut-être aussi, à force de dire qu'elle serait malade, y avait-il des moments où elle ne se rappelait plus que c'était un mensonge et prenait une âme de malade" (I, 207). It is in the midst of all of this

artificiality that Proust introduces us to Vinteuil's sonata for piano and violin and begins his discussion of music.

The amusement which the clan exhibits at Mme Verdurin's performance is representative of the misguided emphasis which prevails in relation to music throughout much of the discussions of Vinteuil's compositions: any attempt to achieve an understanding of the music is viewed as secondary to its ability to be linked to a moment in time which is evoked each time the composition is heard. In fact, as the narrative progresses, the importance of Vinteuil's "petite phrase" will not rest on its esthetic potential, nor in the message it may incarnate, but on its association with Swann's love for Odette. The sonata is completely detached from any connection with the composer and does not act as a link between two moments in time in order to achieve a metaphoric leap to an extratemporal moment. By reducing the sonata to the confines of time and space, which in itself is contrary to the nature of music, Mme Verdurin, her clan, and even Swann, are limiting the possibility of attaining a state of rejuvenation through art; they become trapped in sterility and degeneration: "...La société que Proust s'est plu à évoquer est faite exclusivement d'individus en proie au vieillissement et à la mort. Leur lente dégradation n'est compensée par aucun apport de vie nouvelle, par aucune naissance" (Benoist-Méchin, p. 170). The moral stagnation which results from the clan's attitude concerning the sonata is in complete

contrast to Proust's conception of music having the "pouvoir de résurrection" (Benoist-Méchin, p. 192).

Initially, Swann is intrigued by the secret which he feels the music possesses. Since the artist expresses the innermost depths of his soul in his composition Swann would like to discover what could have been the cause which resulted in the creation of the "petite phrase" which has so impressed him. He seems particularly interested in discovering "ce qu'avait pu signifier pour lui (Vinteuil) la petite phrase" (I, 212). By uncovering these facts he could quite possibly deepen his own understanding of the music and uncover its mystery. However, any attempts to delve deeper into the subject are merely met with a sarcastic retort by Mme Verdurin: "Tiens, c'est amusant, je n'avais jamais fait attention; je vous dirai que je n'aime pas beaucoup chercher la petite bête et m'égarer dans des pointes d'aiguilles; on ne perd pas son temps à couper les cheveux en quatre ici, ce n'est pas le genre de la maison" (I, 213). This comment sums up the character of the "clan" perfectly. Mme Verdurin denies the importance of going beyond what can be readily seen and understood; she rejects what is most important, the realization that the music is an incarnation of the essence of reality in favor of a superficial understanding of the sonata. Any appreciation which they might claim to have for the arts is merely for appearance's sake. It is ironic that they should profess such an admiration for Vinteuil and yet not know anything about him. Mme Verdurin, her clan, and society in

general represent all that stands in opposition to the message of "petite phrase." The mistress typifies all that is superficial and materialistic, while the phrase points to a transcendent reality grounded in essences. In fact, the two juxtapose the two opposing conceptions of art between which Marcel will fluctuate throughout his life: is art the incarnation of a spiritual reality or an extension of life itself? This dichotomy between spirituality and materialism may be further developed so that Mme Verdurin's position becomes that of Swann himself while the "petite phrase" evolves into Vinteuil's septet and his message of joy. Vinteuil and Swann personify the two possibilities open to Marcel: the world or the realm of art and creation; they represent the two poles in the evolution of Marcel's thought:

Car c'est là toute la question, posée d'un bout à l'autre du roman: peut-on sortir du plan de l'existence pour accéder à celui de la création? Qui a raison, de Vinteuil-Elstir ou de Swann-Charlus? C'est entre ces deux groupes que passe la ligne qui départage les personnages en élus ou rejetés, en créateurs et non-créateurs. Et entre eux erre le héros, attiré par les uns puis par les autres, sommé de faire son choix et incapable de s'y résoudre lui-même, jusqu'au jour où les réminiscences enfin comprises opèrent en lui le salut et le contraignent au choix: il sera du côté d'Elstir et de Vinteuil et il tournera le dos à Swann-Charlus, qui s'abîme dans sa déchéance et son irréalité.<sup>1</sup>

Once Marcel surmounts his own weaknesses in Le Temps retrouvé and is able to reconcile his doubts, there is no longer any need for the Swann-Charlus<sup>2</sup> grouping: "Le roman n'a désormais plus besoin de cette incarnation d'une tentation esthétique qui se

trouve surmontée" (Rousset, p. 110). In the course of his development, Marcel outgrows one grouping and enters the realm of the other. Vinteuil becomes the ideal, the artist who has attained the essence of reality.

In keeping with the palimpsestic quality mentioned earlier, both Swann and Vinteuil may be considered extensions of Marcel's own personality: Serge Doubrowsky writes: "Tout lui est donné par autrui."<sup>3</sup> Marcel's existence is defined through his interaction with others and it is only by coalescing several characters that we achieve a sense of totality: "No object, thought, or person can be grasped directly in its totality, but must rather be apprehended successively, from various fragmented viewpoints."<sup>4</sup> In conjunction with Vinteuil, Swann becomes a kind of alter ego who shies away from dedicating his life to any particular goal and reduces art to its purely personal and emotional level; he incarnates the possibility of failure. In contrast, Vinteuil is able to raise his own impressions to a universal level in order to make them comprehensible to all. Swann and Vinteuil each have their respective functions in the realization of Marcel's vocation; each represents a stage in his development.

The reader's introduction to the music of Vinteuil does not coincide with that of Swann since when the pianist sits down to play a piano arrangement of the composer's famous sonata, Swann recognizes a piece that he had heard performed a year earlier. Since the music is not yet related to any moment in time, it

still remains a part of the sphere of "pure music." Swann recalls having been enchanted by the melody at an earlier time and not having been able to identify it; the composition is not yet related to any personal experience. However, the music now becomes associated to this particular period in his life and becomes the leitmotif of his love for Odette. There will be countless performances of the sonata in their mutual presence which will reinforce the feeling that the music is associated to their love.

Swann's initial reaction to the music is limited to externals so that he is unable to descend to any great depths of comprehension; he is impressed exclusively by the technical aspects of the composition: "Il n' avait goûté que la qualité matérielle des sons" (I, 208). Swann's appreciation of the purely materialistic quality is typical of his superficial approach to art. However, the imagery is already beginning to lose its solidity and concreteness since the sounds are now "sécrétés par les instruments" (I, 208); in an attempt to reflect the immaterial nature of the music, the imagery now describes the sounds as having achieved a state of liquidity. As the narrative continues the language used to describe the sonata will become progressively less concrete as Proust attempts to imitate the timeless and spiritual quality of the music. A definite problem arises here since how can an art form which defies the limits of time and space be depicted through language. The problem becomes further aggravated since Proust's descriptions are subjected to

the scrutiny of the critic who in turn must commit his ideas to writing. With each step the sonata deviates from its state of pure music as a result of the intervention of the intellect. The idea of interplay between two different lines of music being played simultaneously helps to reduce the sense which develops at the thought of the "résistante (et) dense" (I, 208) part of the violin and "la masse de la partie de piano" (I, 208). Even if the imagery used to describe the form of the sonata remains of a physical nature, Proust suggests the immaterial element that lies hidden within the depths through the fluid and undefined image of the sea. The sea brings with it connotations of mystery and hidden ideas, an ambiance further reinforced by the fact that the composition has shifted from a more dramatic major key, to a more subdued and mysterious minor key. Something of greater significance lies below the surface which seeks "à s'élever en un clapotement liquide" (I, 208); it is the essence which strives to surface from within the phrases of the sonata. The sea also introduces the idea of confusion which is especially emphasized through the "agitation" (I, 208) of the waves. The confusion is reminiscent of Swann's response to the music and ultimately of Marcel himself; it is the doubt and confusion characteristic of a developing mind. As the passage continues, the imagery progresses to an even more immaterial state. The moonlight which shines upon this tumultuous sea becomes transformed into the fragrance of the roses. Each of the senses has been stimulated, evoking an impression which is as spontaneous as a reflex; a

response which may appear confused and yet is the only purely musical experience, one not ordered by the intellect. The initial response which Swann has toward the sonata is impulsive and highly unconscious, "sans pouvoir nettement distinguer un contour, donner un nom à ce qui lui plaisait" (I, 208). He is neither able to logically explain his reaction nor analyse it theoretically. He tries to subject his response to some ordering process so that he may then distinguish "la phrase ou l'harmonie" (I, 208), something that can be recalled at a later time so that the same impression may be conjured up again; he attempts to bring his impressions into the realm of time and space so that they might be retrieved at will. In a later section, Marcel will attempt to reproduce the joy he experienced as he stumbles on the uneven pavement stones by repeatedly rocking between these same stones. In each instance the subject strives to impose a degree of permanence onto a fleeting moment during which he comes into contact with the essence of reality. The phrase of music has had the appropriate effect upon Swann since it has evoked a sensual rather than intellectual response within him. Since Swann does not have any technical background in music, theoretically his impressions of the music are confused. And yet, this very ignorance is a blessing since it allows his reaction to be pure and uncontaminated, devoid of any admiration that might be occasioned solely by the form of the composition.

The listener is already able to identify some of the progressions that the notes assume. Although the form is beginning

to undergo a kind of ordering process, the impressions are being evoked at such a pace, and so many lines of music are working simultaneously, that it becomes impossible for them to be completely formed before the next group emerges. The motifs flow together and merge like the waters of the sea so that they are no longer distinguishable and make it impossible for them to be remembered and named. In its pure state music defies all rules of logic. In an attempt to stabilize and control these fleeting impressions, the intellect develops an intermediary state, the metaphor, so that a point of reference can be established. The impressions cannot be distinguished according to their actual identity, but through the pleasure which they evoke in the listener. In a similar manner, the "moment" of the uneven pavement stones is not defined by the similar rocking motion which Marcel deliberately repeats, but by the sense of joy which is evoked within him. It is only through memory that any amount of comprehension can be achieved; memory is "un ouvrier qui travaille à établir des fondations durables au milieu des flots" (I, 209). Memory produces "des fac-similés" (I, 209) against which the motifs that follow can be compared. It is the work of memory which enables the music to be described through words and enter the realm of literature. These facsimiles produced by the memory are of a secondary order, copies tarnished by the intellect in an attempt to make tangible what is intangible. Therefore, when these motifs reappear they will no longer appear to be completely foreign. Memory serves the same function as

language since it gives a dimension of permanence to the music allowing it to be studied and scrutinized through the intellect. In order to achieve a greater degree of comprehension, Swann transfers the impressions from the realm of the spirit which is "sine materia" (I, 209), to one that has form; it no longer evokes an impression in the listener, but thought. The music is now viewed as an object, "une chose" (I, 209) that has physical properties and is not merely essence: "Il s'en représentait l'étendue, les groupements symétriques, la graphie, la valeur expressive; il avait devant lui cette chose qui n'est plus de la musique pure, qui est du dessin, de l'architecture, de la pensée, et qui permet de se rappeler la musique" (I, 209). The music has left the realm of pure music and can now be recalled and even described through language; it is being subjected to the limits of time and space. Once the music has left the realm of essence and has entered that of construction, one is able to reproduce the sounds of the music but not the initial impressions it has evoked. The pleasure stems from the very essence of the music, from its spirit making it impossible for it to be reduced to the actual configuration of notes; it is the joy which accompanies creation: "Cette allégresse créatrice, que Proust nous dépeint si bien, accompagne toujours l'apparition de la beauté...Comme l'a très bien noté Bergson, 'la joie annonce toujours que la vie a réussi, qu'elle a gagné du terrain, qu'elle a un accent triomphal...Partout où il y a de la joie, il y a création; et plus riche est la création, plus profonde est la joie'"

(Benoist-Méchin, p. 140). Marcel is likewise able to reproduce the motion of rocking on the uneven stones, but is unable to voluntarily reproduce the sense of joy which accompanies his original faltering steps. Only while the composition remains "sine materia" can it be considered pure music.

Since Proust realizes the inadequacy of language for the transmission of thoughts and impressions he uses the metaphor as a means to communicate what is immaterial and intangible. Through this technique, instead of depending upon one word which can never give an exact meaning, it relies upon the relationship between two words or expressions (Piroué, p. 264). As was mentioned earlier, Genette describes the metaphor as the "stylistic equivalent of involuntary memory." Instead of the union of two moments in time in order to achieve an extratemporal moment, metaphor becomes the link between two thoughts to describe what is intangible. The use of the metaphor is intrinsic to the discussions of Vinteuil's music since all descriptions of music are always given in terms of another concept. Since music is an art form which by nature depends upon the transmission of sensations and impressions through auditory impulses which defy the limits of time and space, it cannot be directly translated into language, a highly intellectual and ordered medium. In order for these impressions to be expressed through language, these sensual responses must be transferred into the realm of thought. This transition is made through the metaphor: with reference to the development of the sonata and

the description of its progression, the "petite phrase" comes to be identified with the image of a woman; a spiritual concept is described in terms of a physical form.

In the midst of the confusion of impressions there arises the motif which will become the leitmotif of his love for Odette; it is the first appearance of the "petite phrase." This motif is distinguishable among the sounds that have otherwise merged together. Swann is able to distinguish it "au-dessus des ondes sonores" (I, 209) as he is overcome by an undefinable sense of joy and pleasure which is completely new to him; the phrase allows him to experience "des voluptés particulières" (I, 209) as it invites him to partake in the pleasures available through art. This sensation of joy and happiness with which Swann is filled is typical of the feeling which Marcel experiences at various moments in the course of the narrative when the possibility of creation and of devoting himself to his work seems accessible to him; it is a reflection of the joy which permeates all of Vinteuil's compositions and culminates in the triumphant ringing of the bells in the final passages of the septet. This joy is evoked as the artist approaches the essence of reality and attains an extratemporal moment through a state of communion with the composer. Although Swann is offered the same possibility, he misinterprets this sense of joy and reduces it to a purely personal level allowing the phrase to take on the characteristics of the woman he will love; the phrase becomes that woman for him. He has a need for it: "il eut besoin d'elle" (I, 210), a

longing similar to that which might be evoked by the beloved. The phrase is then actually associated with a woman; a chance meeting has brought them together, but she already offers the channel to enrich his life: "Il aime déjà " (I, 110) both the phrase itself and the picture of the woman which it embodies, and yet "il ignore jusqu'au nom (I, 110) of the piece of music and the woman which have so enraptured him. It is ironic that Swann should be introduced to the possibility of a more meaningful existence, in the midst of so much artificiality. Although the sonata is now described in terms of an indefinite woman, as a result of his limited understanding Swann will reduce the importance of the phrase even further by associating it with Odette and eventually to his loss of her favor. The lack of understanding and the misconceptions which surround Swann's views of the music reflect the initial stages of Marcel's apprenticeship, including the distractions he faces in society and love, while Odette prefigures all of his other loves (Genette, Figures, III, 88; Rousset, p. 106). Swann is unaware that the physical beauty of the woman, of the stranger who has enticed him through the music is in actuality, the transcendent beauty of art, which becomes the means to go beyond the banality of the society he has been frequenting in order to attain a greater understanding into the essence of reality; art offers the possibility of ameliorating the state of degeneration he has been falling into.

Although lately Swann has only been concerned with superficial pastimes, with "la poursuite de satisfactions

quotidiennes" (I, 210), the possibility for a more meaningful existence lies latent within him: it is to this innate sense that the sonata addresses itself. Swann has been falling into a kind of mental stagnation through his concern with trivialities at the expense of ideals. Lately, he has been experiencing almost a total renunciation of what he calls "un but idéal" (I, 210) in his life. The sonata offers the possibility of reconfirming its existence, and its availability to him; the sonata offers the means to attain this ideal goal. Proust presents a contrast between the motifs which are all "sine materia" and Swann's "poursuite de satisfactions quotidiennes"; Swann's existence serves to emphasize the futility of a life without art or of a life in which the significance of art has been undermined: "Deprived of this beneficent grounding in essences, abandoned to intermittency, to evanescence, things become arid and wilt, and--near them, but separated from them--the self languishes, loses its taste for the world, and forgets itself" (Genette, "Proust Palimpsest," p. 204). The lack of fulfillment which characterizes Swann's life is similar to that experienced by Marcel before his introduction to the septet. Swann is so near to the meaning of the phrase and yet never uncovers its mystery. He represents the first stage in the development of the Narrator's artistic potential: although Vinteuil transcends his impressions in order to raise them to a level of universal significance, Swann reduces art to its purely personal meaning: he never establishes any link between his own

feelings and those of the composer. He dissociates the composition from its origins so that sonata becomes "their" piece; he even undermines the importance of the entire composition in relation to the "petite phrase." The music has the potential to add meaning to his moral barrenness and to act as a rejuvenative force. Music holds the essence of reality, a transcendent reality, which provides a life-giving force; it will also be a consolation to him in his grief. For, in fact, although Swann is experiencing very positive reactions and emotions while listening to the sonata at this moment, a time will come when the sonata will contribute to his grief and desolation. Swann's negative feelings toward the music stem from its association with an ephemeral thing; by linking the sonata to one happy moment, he limits the possibility of attaining the joy intrinsic to the music. Proust emphasizes the degeneration of Swann's existence through the constant juxtaposition of opposites; Proust underlines his point by contrasting what Swann's life has become to what it should be: "la sécheresse morale" of his existence in contrast to "l'influence électorale" (I, 211) of the music. Now since he has been able to become enamoured "pour une phrase musicale sembla un instant devoir amorcer chez Swann la possibilité d'une sorte de rajeunissement" (I, 210). He may be able to achieve the "rajeunissement" by recapturing some of the ideals which he had somehow lost track of--a process which is never completed by Swann but continues in the character of Marcel.

The individual's perception of the universe depends upon the opinion which he holds of himself; the macrocosm becomes a reflection of the microcosm. Therefore, Swann "ne se sentant plus d'idées élevées dans l'esprit, il avait cessé de croire à leur réalité, sans pouvoir non plus la nier tout à fait" (I, 210). Since he is no longer conscious of them in his own being, Swann feels that they no longer exist in themselves. This becomes one of the first indications of the doubts which will plague Marcel concerning the nature of art: does art really incarnate a spiritual reality and do these "idées élevées" really exist? However, these ideas lie latent within his own soul so that instinctively he knows that their existence cannot be denied even though they belong to an order that defies logical analysis. This section is characterized by the doubts and distractions which assume such an important role in the course of the narrative; it typifies the misguided direction which Marcel's understanding of art takes through the greater portion of the novel. Swann's preoccupation with ephemeral pleasures prevents him from devoting any time to what might be of interest to him, including art, which he truly appreciates; he never even finishes his study of Vermeer. Going into society is the obstacle and yet he has fallen into such a state of stagnation, that he even makes excuses for his style of living; society distracts him from devoting himself to anything but the most trivial preoccupations. If he has accepted an invitation he must in fact attend; if he does not actually call, he must at least leave his card. Even in

conversation he is no longer willing to delve deep into the essence of any topic. Swann is degenerating to such an extent, that not only is there no longer any pursuit of knowledge nor of his ideals, but he has reached the point that there is even a denial of any knowledge which might appear to have any intrinsic worth. He limits his comments to superficial details which, although they may be interesting in themselves, do not reveal any of his own inner feelings; there is almost a fear of being too open. He hides what he actually knows from society, and refrains from interpreting or shedding any insight upon a topic of interest; his conversation reflects his superficial existence. Perhaps Swann has so entirely lost contact with his own true self that he cannot express the sensations which lie deep within him or is not even aware of their existence. Swann continues to consistently detach himself from the realm of art for if art may be considered the expression of an impression, Swann goes so far as to deny his own impressions. However, the instinct of the artist is so essential a part of him that occasionally, perhaps unconsciously, "malgré tout" (I, 210), a more profound remark does escape: "il se laissait aller à émettre un jugement sur une oeuvre, sur une manière de comprendre la vie" (I, 210-211). When this does happen, he checks himself by giving an ironic tone to his words. Language is used as a kind of defense mechanism, a mask to cover the true import of his words. Language, which is often, by nature, inadequate for the expression of ideas, is

deliberately used as a means to disguise the true meaning of his thoughts.

Proust compares Swann's moral sickness to an actual physical indisposition. The possibility of an amelioration in his psychological state is described in terms of a patient's recovery from a physical ailment. Ironically, Mme Verdurin needs a physical remedy to recover from the indisposition which the sonata causes in her. The "petite phrase" and the possibility of a more meaningful existence which it embodies act as a remedial force just as "un régime différent, quelquefois une évolution organique" (I, 211) might have a salutary effect on an ailing individual. In the sonata Swann is able to detect the presence of that transcendent reality which he had lost sight of, a reality which would not have been available to him if he had not had the seeds of it already sown deep within his soul. The "petite phrase" acts as a stimulus toward a life dedicated to art. Just as a physical remedy increases bodily strength so that the patient can devote himself more wholeheartedly to life, so too the phrase should act as a boost to his moral strength and give him the incentive to apply himself to a more productive existence. The music offers him a kind of spiritual rebirth after his moral sterility; it incarnates the essence of reality which lies below the trivialities and details he has heretofore been concerned with.

Proust gives very little description of the music itself in terms of theoretical concepts. He describes "une note haute

longuement tenue pendant deux mesures" (I, 211), and then returns to the metaphor of the woman met by chance on the street. Swann's inability to recall the phrase when he is trying to discover the identity of the composition is reminiscent of Proust's technique in evoking the music in the course of the narrative: Swann remembers the pleasure he experienced upon hearing the piece, rather than the notes themselves. Proust presents the impressions which the music evokes within the listener, rather than a theoretical description of the composition. The reappearance of the "petite phrase" is likened to the recognition of a stranger whom one had found particularly appealing on an earlier occasion. "Un rideau sonore" (I, 211), the form imposed upon the fleeting impressions hides "le mystère de son incubation" (I, 211), the evocation of the essence of the phrase. "Mystère" emphasizes the spiritual quality of this message and its incomprehensibility to Swann. This more tangible image emphasizes the purely intangible and spiritual nature of the motif which is no longer compared to the fragrance of the rose but becomes the fragrance itself: "la phrase aérienne et odorante" (I, 211). Its individuality and particular traits make it plain that the motif is the incarnation of the artist's soul; the expression of Vinteuil's impressions. It is not a language developed by the reason but a communication of essences: music is a communication of souls which leads to a union between the composer and his listener, a concept which will be further developed with reference to Vinteuil's septet. Its message is

marked by a "sourire" (I, 211) which grows out of an optimistic outlook for the future and a hope for happiness. The phrase incarnates a joy which is more permanent than the happiness he derives from its association with Odette. Swann never participates in the joy which is intrinsic to Vinteuil's music. There is something which lies buried deep within this phrase which goes beyond everyday understanding, something which delves deep into the soul and spirit of the composer and has now evoked a similar emotion within him. Although a link is established between Swann and Vinteuil as a result of the emotions they both experience, Swann eventually separates himself from the composer and superimposes his own feelings upon the music to the total exclusion of any deeper meaning. There is something so original about this phrase of music that separates it from all that he has ever experienced, which is indicative of the individuality of the artist, and of his vision of reality: "Et elle était si particulière, elle avait un charme si individuel et qu'aucun autre n'aurait pu remplacer" (I, 211-212). The uniqueness which is characteristic of the music suggests Marcel's doubt concerning the existence of the individual. Vinteuil's septet, and the Narrator's thoughts on the composer's "patrie inconnue" (III, 257) will serve as proof that the individual does in fact exist.

While trying to familiarize himself with the life of the composer, Swann learns that "Vinteuil était menacé d'aliénation mentale. Et il assurait qu'on pouvait s'en apercevoir à certains passages de sa sonate" (I, 214). A contradiction is raised

here: if music does not follow any of the logical patterns which are the basis of language, how is one to assume that the deviation from these patterns can be reflected in Vinteuil's music? And yet, since music, and art in general, reflect the artist's psyche, shouldn't the composer's tendency toward insanity be seen in his music? Perhaps the breakdown of logical patterns of cognition which constitutes madness should not be considered an obstacle to the artist. That which is illogical brings him closer to the spiritual world and allows him to delve deeper into himself. Since the individual who is mad does not experience the need to impose order upon his thoughts, an artist suffering from such a disorder might be more likely to express his impressions spontaneously than one who is governed by rational thought processes.

In the structure of this section, true appreciation lies between two exhibitions of Mme Verdurin's artificiality; the essence lies in the midst of reality. It is the ability to transcend this reality which is most important. The possibility which a thing has of going beyond itself and of entering into another order makes the real world tolerable; the possibility of finding a value, another meaning to what might seem superficial, and of discovering the essence of reality below the physical world, makes our existence seem worthwhile. Art could help Swann go beyond society's artificiality. The metaphor is this ability to go beyond itself: "ce bondissement de l'image hors d'elle-même, ce fil d'or lancé de l'une à l'autre."<sup>5</sup> This is

what brings the real world into conformity with that of the spirit. The metaphor enables the images to liberate themselves from the limitations of time and space, from "la fixité" (Picon, p. 135) in which they must subsist in the real world in order to attain an extratemporal moment which is the union of past and present but a liberation from both. In music this moment is achieved when the impressions of both the composer and the listener are transcended and a universal level is achieved; it is the moment when the music no longer is the incarnation of neither the impressions of the composer nor of the listener, but of those of humanity: "Que ce monde du réel puisse devenir--en restant ce monde, ce monde même--le monde de l'imaginaire, c'est la possibilité qui fonde en même temps la signification de la vie et la signification de l'oeuvre" (Picon, p. 135). It is because of this ability to transcend itself that the real can become the spiritual: "Et c'est parce que la réalité se prête au jeu métaphorique qu'elle peut devenir l'oeuvre de l'esprit" (Picon, p. 135).

Swann has been attracted and seduced by the "petite phrase" but has not yet uncovered its intrinsic worth or its hidden meaning. What he is interested in is its connotative or associative meaning: for Swann, the sonata's importance lies in its ability to recall his love for Odette. He is thus far completely unreceptive to the fact that this piece of music represents the composer's impressions of reality, and that it was composed quite separate and distinct from any thought of his

relationship with Odette. The sonata incarnates something far deeper and more profound than this relationship. Swann does not realize that the artist, in this case, the composer Vinteuil, transcends his own impressions in order to achieve a universal truth which in turn will be recognized by the listener. Swann imposes his feelings on the piece, but limits himself to those related to ephemeral satisfactions instead of the deeply rooted truths of the soul. Swann makes absolutely no attempt to understand the message which Vinteuil sought to convey through his music. In fact in his limited scope of understanding, Odette is able to dissuade him from searching for the entire composition: "notre morceau," (I, 219) is sufficient for them. Swann is particularly upset at the thought that although the phrase speaks to him of his love, it is actually oblivious of their existence.

In this section Swann has been introduced to Vinteuil's sonata and by associating it with the love for a woman has misinterpreted the important role that the music should play in his life. As his relationship with Odette progresses the "petite phrase" and his passion for this particular woman will become synonymous; the phrase will be "l'air national de leur amour" (I, 218). Despite the important role which Proust attributes to love in the life of the artist, Swann's love for Odette will become a deterrent rather than a stimulus toward creation since he always places the emphasis upon life (Rousset, p. 108) rather than the transcendence of life in order to achieve immortality. No

attempt is ever made by Swann to make the metaphoric leap beyond his own impressions in order to transcend the confines of time and space. The sonata is never raised to a universal level which attains the essence of reality, but is reduced to a particular moment in time filled with a sense of personal gratification. For Swann, the happiness which is evoked within him by the sonata is never recognized as the joy which accompanies creation and offers the possibility of a more meaningful existence. Swann experiences a temporary happiness which disappears as quickly as Odette's interest in him. Swann represents the initial stages of Marcel's evolution as an artist, the years of error and procrastination before the final revelation and the dispelling of his doubts, while Swann's relationship with Odette will exemplify all of Marcel's subsequent loves (Genette, Figures, III, 88; Rousset, p. 106). In the second section devoted to Vinteuil's music, the sonata no longer incarnates the happiness which Swann experiences as a result of his relationship with Odette, but serves to intensify the grief he feels at the loss of her favor: as their relationship deteriorates, the strength of its association with the sonata is not shaken, and is able to evoke a series of memories which will be extremely painful.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Jean Rousset, "Notes sur la structure d'"A la Recherche du temps perdu'," in Les Critiques de notre temps et Proust, ed. Jacques Bersani (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1971), p. 110.

<sup>2</sup>Rousset links these two characters in his study, since he feels that Charlus acts as Swann's "double" throughout the narrative.

<sup>3</sup>Serge Doubrovsky, La Place de la madeleine (Paris: Mercure de France, 1974), p. 56.

<sup>4</sup>Keith Cohen, Film and Fiction: The Dynamics of Exchange (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 164.

<sup>5</sup>Gaetan Picon, Lectures de Proust. Idées NRF (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1963), p. 134.

## Chapter 2

## Illusions Dispelled

The second section devoted to Vinteuil's music serves to negate Swann's original impressions concerning the sonata and follows the pattern which is repeated throughout the greater part of A la Recherche: in the course of the narrative, Marcel, or in this case Swann, who is operating as the Narrator's double, comes to various conclusions concerning art, love, and life in general, which are eventually contradicted as he proceeds to the fulfillment of "sa vocation" as an artist. During the evening party given by the Verdurins, an undefinable sense of happiness, as exemplified by the "sourire" of the "petite phrase," which was heretofore known by Swann is evoked by Vinteuil's sonata. However, as a result of his limited perspective, the nature of his pleasure is misunderstood by Swann, who attributes it to the association which exists between the phrases and his relationship with Odette rather than to the joy which accompanies creation, and is characteristic of Vinteuil's music. In the section devoted to the soirée given by Mme de Sainte-Euverte, the sonata evokes pain and suffering within Swann since he continues to associate the music with his beloved, although his love affair with Odette has come to an end. As a result of his tendency to emphasize his personal impressions of the sonata, the music comes to exemplify an emotion which is contradictory to what Vinteuil had actually intended: the joy which the composer experiences as

he approaches the essence of reality is reduced to the sorrow which Swann feels at the loss of something ephemeral. The appearance of this familiar phrase of music acts as a stimulus for involuntary memory and before he is even able to identify the composition, Swann is transported back in time to the moment when he was united with Odette. At the appearance of the "petite phrase" all the memories which he had managed to keep in check, flow in spite of him. These memories are evoked as a result of the feeling that the time in which they were happy together has once again been reinstated. Swann has undergone an unconscious movement into the past through which "il retrouva tout" (I, 345). Since he considers the phrase of music to be synonymous with his love for Odette, when the phrase appears, Odette, too, seems to appear. The pure music addresses itself to his heart and his initial and spontaneous reaction is one of anxiety. This is the true reaction since it is evoked before he has any chance to undergo any process of intellectualization. The phrase touches "les profondeurs de son être" (I, 345) and releases all the memories which his intellect has tried to keep buried deep within him. These memories are compared to birds slumbering during the night and awakened by the bright sunshine of a new day, spreading their wings to sing joyfully of the new dawn. The image evoked through this comparison suggests that the phrase incarnates something more than the pain which Swann associates with the music; it anticipates "l'éternel matin" (III, 250) which is evoked in the final passages of the composer's septet.

Although the sonata serves as a stimulus for involuntary memory, Swann does not attain an extratemporal moment nor does he participate in the joy which Marcel experiences under similar circumstances. The link which Swann achieves with the past does not offer him the possibility to transcend his personal impressions and establish a union or sense of communion with Vinteuil. The music does not serve as a means to escape from the confines of time and space, but captures a moment which is recalled each time the phrase is heard. Even in the next section, when the music no longer evokes painful memories the sonata still incarnates a moment in time associated with Odette. Therefore, since the sonata has always been associated with happiness, when its first strains are played, through the force of memory this same happiness and all the impressions which were connected with it are once again unconsciously evoked. However, the realization that this happiness no longer exists ends in desolation. Upon hearing the familiar notes of the "petite phrase" Swann is afflicted by such an acute emotional suffering that it is transferred into his physical being: "Cette apparition lui fut une si déchirante souffrance qu'il dut porter la main à son coeur" (I, 345). The juxtaposition of opposites serves to reinforce the intensity of the emotions and the differences between the two periods of time: "son infortune présente" (I, 345) is placed in conjunction to "les refrains oubliés du bonheur" (I, 345). Since the music is still associated with this former period of his life and the happiness

which was characteristic of it, his present suffering is now intensified even further. Swann misinterprets the meaning of the phrase's message, and mistakenly looks back to the moments of happiness evoked by the music, rather than to a future filled with the joy which accompanies creation.

The past is evoked in all of its manifestations through the senses: "il revit," "il sentit" (I, 345) all the trifles which had made those days special for him. These feelings assume the same qualities as the music and possess that same volatile nature which is reminiscent of the fragrance of the roses; they have not been sullied through the imposition of any external form upon them. For Swann, it is not the phrase of music that has permeated the room, but Odette herself and subsequently, all his reactions to this woman, are transferred to the musical composition. The joy and anticipation which Swann initially feels at the expectation of the "petite phrase" are reminiscent of the "l'exaltation" (I, 345) of the violin part awaiting the arrival of this phrase. Swann's happiness however, results from the physical connotations he has imposed upon the phrase, whereas the violin reflects the emotions which Vinteuil experiences as he approaches the essence of reality. The existence of these two conflicting interpretations, once again points to Marcel's inability to reconcile his doubts concerning the importance of art in his life, and his recurring skepticism as to whether art should be considered materialistic or spiritual in nature. Swann is that part of Marcel's personality which limits his

interpretation of Vinteuil's music to its purely personal level without understanding the role that his impressions ought to play in the realization of the artist's vocation; he seems unaware that these impressions, when raised to a universal level, provide the material for the artist's work. In contrast, Vinteuil remains Proust's conception of the perfect artist, the individual who has transcended his own pain and suffering in order to attain the essence of reality.

Swann's limited perspective and misguided conclusions concerning Vinteuil's music reflect the errors and distractions which are characteristic of Marcel during the years of his "apprenticeship" and typify the initial steps in the evolution of the Narrator's thought. Swann's preoccupation with the association which develops between the "petite phrase" and Odette, anticipates Marcel's relationships and the distractions which love and society will provide throughout his life. For Swann, there is no longer any separation between the "petite phrase" and his love of Odette: the phrase is "une déesse protectrice et confidente" (I, 348) who may be considered the patron saint of his love. She is the only one present who is completely aware of his love and of the pain and suffering which he is enduring; the only one who will speak to him of his love. Before the onset of the concert, Swann tries impatiently to escape from these surroundings which seem so unsympathetic to his suffering; he feels completely alone among this crowd of guests. No one is aware of his pain nor would they be particularly

sympathetic to his plight even if they were conscious of his suffering, since their only response might be merely to consider it a trivial matter. Swann is acutely affected by the thought that Odette is totally absent from these surroundings; she has never nor will she ever be a part of this milieu; these guests are totally oblivious of her existence. The "petite phrase" breaks through his isolation and speaks to him specifically of what he most wants to hear. He is no longer alone, since the phrase is there with him holding his memories fast.

The tragedy of Swann's happiness is that while it lasts he never believes that it will end: "Il avait cru qu'il pourrait s'en tenir là, qu'il ne serait pas obligé d'en apprendre les douleurs" (I, 345). During the period of his love, Swann felt that he would not have to move on, but could remain fixed in this moment of happiness and contentment. However, the passage of time is emphasized through the irony of their shifting roles which are juxtaposed within the same sentence. After having been almost annoyed at her constant importunities, Swann ends by becoming totally enslaved to Odette. With regard to their outlook on their meetings, at first the possibility of seeing each other every day is seen by Swann as "une cause d'ennuyeux dérangements" (I, 346); "un fastidieux tracas" (I, 346); whereas Odette sees it as "un désir passionné" (I, 346); "un délice" (I, 346). By the end of the sentence Odette "avait prise en dégout et définitivement rompue...cette habitude de se voir tous les jours" while "elle était devenue pour lui un si invincible et si

douloureux besoin" (I, 346). The juxtaposition of past and present allows Swann to see both points of view simultaneously: his past happiness becomes a reference point against which his present suffering can be compared. Although the union of these two moments should lead to the transcendence of both and to a moment which is neither past nor present, Swann becomes entrapped within his memories. The sensations and emotions he recalls remain important in themselves since he never realizes that the particular impressions and emotions which the individual experiences when raised to a level of universality become the expression of truth and the means to attain the essence of reality which remains beyond the limits of time and space: the "petite phrase" speaks to Swann of the possibility of achieving immortality through art, and in turn, immortalizes Vinteuil. Swann distances himself from his present to such an extent, that the "bonheur revécu" (I, 347) is more real than his actual state. It is no longer the past which must be recognized or recalled, but the present: "Et Swann aperçut, immobile en face de ce bonheur revécu, un malheureux qui lui fit pitié parce qu'il ne le reconnut pas tout de suite, si bien qu'il dut baisser les yeux pour qu'on ne vît pas qu'ils étaient pleins de larmes. C'était lui-même" (I, 347). The poignancy of this passage emphasizes the shift from happiness to desperation while Swann's "larmes" become an open expression of his wretchedness. He becomes so separated from reality, that it is almost as if this other individual is a rival of whom he is jealous. The past is

completely distinct and separate from the present and not merely a forestage of it.

Swann always views everything from a distance as if he were exempt from participating in the activities of the real world. Love is a passion which is one of "les plaisirs des gens" (I, 346); it is an emotion which others will experience but not himself. Once he has fallen in love, he honestly believes that he will not have to undergo any of the pain and suffering which others claim always accompanies it. In fact, at first he does not even recognize the "malheureux" who is staring him in the face. However, the short, staccato sentence: "C'était lui-même," serves to emphasize the closing in of these distances; all of these emotions eventually do touch him. Once again his moral and spiritual suffering are expressed through a physical action and the emotion is displaced to the real world: "Puis sa souffrance devenant trop vive, il passa sa main sur son front, laissa tomber son monocle, en essuya le verre" (I, 347). Through the gesture of removing his implement which improves physical sight, it is almost as if he would like to impair his vision of the internal pictures and halt the flow of memories which are becoming too painful. By wiping away the tears from his monocle he attempts to wipe away the thoughts which caused them.

Swann separates himself from the true meaning of the sonata by shifting his attention from the universality of the phrase's message in order to concentrate on his own personal impressions of it. He even removes the phrase from its musical context and

concentrates upon this one section of the music at the expense of the rest of the composition. The more Swann focuses upon his love and emphasizes the associative potential of the music, the more he limits his possibilities of comprehending the composer's message and prevents himself from achieving a more worthwhile existence. Swann constantly undermines the true meaning incarnated within a work of art by relating it to everyday circumstances: this is not only seen in his reaction to the music, but in the associations he makes between various individuals portrayed in the Masters' paintings and the people they resemble among his acquaintances. A distinction always remains between what the music actually expresses and Swann's impressions of it since his appreciation of the sonata never depends upon the composer's message.

Although Vinteuil's music incarnates the potential which the individual possesses to transcend time and approach the essence of reality, the sonata, with its "petite phrase" passes through all stages of time: it is performed in the present, it evokes the past for the listener, and it points to a future resignation--a stage which Swann will have achieved by the third section devoted to music. Each of the three sections devoted to Vinteuil's sonata typifies one of the three stages in the progression of Swann's emotions: the first episode is devoted to the happiness he experiences in his love affair with Odette; in the second episode, the happiness has turned to pain; and in the third episode, Swann has reconciled himself to the situation. By

the third section, Swann has made the full circle of his emotions and is enjoying a very comfortable existence with Odette. Although the movement in A la Recherche is essentially towards the future rather than to the past, Swann is never able to separate his impressions of the music from their amorous connotations nor from their link to a particular moment in time:

"La Recherche est tournée vers le futur, non vers le passé."<sup>1</sup>

The movement depends upon the following progressions: "à tel ou tel moment, le héros ne savait pas encore telle chose, il l'apprendra plus tard. Il était sous telle illusion, dont il finira par se défaire. D'où le mouvement des déceptions et des révélations, qui rythme toute la Recherche" (Deleuze, p. 10).

Swann and Odette continue to listen to "their" phrase and reminisce about the past without realizing that love and the impressions it evokes should be a stimulus to creation. The impressions which characterize Swann's conception of the sonata are in complete contrast to the intrinsic meaning of the work: the happiness which he initially experiences is based upon a particular moment in time rather than the escape from time; the pain he feels at the loss of Odette's favor is contradictory to the emotion which the individual experiences upon approaching the essence of reality; and, his eventual reconciliation is based on complacency rather than a true understanding of the composer's message. Love prevents Swann, and ultimately Marcel, from dedicating himself to his work with the sole difference that Marcel's misconceptions are eventually dispelled, and with his,

those of the reader who is liable to assume the veracity of the Narrator's ideas, whereas Swann remains trapped within his self-centered interpretation of the music. Swann never participates in the evolution from doubt to understanding which characterizes the development of Marcel's thought. Swann does not undergo any forward progression in his understanding of the message inherent to the sonata. Even at his point of maximum growth the sonata remains an incarnation of the beauty of nature and the means to recapture a particular period of his life during which he had been too distracted to appreciate his surroundings.

In the course of the narrative, this movement toward the future continues until that time when all Marcel's misconceptions and doubts will be dispelled and the moment of revelation becomes the Narrator's present. It is at this moment that the possibility of writing a book becomes a reality, so much so that it has entered the reader's present.

Although the sonata is a separate entity composed independently of any thought of Odette and Swann, through association and as a result of the many performances they have witnessed together, for Swann the phrase becomes an incarnation of their love. Having been filtered through the intellect and the memory, the phrase no longer exists in the realm of pure music, but has been confined within the limits of a form created by their feelings. The spiritual essence of the phrase which points to a reality transcending that of an earthly love, is in direct contrast to the ephemeral nature of his happiness. And yet,

there is a definite awareness of the human condition linked to the phrase: of the transitoriness of earthly pleasures and the inevitability of suffering. It also brings the further realization that this suffering is not sterile but is "lié à l'avenir" (I, 350) and to a future tranquility and peace, and the creative act. The phrase places a lack of importance upon both happiness and sorrow since it incarnates the composer's realization that there is something which transcends the banality of our earthly existence. The "petite phrase" is the prophetic of a coming paradise: "'Qu'est-ce cela? tout cela n'est rien'" (I, 348). The idea that the world with all of its pleasures and even its sorrows is ephemeral in nature, and that something more exists was already recognizable in Jean Santeuil, a thought which will be discussed further in conjunction with Proust's earlier work, later in this study. Despite his unawareness of them, a certain suffering and disillusionment had been present in the phrase even on the occasion when Swann was first introduced to the sonata, since these feelings had been intrinsic to Vinteuil's life. In the time of his happiness it had warned him of his impending suffering; now it offers him the means to overcome his pain; the phrase speaks of a time when the pain will have diminished and he will be able to attain a new sense of fulfillment: "aujourd'hui il y trouvait plutôt la grâce d'une résignation presque gaie" (I, 348). Although the individual's pleasures and sorrows are only temporary states, they become the basis for creation; art is the expression of the impressions

evoked at such times. The sense of gaiety which permeates the phrase is a reflection of the joy which Vinteuil experienced during creation and which recurs throughout his works and culminates in the septet. The "petite phrase" offers the consolation Swann is so in need of. The anxiety and distress which Swann feels in the midst of society and the reassurance and comfort which he discovers in the music is indicative of the idea that fulfillment can only be attained through art. The phrase foresees the resignation that he will eventually achieve in face of the suffering which he must now endure. His sense of resignation will also be "gaie" since he will attain a happiness which now seems impossible: a happiness which issues from the discovery and acceptance of a transcendent reality found within the recesses of one's soul. Swann no longer feels that he is exempt from the suffering which others experience in love. There is the realization that both sorrow and happiness are integral factors in life.

Swann realizes that in order for the "petite phrase" to speak so eloquently on suffering, resignation, and transcendence, the composer must also have experienced such intense emotions. The insight and experience which are so apparent in his music must have been an integral part of his existence. He must have experienced pain in order to be able to evoke it so forcefully, but what is most important is that he must have reconciled himself to this pain and achieved a kind of inner tranquility. Suffering becomes the initial spur toward creation; it is the

descent into the depths of one's soul before reaching the light of day. A kind of comradeship has been established between Vinteuil and Swann since the composer has captured his impressions in his music and the listener has been able to recognize a certain affinity between what the music expresses and what he himself feels. Only when Swann experiences pain and sorrow does he attain any understanding of the meaning the composer intended to convey through his music: happiness leads to a complacency which is static in nature. The spontaneous effusion of pain which Swann experiences in face of the "petite phrase" is the only true comprehension, devoid of the influences of the intellect, which Swann might hope to achieve. This pain reaches the depths of his own psychological state and in turn, reflects the intense emotional turmoil experienced by Vinteuil while composing the sonata, for in fact, he had translated his pain into his music. Swann's suffering sets him apart from all the others present at the gathering since his experience of pain allows him to commiserate with the composer's sorrow: "Et la pensée de Swann se porta pour la première fois dans un élan de pitié et de tendresse vers ce Vinteuil, vers ce frère inconnu et sublime qui lui aussi avait dû tant souffrir" (I, 348). The apparent paradox between "frère" and "inconnu" is reconciled since their attachment is of a spiritual rather than a physical nature; a binding relationship has been established between Swann and Vinteuil. The link which is established between the composer and his listener offers Swann the possibility of transcending his

pain and attaining an extratemporal moment which ultimately leads to the joy which permeates all of Vinteuil's music. In light of the society in which Swann is moving, he is the only individual capable of having anything but the most artificial responses to the music. The society is an extension of Swann himself and of his superficial interests. Since the arts are based on that which lies deeply embedded within the soul of the individual, only someone who has delved deep within his own psyche can expect to be able to comprehend the artist's true meaning. The suffering which Swann experiences as a result of the emotions and impressions which the music evokes within him, allows him to approach the mystery of the sonata. Vinteuil's keen insight into the nature of suffering are inherent in his music and an integral part of his genius.

The communion which Swann establishes with the "petite phrase" allows him to attain a past which reaches even further back than his knowledge of the sonata; he becomes spiritually united to the composer. A receptive state of mind tends to lessen the psychological and temporal distance between the composer and the listener; as the importance of time decreases, the possibility of attaining an extratemporal moment increases. When the listener hears a piece of music, if he is able to sympathize with what is expressed a kind of exchange occurs and his feelings and impressions are substituted for those of the artist; this exchange encourages self-examination within the listener. Therefore we have three stages of development: in the

first stage, the artist's impressions predominate; in the middle stage a relationship is established between the artist and the listener; and in the final stage, the listener replaces the artist: "Vinteuil, aussitôt appréhendé par son auditeur, s'efface, remplacé par l'auditeur lui-même en qui il a éveillé la vocation de l'art" (Piroué, p. 85). Swann's only possibility for transcendence comes when he becomes aware of the importance of the composer's impressions to the creation of his work, and briefly identifies with Vinteuil. Swann's interpretation of the music always tends to reduce the importance of the composer's impressions as he imposes his own emotions upon the music. Although Swann has experienced intense pain, he is unable to detach himself from his suffering as Vinteuil does in order to raise his impressions to a universal level expressible through art. Whereas Swann's suffering becomes a cause for feelings of self-pity and total desolation which will never be translated into art, Vinteuil's pain becomes a stimulus to creation. Music becomes a means through which these intangible and volatile feelings, labeled sorrow, can be captured and immortalized in a more permanent form. They take on a universal form which may be experienced by all listeners who are sensitive enough to appreciate what has been expressed.

Sorrow is a more fruitful state of mind since melancholy is conducive to soul-searching, contemplation and meditation whereas tranquility and contentedness become somewhat static. There is a certain sterility to happiness in that it becomes an end in

itself. When one is satisfied with his situation he falls into self-complacency and does not seek to change his position. Swann becomes a perfect example of the individual who becomes trapped within his own complacency, a state which culminates in his marriage to Odette. The only time Swann becomes aware of a deeper meaning in the music, is when he experiences sorrow and suffering as a result of the loss of Odette's favor; only then does he recognize the existence of Vinteuil and is he able to identify with and commiserate with the composer. Whenever Swann is able to separate the music from his personal feelings and from its association with Odette, it becomes possible for him to achieve a better appreciation of the music and a greater understanding of the message of the sonata. At times, he even returns to his study of Vermeer, and yet, more often than not, his love paralyzes him instead of offering the stimulus to dedicate himself to his work. His response is typical of Marcel who fluctuates between his doubts and who despite moments of conviction continues to stagnate and procrastinate, a pattern which recurs throughout the course of the novel. This second section indicates Swann's potential to achieve a certain degree of understanding of the message inherent to the music. His response is similar to that of Marcel, whose appreciation of the septet is often undermined in favor of a more materialistic conception of art. Although Marcel does fluctuate between moments of doubt and certainty, there is a general line of progression to greater understanding which characterizes the

course of the narrative. Swann, however, will reach his point of maximum growth in the following section, in his mistaken conception of art as a manifestation of the beauty of nature, a step backwards from his present view of the sonata. Both Swann and Marcel approach a greater appreciation of Vinteuil's music in a moment of anxiety and pain caused by love. Suffering becomes the initial spur toward creation and the transcendence of time.

Love's importance lies in its ability to evoke a multitude of impressions and emotions within the individual which are in direct contrast to the logical and ordered thoughts imposed by the intellect: "C'est que la petite phrase, au contraire, quelque opinion qu'elle pût avoir sur la brève durée de ces états de l'âme y voyait quelque chose, non pas comme faisaient tous ces gens, de moins sérieux que la vie positive, mais au contraire de si supérieur à elle que seul il valait la peine d'être exprimé" (I, 348-349). Although these meditative states seem "frivoles" (I, 348) to the uninitiated observer since they are not materially productive, their product is actually greater self-knowledge, something which is "incommunicable" but which the "petite phrase avait captée" (I, 349). The phrase becomes the only possible means of expressing ideas which "ne pouvait pas se résoudre en raisonnements" (I, 349).

The permanent form into which music transforms these ideas, is not subject to any logical analysis since they do not spring from the intellect but are the product of a transcendent existence, the spirit. The motifs, incarnations of ideas of

another world, take on a hierarchal value which differentiates them according to their respective importance and significance. The transcendent nature of the "petite phrase" is emphasized by being compared to a flash of ultraviolet light, an image which is even less tangible than the moonlight referred to in the first section.

Swann tries to decipher the mystery of the power of the phrase by studying the technical form of the piece; his response is similar to that of Marcel, who attempts to recreate the impression evoked by the uneven pavement stones by repeating a physical action. Swann discovers that the melody is created through the interplay of five notes and the constant repetition of two of these same notes. But this is an order imposed by the intellect and Swann is reducing the infinite number of possibilities which all the different listeners will develop, to a five note pattern which will remain fixed forever. Once the phrase is viewed as a theoretical configuration of notes, it becomes construction, and all the passions and impressions intrinsic to the human soul are reduced to the limitations of a musical scale. Logical analysis further removes the music from its pure state since the compositions undergo various mutations during the process of recollection; the listener is no longer dealing with his spontaneous impressions of a composition, but the memory of these impressions. Through the imposition of form and the application of set conventions, the music undergoes a restricting force which is contrary to its true nature; music

does not depend upon explanation or thought but upon the stimulation of feeling. Swann is not dealing with the meaning itself, but with notation, a rational equivalent which strives to impose a physical form upon essence. These are symbols which function in a similar fashion as language and try to make permanent what is in a state of constant change; they are the equivalent of the metaphor in language which attempts to make what is intangible, more comprehensible by reducing the artist's impressions to the confines of time and space. Pure music, separated from the physical instrument which produces it is in a state of constant flux, similar to the impressions which it embodies. Music remains the most individual of the arts since it does not depend upon any intermediary form, such as language. The composer's possibilities cannot be reduced to "un clavier mesquin de sept notes" since the whole universe lies open to him through the passions and emotions which lie hidden in the depths of his soul and must be brought to light: "des millions de touches...d'un autre univers" (I, 349). The composer does not write a great piece of music merely by arranging and rearranging the seven notes of the octave into different patterns and combinations, but by unveiling his own soul and translating his sensations and his individuality into a form which can be universally understood. When the listener comes into contact with this wealth of impressions, corresponding feelings are awakened within him which lead to the discovery of impressions and sensations which were heretofore unknown to him. The music

becomes a ray of light, ultraviolet light, guiding the listener through "cette grande nuit impénétrée et décourageante de notre âme que nous prenons pour du vide et pour du néant" (I, 350). The phrase incarnates the riches of the composer's soul and serves to unveil his own hidden wealth. The juxtaposition of the "richesse" and "variété" which are actually characteristic of the soul and the "vide" and "néant" which the intelligence feels resides there proves the inadequacies of the intellect. That which the music expresses is as important, if not more so, than the ideas formed through the intelligence. The message of love and transcendence which it carries is ever-present in the soul of the individual and cannot be denied, even when he is not consciously aware of it. Just as the darkness and obscurity of a room disappears by introducing light into its midst, so does the obscurity of the soul disappear through the intercession of the "petite phrase" and its message of enlightenment. Reason sees the phrase as "obscure" (I, 350) but this is due to the fact that the method it uses to approach the music is not applicable; it must be felt: "On sentait un contenu si consistant, ...si originale" (I, 350). The intellect evaluates the theoretical form of the sonata and concludes that its simplicity corresponds to its intrinsic worth. Music is able to uncover a self which is not readily visible on the surface, as seen through Vinteuil himself. "Le triste petit bourgeois bienséant" (III, 261) who seemed so conscious of appearances and seemed so firmly fixed in his material existence, rejects the physical reality completely

and comes to a great revelation which is revealed through his music.

Musical motifs are the ideas of a world which lies beyond the physical realm, and become the incarnation of essence: "idées voilées de ténèbres" (I, 349), an image reminiscent of the passages which describe the "petite phrase" as being hidden behind a curtain of sound or cloak of sound. Even if we must eventually end in nothingness, the presence of "ces captives divines qui suivront notre chance" (I, 350) will make the fate seem much less bitter. They will be liberated once their imprisonment in our physical body is destroyed. Since essence is not restricted to the confines of time and space, that part of the individual which is joined to it is not subjected to time either: union with the essence which is incarnated within art becomes the means to achieve immortality: "Et la mort avec elles a quelque chose de moins amer, de moins inglorieux, peut-être de moins probable" (I, 350). The lack of importance which Marcel places on death when he experiences the joy which issues from an extratemporal moment stems from the fact that once the individual leaves the temporal reality, time limits, and by extension, death, become meaningless. The phrase assimilates elements of the visible into the invisible world since elements of the real world are found in these "créatures surnaturelles" (I, 351).

The artist who tries to capture these motifs is the explorer who ventures into unknown regions in order to decrease the metaphorical distance between them; he is the only one who has

access to this "monde divin" (I, 351) where they reside. However, it is through the efforts of the artist that the listener or reader is able to come into contact with the essence of reality; the artist reveals the essence to all receptive individuals as he presents it through his own medium of expression. At first the phrase was hidden behind a curtain of sound, then was enveloped in a cloak of sound, now it is the composer's task "de la dévoiler" (I, 351) so that it will be visible and within our grasp. The composer does not create what he sets down in music, he translates his impressions and then raises them to the level of general principles of truth; that which unites mankind and makes the thoughts of one comprehensible to another. It almost seems to be a conflicting thought, when we consider that the composer uses physical means, that is instruments, to express these illusive impressions. However, the composer transcends the instruments which produce the sounds of the music. In setting his impressions down into music, the composer is using the same technique that the writer would employ: the composer is using what we might call a "musical metaphor." He must translate what is unknown into a form which will be easily accessible to those who seek greater insight into reality. As he presents these ideas through his music he is particularly sensitive to the subtleties of their meaning: "Swann sentait que le compositeur s'était contenté, avec ses instruments de musique de la dévoiler, de la rendre visible, d'en suivre et d'en respecter le dessin d'une main si tendre, si

prudente, si délicate et si sûre que le son s'alterait à tout moment, s'estompant pour indiquer une ombre, revivifié quand il lui fallait suivre à la piste un plus hardi contour" (I, 351). If he has less insight and tries to counterfeit his feelings this deficiency would be readily noticeable; he is unable to dissemble truth: "Tout amateur un peu fin se fût tout de suite aperçu de l'imposture, si Vinteuil, ayant eu moins de puissance pour en voir et en rendre les formes, avait cherché à dissimuler, en ajoutant ça et là des traits de son cru, les lacunes de sa vision ou les défaillances de sa main" (I, 351).

As the theme alternates between the piano and violin, Proust speaks of this interplay between the two instruments in terms of human speech. But this "dialogue" (I, 351) goes on, on a level which transcends human words, and poses questions and provides responses which are much more profound than those which could be dealt with on a human level. This language transcends the external world since it does not depend on the intellect nor is it a product of reason: it is "la suppression des mots humains" (I, 351), a communication of souls. It is more pregnant with meaning and a more direct means of communication which expresses feelings and impressions directly rather than through the use of symbols: the music becomes the feelings themselves. In a later section Proust suggests that music incarnates the type of communication which existed before the development of language. Music remains the only art form which is not limited by time or space and is able to capture a transcendent reality directly,

without recourse to the intellect. However, in order for the music to be described through language it must pass through an intermediary stage, namely the metaphor. Despite any attempts to confine it to the limits of time and space through language, the music maintains a certain sense of mystery as is exemplified by the imagery of the sea in the first section.

As the sonata comes to a grand finale all the various elements combine into a crescendo effect which brings the piece to a dazzling conclusion. It is a breathless moment which anticipates the feeling of joy which permeates the final passages of the septet. All limitations have been lifted so that the five-note progression is expanded to include as many chords and inversions as are possible in the scale, a heightening effect which reflects all the passions and emotions latent within the individual which become the basis for the work of art. Sound is also expanded to include the added dimension of color: as the sonata is discussed in terms of painting, there is no longer a sharp distinction made between the arts which suggests that the various forms function in a similar fashion throughout the narrative: "Aux deux couleurs qu'elle avait jusque-là laissé paraître, elle ajouta d'autres cordes diaprées, toutes celles du prisme, et les fit chanter" (I, 352). We are no longer limited to the "dialogue" of the violin and piano parts, but have reached a recapitulation of all the motifs which will lead to an impressive climax, a climax which anticipates the jubilation of the final passages of the septet. Although the sonata is

described in terms of the visual imagery of color, the final passages of the septet will be evoked through a less physical and less concrete means of expression, that is through auditory stimulation: the sounds of the cock crowing and the bells ringing. The more subdued imagery which surrounds the sonata reflects the less mature and less urgent appeal of the composer who has not yet achieved total comprehension into the nature of art; there is a sense of tranquility which surrounds the image of the rainbow which follows the unrest of a storm (I, 352). The gentle lament of the bird which alternates between the violin and the piano parts is in sharp contrast to the piercing shrieks of the cock in the final section. This imagery reflects the pressing appeal offered by the more mature Vinteuil who has transcended his personal sorrow in order to capture the essence of reality through his music. The evolution from doubt to understanding which characterizes the Narrator in the course of A la Recherche is intrinsic to Vinteuil himself and his compositions.

The possibility of attaining transcendence reaches its highest point when the gathering is no longer a social event but "une cérémonie surnaturelle" (I, 353) at which the two musicians are performing the rites which have arrested the attention of three hundred spectators and have left them in awe of the spectacle. The stage is no longer a stage, but has become the altar upon which this ritual is being performed. Vinteuil's presence is evoked through the music as he sits as the presiding

god over this ceremony: "La parole ineffable d'un seul absent, peut-être d'un mort..., s'exhalant au-dessus des rites de ces officiants, suffisait à tenir en échec l'attention de trois cents personnes, et faisait de cette estrade où une âme était ainsi évoquée un des plus nobles autels où pût s'accomplir une cérémonie surnaturelle" (I, 352-353). The idea of the performers as officiators at a ritual may be extended to become the concept of the artist as priest. Art may be viewed as a successor to religion having various sacred and healing properties which offer the possibility of raising man to a higher level of existence. Through art the individual comes into contact with the level of existence beyond physical and temporal reality which leads to immortality.

Although Swann is now impressed by the sonata, he is only able to consider it the expression of a transcendent reality which has been unveiled and captured by the composer and as a means to attain new levels of development for as long as the possibility of resuming his relationship with Odette seems frustrated. Once a complacent existence has been established with her, the importance of the sonata once again lies in its association with a particular moment in time. In the following section devoted to music Swann regresses to a personal interpretation of the music which abruptly ends any progress toward a greater level of understanding which he may have achieved thus far. However, despite his misguided conclusions concerning the music, it is through Swann's influence that Marcel

is introduced to the sonata so that the transition can be made for the appearance of the septet, the composition which will ultimately reveal the importance which art must play in his life. Swann's response to the music in this section is similar to that of Marcel who attends the concert at the home of la Princesse de Guermantes with all the negative feelings which accompany his relationship with Albertine and is introduced to transcendence through art as a result of Vinteuil's music.

In the previous section devoted to music, Mme Verdurin's remarks incarnate the artificiality of the audience for which the sonata is being performed. In this section the Comtesse de Monteriender's comments are reminiscent of Mme Verdurin's superficial appreciation of art and of her desire to impress others with her understanding of the music; her remarks cause an abrupt return to the physical world after temporary contact with the essence of reality: "'C'est prodigieux, je n'ai jamais rien vu d'aussi fort...rien d'aussi fort...depuis les tables tournantes'" (I, 352)! This fluctuation between two contradictory interpretations of the music reflects Marcel's own shifting positions concerning art. Just as Swann's attention is distracted from his absorption in the music by the Comtesse's remarks, so too, will any inspiration which may have been instilled in him by the music disappear; his attitude reflects Marcel's occasional attempts to dedicate himself to the "creation" of his work.

In the third section devoted to music, the Narrator is simultaneously presented with the two possibilities open to him in life: a superficial, and yet complacent existence devoid of the influence of art as represented by Swann or a life which transcends the pain and sorrow of our daily lives in order to attain the joy which is exemplified by Vinteuil's music. It is ironic that the individual who undermines the role of art in his own life, introduces Marcel to Vinteuil's music and to Bergotte, the youngster's ideal writer. Unfortunately, Swann's limited perspective of the sonata does nothing to further Marcel's comprehension of the music. In fact, Marcel's appreciation and understanding of Vinteuil's music is not something which can be instilled from without since he must experience the intensity of the composer's message himself; Swann's mistakes cannot serve as an example to him: they reflect his own misconceptions and doubts and his initial steps toward the evolution of thought concerning art.

One of the major differences which exists between the Narrator and his counterpart, is that Swann remains somewhat static whereas Marcel's approach to life changes as the narrative advances: his mistakes, doubts, vacillations, and resolutions help him to go beyond the point at which Swann becomes fixed. The evolution of Marcel's thought and his gradual progress toward the realization of his goal to write a book are the subjects with which the remaining sections devoted to the discussions of Vinteuil's music are concerned. As Marcel approaches the

revelation of the importance of art to a fruitful existence, his identification with Swann decreases until this character eventually disappears from the narrative. At this time Vinteuil, the ideal towards whom he has striven throughout his life, becomes more accessible.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Gilles Deleuze, Proust et les signes (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), p. 10.

## Chapter 3

## Initiation to Art

The creative potential is a gift inherent in the individual which passes through various stages of development. During the early years at Combray, this potential is already recognizable in Marcel through his ardent desire to become a writer; even at this early age, his keen interest in the arts and his eagerness to further his knowledge of them foreshadows the important role art is to play in his life. Several characters with whom Marcel comes into contact in Combray will remain influential to the realization of "sa vocation" and the fulfillment of his artistic possibilities. Among these are Swann, the Narrator's "double" who despite his shortcomings is the one who acquaints Marcel with several important artists and their works; Bergotte, the writer whom Marcel strives to emulate, a source of both illusion and disillusionment for the Narrator; and Vinteuil, the musician whose compositions eventually act as a stimulus to creation for Marcel. The impressions evoked during this early period of his life will retain their importance into Marcel's mature years, when he can fully appreciate their impact. As seen through the sections devoted to Vinteuil's music, Swann, Bergotte, and Vinteuil may be viewed as representing stages in the development of Marcel's thought which end in a realization of the nature of art. The shift in influence which occurs among these three characters reflects a progression in the Narrator's maturity

concerning art from the superficial interpretation of the sonata characteristic of Swann, to Marcel's idealistic or greater-than-life conception of the artist as seen through his deification of Bergotte, to his understanding that through his music Vinteuil is able to transcend his own impressions in order to attain the essence of reality. The evolution which occurs as a result of the changes in emphasis in Marcel's views concerning these characters reflects the growth, which will later be seen in the transition from the sonata to the septet. Although the sonata incarnates a message which is essentially the same as that which is evoked through the septet, reactions to the sonata are characterized by error, both in Swann who continues to attribute the importance of the music to its ability to resurrect the past, and in Marcel, who initially does not experience any reaction to the music. It is a piece which reflects the immaturity of its listener and the fact that the composer has not yet developed to his maximum potential. Since the sonata remains basically associated with Swann, once his influence decreases, so does this piece's importance: it is at this moment that Vinteuil gains in significance. However, before Marcel can appreciate the message inherent to the septet, he must pass through the preliminary stages of the sonata so that the transition can be made between Swann and himself.

The third section devoted to Vinteuil's music serves as a point of transfer between the generations since it is in this section that "à lieu la transmission de la Sonate de Swann à

Marcel" (Butor, p. 136). At this moment in the narrative, it is clearly visible that although there has been no evolution in thought, a progression in time has occurred: Swann has married Odette and has attained the stage of resignation which the phrase had spoken of to him. It is also in this section that the flashback into Swann's life reaches the point where it intersects with the Narrator's own experiences. During one of the afternoons which Marcel spends at Gilberte's home, Mme Swann, her mother, introduces him to the sonata. It is interesting that Odette, who had come to be associated with the "petite phrase," will now be the one to perform it for Marcel. Perhaps Marcel, too, will come to associate Odette with the composition since she is the one to introduce him to it. In fact, the complacency which is exhibited by Swann with regard to his existence and the music, is assimilated to a certain extent, by Marcel. When he is first introduced to the sonata by M. and Mme Swann, Marcel responds ambivalently to it. Unconsciously Marcel's own reactions to the music may be minimal since the limited perspective and the personal nature in which it is presented to him offers very little meaning to which he can respond or share in. Swann's interpretation of the music is of a self-centered nature: it reminds him of his love for Odette and becomes a means for him to recall some treasured memories. His impressions of the sonata are representative of a misguided approach to art which remains with Marcel until his introduction to the septet.

In the third section devoted to Vinteuil's music, Swann explains to Marcel what the sonata now means to him: he is never able to transcend his limited perspective toward the music. Swann mistakes the happiness awakened in him by the music to its association with his love for Odette and not as a call to creation or as a revelation of transcendence through art, as will be seen in Vinteuil's septet. He does not recognize it as the joy revealed to Marcel at various special moments of his life: at Martinville, at the concert during which he hears the septet for the first time, and at that moment in the library of le Prince de Guermantes when he finally understands the importance of art to a more fruitful existence. This section emphasizes the static quality of Swann's approach to art and his inability to detach himself from a personal interpretation of the sonata. Even when Vinteuil's music no longer incarnates pain and suffering for Swann, it is still associated with reminiscences of a particular period of his life. Swann does not accept the music in its metaphoric capacity, as a point of transference from his own personal experiences to creation. He is not able to take the metaphoric leap to transcend the "moment" of his love to achieve immortality; the music never becomes the means to link two moments in time in order to go beyond both. The sonata reminds him of pleasant and tranquil evenings spent in the company of Odette; the sonata becomes an incarnation of "le Bois de Boulogne tombé en catalepsie" (I, 533) and reveals the beauty of nature to him. His response is similar to that displayed by Jean in Jean

Santeuil. The pain and suffering which Swann has endured at the hands of love has not prepared him for creation: he remains satisfied with a complacent existence with Odette as his wife.

Although it is at this point in the narrative that the shift in emphasis is made from Swann's impressions of Vinteuil's music to those of Marcel, no more comprehension of the sonata is observed in one than in the other. This section does little to advance the progression to greater understanding which characterizes the course of the narrative. Despite the fact that Swann reaches his point of maximum growth in this section, his present impressions of the sonata have not changed drastically from his original conception of the music. The point at which Swann's development ends, can essentially be considered the point from which Marcel's growth begins. In fact, Swann tries to instill his own impressions of the sonata within the Narrator. The importance which Swann attributes to his memories of the "Bois" is reminiscent of the interest which Marcel shows with regard to the beauty of nature during his early years at Combray.

Swann reduces the innumerable possibilities available to him through art to one particular phrase of music which reminds him of a frustrated love affair. Typical of his tendency to accept things at face value, the music exemplifies one woman and his love for her and not the multiplicity of the composer's soul which might lead the listener to the immortalization of his own soul through the projection and depiction of it through art. The phrase should speak to him of the possibility of attaining a

higher level of existence through art; it beckons to him to accept the challenge of a more fruitful existence, devoid of the sterility of his present situation. Swann's limited point of view prevents him from exploring the possibilities latent within the phrase. Swann allows himself to be trapped in the past through his memories, instead of allowing the music to unlock a transcendent future for him; his impressions of the sonata are constantly directed toward a past moment in time, rather than as the means to transcend time. When he is first introduced to the sonata and associates it with a happy love affair, he hopes to hold on to the moment indefinitely. When his love is lost he searches for consolation in the past. When he finally attains resignation, the music becomes an incarnation of happy moments experienced in the past. Swann is never able to detach himself from his own personal experiences long enough to attempt to achieve the possibility of transcendence through art which the music embodies. He is never able to step beyond the moment or the immediate meaning which the phrase of music holds for him. He mistakes the time of resignation of which the phrase speaks to him for the domestic tranquility he establishes with Odette. Although he has attained that objectivity with regard to his suffering, required to dedicate himself to creation, he has not benefited from the experience. He allows himself to be content with living with his memories and listening to Odette play "notre morceau" (I, 219). Swann never even attempts to go beyond the

one phrase, presented as a piano arrangement with which he is familiar, to the entire composition.

Since this is Marcel's first exposure to the sonata, his level of comprehension is far below that of Swann and Odette. Where he is only able to perceive confusion they can detect "une phrase distincte" (I, 530) whose form is clearly delineated. In Marcel's case, the sonata is completely new to him and no conscious impressions have been able to emerge since he is still in the realm of pure music, "sine materia." Therefore, as he says: "Je ne compris pas la Sonate" (I, 532). However, a response has instinctively been made and has been inscribed within the listener despite the fact that it is still out of the reach of memory. It is ironic that Marcel's comment characterizes Swann's understanding of the sonata in general and his own early impressions of Vinteuil's music.

Each time the listener hears a new composition, he is faced with this initial confusion which the intellect strives to overcome by imposing order on these fleeting impressions. Although the memory accumulates various impressions after each exposure to the piece, the process of assimilation is often unconscious so that after the first hearing it may appear that no impression has been formed. However, if no impression had been received after the first hearing, each subsequent hearing would be as disordered and confused as the previous ones. The first hearing always remains the most disordered since it lacks any previous experience to look back upon as a foundation.

Comprehension is present, but only on a subconscious level: "Probablement ce qui fait défaut, la première fois, ce n'est pas la compréhension, mais la mémoire" (I, 529). The intellect then strives to impose order upon these impressions so that they can be recalled at a later time. After several subsequent hearings the impressions will take shape spontaneously and become more recognizable just as a name which one has forgotten will suddenly be remembered when it is least thought of.

The capacity of the memory is limited since it is not capable of assimilating a multitude of impressions simultaneously. Normal capabilities are compared to those impaired by senility and old age: "d'un homme tombé à moitié en enfance" (I, 530). The memory is compared to the state of mind of the sleeper, an analogy which is paradoxical since during sleep, the subconscious is much more active than the conscious mind, whereas memory is a product of the intellect. The impressions received in sleep are not restricted by logical and rational thought and are as confused as those received through the intellect. However, musical impressions are confused only when viewed through the intellect since they are not so in themselves. Since assimilation of the material is a very gradual process, it is necessary to be introduced to the piece on various occasions before a complete picture can be obtained. The least important sections are always more readily understood than those of greater complexity. As the more important ones are revealed to us, those which were more easily understood vanish. One assimilates the

impressions which are most closely akin to our everyday existence, that is, those which are more concrete in nature, first. These more familiar sensations become the least important as our understanding of the piece of music increases. The withdrawal of the more familiar impressions leaves those which have presented the mind with confusion since they were not assimilable to any previous knowledge which we possess nor could be reduced to any familiar form because of their spiritual nature. Since they could not be understood they remain intact and have not had any external form imposed upon them. This is music in its purest form since it has not been transformed in any way. This phrase contains the mysterious essence which is "invisible et restée inconnue" (I, 531). The actual meaning becomes apparent once we have stripped the music of all externals.

The metaphorical obscurity which seems to hinder clarity of perception in a musical composition becomes the actual fog which might prevent a total view of a building or the distance which might hinder our vision of an object. The obscurity which covers the sonata allows only the most concrete images to arise, which are in turn the weakest in inner meaning. Just as the monument is only partially visible despite its complete physical existence, so too, although the complete sonata is heard only those parts which are most concrete stand out. However, different sections will be comprehensible to different individuals. Once a greater understanding has been achieved, those parts which heretofore had assumed a greater importance

tend to disappear; habit was the only tie which tended to hold us to them: "Quand ce qui est le plus caché dans la Sonate de Vinteuil se découvrit à moi, déjà, entraîné par l'habitude hors des prises de ma sensibilité, ce que j'avais distingué, préféré d'abord, commençait à m'échapper, à me fuir" (I, 530). It is ironic that those images which are more concrete are the first to disappear, while those which are most intangible remain intact; their message is an eternal one which cannot be destroyed through the passage of time. In Elstir's paintings, physical obscurity and the fog tend to increase the individual's perception of reality by blocking what is external and revealing what is internal. Since the memory is limited, as some impressions become more important, others disappear. Therefore it is impossible to be in complete possession of the sonata at any given moment; our comprehension is in constant flux with the impressions becoming progressively more complex. The image of the monument which can only be partially seen by the viewer points to the constantly shifting perspective from which Marcel sees the steeples at Martinville. The movement of the carriage from which he is observing the steeples, creates a semblance of motion in the steeples themselves.

Marcel expresses a similar idea in relation to his readings of the works of Bergotte: that which attracts the youngster's attention initially, becomes less important as he becomes more aware of the intricacies of language and style which are characteristic of the writer. Benoist-Méchin experienced just

such a reaction with reference to A la Recherche: after a lapse of thirty years, his original appreciation of Proust gives way to something much deeper: "Ainsi, les pages d'une beauté moins évidente que celles auxquelles j'avais accordé d'emblée ma prédilection se sont gorgées peu à peu d'une richesse et d'une signification que je ne leur avais pas soupçonnées" (Benoist-Méchin, p. 167).

The process of assimilation which the individual must undergo in order to appreciate a given composition, reflects a similar process which must occur to understand the entire scope of the artist's creations: although the sonata reflects the early stages in the development of both Vinteuil and Marcel, its importance tends to diminish once the septet is introduced. This idea may be extended to include a similar process which must be undergone by the public before it is able to appreciate a work of art which is "vraiment nouveau" (I, 531). Very often a work of art which is truly great may be ignored because it is not readily understood at first glance. The public must be able to discover something which is already familiar within the novelty so that it will have something to build from: a ray of familiarity in a mass of confusion. The artist is doomed to be misunderstood by his contemporaries since real appreciation is only achieved after a certain distance is maintained. The music takes on the characteristics of the visual arts: "comme certaines peintures qu'on juge mal de trop près" (I, 531). The figurative distance which is implied here is extended to become the literal distance

which an observer must maintain in order to fully appreciate a painting.

There is a process of growth in understanding which occurs as time progresses: Proust presents the picture of an almost physical reproduction. The work serves as a fertilizing agent so that "les rares esprits capables de le comprendre" (I, 531) will be able to "croître et multiplier" (I, 531). The work of art must create its own audience and the public must undergo an evolution before the new concepts can be accepted. Therefore any attempt to transfer a composition to the following generation by isolating it from the composer's contemporaries would not spare it from being misjudged since they would be as unprepared for its appearance as the previous generation was: "Si donc l'oeuvre était tenue en réserve, n'était connue que de la postérité, celle-ci, pour cette oeuvre, ne serait pas la postérité, mais une assemblée de contemporains ayant simplement vécu cinquante ans plus tard" (I, 532). It is not the passage of time, in itself, which is particularly important to the process of comprehension and acceptance of the work, but the changes which occur in the individual as the time advances. The artist must not attempt to shelter his work and try to protect it from adverse criticism since this will only delay its general acceptance. The final ordering process and ultimate comprehension can only be achieved through conflict and discussion. The importance which Proust places on error and mistaken impressions in the evolution of the individual becomes apparent since he fashions his novel as a

representation of this growth process. Comprehension of the work depends upon the ultimate realization that art is the expression of what is most personal to the individual and that although the actual means of expression, that is the form, may differ, the deeper meaning must always remain essentially the same since human nature does not change drastically.

If works which were written in the past all seem to follow "certaines règles" (I, 532), it is because they are already seen as part of a tradition. However, we tend to forget that these works also appeared to be "different" after their completion and that they are no longer viewed as a departure in a new direction as a recent work of art is, since they have already been assimilated into the culture. Since works of the past are all looked at as a whole, in fifty years, even the most unusual work will also be absorbed into the vat of homogeneity. In spite of any unconventional methods, the fact that a reader may be able to identify with what is written proves its truth: "La reconnaissance en soi-même, par le lecteur, de ce que dit le livre, est la preuve de la vérité de celui-ci" (III, 911). Once the artist's impressions are raised to a universal level, they become comprehensible to all receptive individuals.

At this point in the narrative, Marcel's interest in the music is not as great as that displayed by Swann on his first exposure to the sonata. Whereas Swann was extremely anxious to discover the name of the composer and title of the piece, Marcel does not take advantage of the fact that this information would

be more readily available to him. Unlike Swann, he is, as yet, unable to relate the sonata to any tangible experience. He is a perfect example of the individual who will not exert any extra effort to discover anything beyond the more familiar passages. He is under the same mistaken impression as those individuals who believe that a photograph can evoke the same emotions as the actual sight of a beautiful cathedral. The imagery has been shifted to the visual arts. The photo can only show the surface appearance of the monument in very rough outline just as a theme is only the foundation upon which the music is built; the outline from which the development must grow. A photograph would be highly insufficient to capture the effects of chiaroscuro or of changing light upon a monument. One would also be required to take a series of pictures in order to capture the same monument from different perspectives, perhaps a moving picture. The mature Marcel is able to see the similarity in responses which listening to a piece of music and admiring a beautiful building might evoke and that each must be approached with patience and perseverance if a better understanding of their true worth is to be achieved. The young Marcel was able to appreciate the sight of the steeples at Martinville, an episode which I intend to examine more closely a little later. Marcel takes the time and trouble to listen to and examine the feelings which the steeples evoke in him, more closely. He even commits these feelings to writing in an attempt to attain a certain release from the oppression of these feelings. With regard to the sonata, he

merely feels that there is nothing more below the confusion he has encountered and that, therefore, the sonata will not reveal anything further to him.

Marcel is not able to understand the sonata, but he is attracted by all the sensations aroused by the presence of Mme Swann; he is enchanted by the physical woman. However, Swann is able to appreciate the nuances of the music which are able to capture his wife even better than his memories. Marcel will have to live with the sonata and discover what is more personal to himself before the compositions can evoke any associations for him. Love is the only emotion which puts the individual in the proper state of receptivity to perceive the message carried by art (Piroué, p. 63). This is why the passages devoted to the descriptions of the sonata and septet are always associated with the loves of the two major characters. Perhaps Marcel is not able to come to any definite conclusion during his first hearing of the sonata since he still has not experienced a mature love. In fact, his introduction to the septet and his understanding of this piece become associated with his affair with Albertine. In a sense, Odette already prefigures the appearance of Albertine and foreshadows the importance which love is to play in Marcel's life.

To Swann, the sonata is the representation of a "clair de lune" (I, 533), the calmness and serenity of a silent night when not even the wind is stirring. More particularly: "C'est cela qui est si bien peint dans cette petite phrase, c'est le Bois de

Boulogne tombé en catalepsie" (I, 533). It is almost as if the sonata has a certain control over the forces of nature, since "les arpèges du violon font tomber la fraîcheur" (I, 533). The sonata evokes a particular period in his life when he often heard the sonata performed as he was accompanied by Odette; silent and tranquil evenings which are now associated with the phrase. The phrase is no longer associated with the emotions he had experienced, but with the surroundings in which he had heard the music performed. Swann reduces the importance of the phrase to a particular location and moment in time. Even now, Swann does not see the sonata as a means to make the leap beyond time. Like Jean in Jean Santeuil, during this earlier period of his life he had been too preoccupied with other matters to be able to appreciate the surrounding beauty. But unconsciously all these impressions had been absorbed deep within his soul to be evoked each time the phrase is played. Although Odette had been a constant companion at this time, she would not have been able to give as complete a picture of his impressions as the "petite phrase" can: "Odette était seulement à côté de lui...non en lui comme le motif de Vinteuil" (I, 534). Through the force of involuntary memory, each time Swann hears the "petite phrase" all of the emotions and impressions he had experienced and all of the places he had visited which have now become associated with the phrase are once again evoked. For Swann, the "petite phrase" incarnates a particular period in his life; it is able to seize things which cannot be externalized. The music is able to

capture time to a greater extent and more faithfully than memory can ever do. The music is able to mirror the listener just as his image might be reflected in water or glass. However, the difference resides in the fact that the reflections seen in water and glass are those of physical bodies, whereas sound reflects the soul. Through his music, Vinteuil has raised his emotions to a level of universal significance so that all his listeners are able to project their own feelings onto the music. It is ironic that since Marcel is receiving his introduction to the sonata from Swann and Odette, his reactions to the music will always be biased by the meaning which the music holds for them. This is especially so since he has as yet been unable to formulate any personal reactions to the sonata and tends to assimilate the impressions which Swann relates to him.

In contrast, the emotions aroused in Marcel by the steeples at Martinville are all his own, not biased by the intrusion of another. The steeples are tangible objects capable of being perceived through the youngster's inquisitive senses. By nature, the Narrator very rarely exerts himself to follow a thought or idea to completion; he all too often postpones serious matters to a later moment when he will be able to devote more time to them, a moment which very rarely seems to occur. Just once such moment does present itself at Martinville, an episode which will be examined later. Just as Marcel's introduction to the sonata can be considered the initial step in the evolution to an understanding of Vinteuil's music, his experience at Martinville

can be considered his first literary endeavor: the link between these two experiences reveals Marcel's initial response to art.

Marcel's introduction to the sonata occurs during a period of his life when he is able to feel a greater affinity with literature than with music as a result of his literary aspirations and his love for Bergotte. Despite his limited perspective concerning Vinteuil's sonata, Swann still remains a major influence in Marcel's life since it is through his intercession that Marcel becomes acquainted with Bergotte, the personification of the child's conception of the ideal artist. In fact, his conversation with Marcel concerning Bergotte is one rare occasion upon which Swann actually expresses himself on a serious subject. Bergotte provides another link in the progression from doubt to understanding since he may be considered the initial stages in the development of the character of Vinteuil. A definite relationship is established between these two artists as early as the opening pages of A la Recherche: many ideas introduced in the early sections of Combray in relation to Bergotte will later be extended to encompass music and the compositions of Vinteuil. In a sense, Combray and "The Overture" serve to introduce, just like in music, the themes which will ultimately be developed in the course of the work. The themes introduced in conjunction with Bergotte and literature in the early sections of the work will be developed to encompass music; ideas extended with reference to music ultimately evolve and result in a better understanding of

literature. Therefore through the discussions of the works of these two artists a circular effect is established in relation to music and literature: ideas introduced concerning Bergotte, including Marcel's own imaginings, hopes, and aspirations, those which are realizable, those which are merely the far-fetched ideas conjured in a child's mind, his mistaken impressions concerning art and the artist, impressions and sensations which will influence his mature ideas, these ideas are taken one step further and broadened to encompass another art form, that is music, which in turn functions as a stimulus to creation; Marcel's realization of the nature of art comes after his introduction to the septet and is ultimately achieved in conjunction with a greater understanding of Vinteuil's music. Bergotte and Swann represent stages in Marcel's development which are eventually bypassed. Marcel's image of Bergotte incarnates many of the child's mistaken conceptions concerning art, including his notion that the artist is a figure of greater-than-life proportions who deals with matters of philosophic significance. Swann entertains a similar notion of Vinteuil when he dissociates the composer from the music tutor of Combray. Marcel ultimately learns more about art and creation from music than from literature, the form which in fact, will be his medium of expression; Marcel receives his true "education" from Vinteuil: "Bergotte sera dépassé, l'expérience de l'art approfondie avec Elstir et Vinteuil" (Rousset, p. 111). Marcel eventually outgrows his interest in Bergotte as his understanding

of art becomes more profound and his comprehension of Vinteuil becomes deeper. Bergotte represents an earlier stage in Marcel's development characterized by an immature and idealistic conception of art. Bergotte, Swann, the sonata as seen by Swann and Odette, and Martinville all belong to a particular period of Marcel's life characterized by doubt and confusion and an initiation to art: each offers the potential for growth. In fact, Bergotte may be seen as a conception of art which is eventually refuted and evolves into the character of Vinteuil, the ideal artist.

As a youngster, Marcel's interest turns more readily to the works of Bergotte to which he is introduced by his boyhood acquaintance, Bloch. This artist represents the ideal he would like to attain, the model he strives to emulate. At this point in his life, the compositions of Vinteuil have not made any impression on him nor caused any major impact upon his life. Swann is able to inspire more interest about Bergotte in Marcel, than about the composer's music. Bergotte becomes a source of both great illusion and disillusionment for Marcel with regard to the boy's thoughts on art and the artist. He feels that he will never be able to attain this artist's level of perfection and yet, he also experiences surprise and excitement at the realization that he may have also considered some ideas similar to those expressed by Bergotte. Marcel sees this as a possibility that all hope is not lost and that perhaps he may still have the opportunity to pursue a literary career.

In considering the works of Bergotte, Marcel is impressed by the writer's archaic phrases, his imagery, and the harmony of his speech. The fluidity of his phrase is described as "un flot caché d'harmonie, un prélude intérieur" (I, 94). This latter comparison is quite appropriate since the song of the artist is an externalization of his interior song. It is "ce chant de harpes"--"cette même effusion musicale" (I, 94). The musical quality of Bergotte's prose with which Marcel is so impressed characterizes Proust's own writings; he opts for a prose which becomes music. With reference to one of Bergotte's passages, Marcel experiences "une joie que je me sentis éprouver en une région plus profonde de moi-même" (I, 94). In a later chapter we will see that Marcel is struck by a similar joy at the sight of the steeples at Martinville. In fact it is interesting to note that the emotion which he then experiences is described in terms of the joy an individual might experience in light of a well-turned phrase: "une jolie phrase" (I, 181). In each case, the Narrator is experiencing the joy which always accompanies creation. At Martinville, the experience manifests itself in terms of words.

Marcel refers to Bergotte's "'morceau idéal'" (I, 94), the passage which incarnates the essence of this artist's thought and is typical of all of his works. Marcel begins to see in relation to Bergotte what he will later understand with reference to the whole of Vinteuil's music: all of the earlier compositions of an artist reflect in essence a common idea, which is developed to a

greater or lesser degree in each of his subsequent works; the artist's works reflect the evolution which occurs in his own thought. When the artist attains the culmination of his genius, the height of his artistry, all previous attempts appear as mere sketches in light of the total orchestration and development of the idea. The incarnation of this "morceau idéal" will be extended in the section describing Vinteuil's septet to the composer's "patrie inconnue" (III, 257), the expression of the artist's soul, that which is most individual to him and cannot be copied by another; it is in this composition that the artist captures the essence of reality and transcends the limits of time and space. Even the artist himself is unable to alter the essence since any attempt to do so would be easily recognized as falsification by the observer. When the artist deliberately tries to exploit those aspects of his writing which he feels to be most pleasing to his audience, the naturalness and easy flow of the writing is spoiled since the writer is no longer presenting a spontaneous effusion from his soul: his writing becomes invention rather than the expression of an impression. When the reader comes into contact with this essence, he is enlightened and experiences realms and areas of study heretofore beyond his comprehension or imagination; only through art can the individual achieve a broader view of the universe: it is only by coming into contact with the views of as many artists as possible, on as many topics as possible, that we can hope to attain a true picture of reality. This "morceau idéal" may be

compared to the sketch which takes on an added dimension through the use of color, or perhaps a piano arrangement of a given composition which takes on greater life once it is orchestrated. In the section devoted to Vinteuil's septet, Proust will resume the thread of these ideas which will be extended even further: the septet becomes the composition which has been orchestrated and is now seen "in color."

Bergotte is raised to extraordinary proportions in Marcel's estimation, and Swann and his wife gain in importance through their association with the artist. The imaginary picture of Bergotte which he conjures up serves to introduce the idea of the artist as an individual of greater-than-life proportions, an idea which will also be developed in relation to Vinteuil, but more importantly will be dispelled with regard to both artists. Their ideas concerning these two artists follow the pattern which prevails throughout the narrative, in that an idea which is held as fact is ultimately refuted and replaced by another which may seem contradictory to the original one. The heroic proportions which these two artists taken on in the imagination of Swann and Marcel are in direct opposition to their actual physical appearances. Art is a manifestation of the soul, and is not dependent upon externals in order for it to come to fruition. Marcel and Swann are both acquainted with an individual named Vinteuil, however, his appearance prevents them from attributing any importance to his compositions; each confuses physical appearance with lack of genius. Even when they are introduced to

the music of a composer by the name of Vinteuil, the old music tutor and the musician remain distinct since the image of one does not coincide with the actual appearance of the other.

In the case of Bergotte, since the physical appearance of the writer remains unknown to Marcel, he is free to leave the portrait of this artist to the free rein of his imagination. Bergotte is "cet esprit parfait" (I, 95) whose ideas and opinions must be "d'un monde inconnu vers lequel je cherchais à 'élever'" (I, 95). In light of the deification of Bergotte and of the idealistic picture Marcel paints of the artist, he is overcome by a feeling of total inadequacy and worthlessness. This sense of inferiority adds to the feeling of surprise he experiences when in his writings Bergotte refers to some idea of which the Narrator may have thought. This sense of inadequacy prevents him from placing any importance on his own thoughts and opinions. It is only when these are reflected in the writings of Bergotte, that they begin to take on some significance. Once the artist raises his impressions to a universal level they become recognizable to all receptive individuals. This is why Marcel is able to identify with what Bergotte writes. Through his contact with the works of Bergotte, Marcel begins to realize that truth and life are not two distinct realms which never intersect; the essence of reality lies within life itself. Only after he comes to this realization can he accept the fact that "(son) humble vie et les royaumes du vrai n'étaient pas aussi séparés que j'avais crus" (I, 96). Even certain remarks made with reference to their

servant, Françoise, and a friend of the family, Legrandin, gain importance once Marcel comes across similar comments in Bergotte's writings. At Martinville, the Narrator will be influenced by this interpretation of creation, and will set down his own personal impressions and reactions to the steeples in order to release the burden and oppression of his thoughts. Unfortunately, the full impact of this revelation will not be felt in his life until many years later during the afternoon concert given at the home of le Prince de Guermantes; his mistaken impression as to a subject for his work, will remain a major obstacle to the fulfillment of "sa vocation" for many years. Vinteuil's music will be instrumental in helping Marcel realize that the composer reveals his soul through his music and constructs it not on topics of philosophic proportions, but on intimate impressions and sensations.

The preconceived idea which Marcel holds of the character of Bergotte ends in disillusionment in light of the ordinary appearance of the artist. The Narrator pictures his idol as follows: "D'après ses livres j'imaginai Bergotte comme un vieillard faible et déçu qui avait perdu des enfants et ne s'était jamais consolé" (I, 97). However, once Marcel is introduced to him by Swann, the godlike writer, this venerable, old gentleman who has inspired such awe within him, in reality becomes "un homme jeune, rude, petit, râblé et myope, à nez rouge en forme de coquille de colimaçon et à barbiche noire" (I, 547). The image of Bergotte he had constructed was accompanied by an

entire philosophy which corresponded to the thoughts manifested in his works, thoughts Marcel has great difficulty reconciling to this new and unexpected physical appearance of Bergotte. The illusion and aura which surrounded the author are broken, and he is unable to reconcile Bergotte's appearance with the heights of excellence he had attributed to the artist. His appearance also seems to undermine the value and importance of these works in Marcel's estimation. His quite common appearance seems in no way to coincide with the wisdom and intelligence which might lead to the deification process initiated in Marcel's imagination. Bergotte's appearance seems to indicate more of a practical intelligence rather than creative genius. His works are no longer viewed as the incarnation of truth, but as "quelque mediocre divertissement d'homme à barbiche" (I, 549). Swann experiences a similar reaction to Vinteuil: he, too, must learn that an individual's physical appearance is not necessarily an indication of his genius or talent.

Despite his disappointing appearance, the novelty and acuity characteristic of Bergotte's written works is also apparent in his speech. The beauty of his language lies not so much in the production of "well-turned" phrases, as in his ability to extract truth from the external objects surrounding him. He seems to forego all that is usual or familiar to his listener as he approaches the essence of reality. At Martinville, Marcel recognizes the existence of something more than what is seen by the naked eye below the surface of the objects he observes.

Swann also detects the possibility of a secret within the phrases of the sonata. However, neither one is able to uncover the cause for his suspicions. The novelty of Bergotte's approach often leads to his being accused of being confusing merely because what he speaks about is not always familiar to his listener. Earlier in this chapter we saw that Swann reveals a similar idea to Marcel concerning the artist who is misunderstood by his contemporaries: "D'ailleurs toute nouveauté ayant pour condition l'élimination préalable du poncif auquel nous étions habitués et qui nous semblait la réalité même...toute peinture, toute musique originales, paraîtra toujours alambiquée et fatigante" (I, 552). The listener usually attempts to relate what is heard to something "de plus concret" (I, 552) or perhaps more appropriately "de plus habituel" (I, 552). The passage of time is an essential criterion to understand the genius of a new artist. With reference to Vinteuil, this idea is extended to include still another element: not only is time itself a factor, but the earlier works of the artist serve to prepare his audience for his later ones. The audience searches for a grain of familiarity in the midst of all this originality; the process of assimilation of a "new word" is similar to the principle behind the use of the metaphor: we build to what is new from what is already known. Therefore, Vinteuil's sonata serves as a stepping stone to the appreciation and acceptance of the composer's septet. Very often an artist's talent is not appreciated by his contemporaries, and it is only posthumously that the work's true

worth is recognized: "Nous sommes très longs à reconnaître dans la physionomie particulière d'un nouvel écrivain le modèle qui porte le nom de 'grand talent' dans notre musée des idées générales. Justement parce que cette physionomie est nouvelle, nous ne la trouvons pas tout à fait ressemblante à ce que nous appelons talent" (I, 99). Although many adjectives are used by his admirers to describe Bergotte's creative potential, "ils ne disaient même pas qu'il avait du talent. Ils ne le disaient pas parce qu'ils ne le savaient pas" (I, 99). Despite the fact that Bergotte's esthetics are visible within his speech and that what he says must be attributed to the author Marcel so adores since this artist is present before him, his speech lacks the depth and "éclairage" (I, 553) characteristic of his written works. Perhaps, in a sense, this seeming lack of penetration is due to the fact that in conversation, our attention is concentrated more directly on the speaker, to the exclusion of ourselves. The maximum effect can only be achieved when the listener is receptive and is actively participating in creation through the projection of his own self onto what the artist is presenting. The artist is not aware of the depth of truth he has revealed since he is externalizing what is most personal to himself; his works are the expression of his soul, "sa personnalité la plus intime" (I, 553), and not mere "creation." In a sense, Marcel has known him intimately for some time through his readings of the artist's works. Bergotte's spoken language seems to be more concentrated than his writings since he is dealing with the

constant flux of reality being examined by his perceptive mind; he is not limited to any one moment in time but the constantly changing moment. It cannot be reduced to what his listener might expect, that is, "tant d'images et de pensées 'à la Bergotte'" (I, 550).

Vinteuil and Bergotte achieve supreme artistry through the revelation of their inner selves through the depiction of ordinary moments of their lives. Bergotte relates incidents from his childhood, while through his music, Vinteuil is able to capture different scenes from his life: the passionate and turbulent moments characteristic of his feelings of rejection and betrayal, and the quiet moments depicting the child sleeping innocently under the watchful paternal gaze. Therein lies genius: the creative power of the artist lies not so much in the scene which is depicted, but in "le pouvoir réfléchissant" (I, 555) of the scene. Genius lies in the faithful rendition of what might be considered mediocre, and yet has the potential to serve as "un miroir" (I, 555) for the reader. If the artist has achieved truth, he is replaced by the reader who is able to identify with what is said and then substitutes his own impressions and sensations for those of the artist. Bergotte realizes that the importance of his works and the indication that they portray truth is that they elicit pleasure in both the reader and himself: "Mais l'instinct du constructeur était trop profond chez Bergotte pour qu'il ignorât que la seule preuve qu'il avait bâti utilement et selon la vérité, résidait dans la

joie que son oeuvre lui avait donnée, à lui d'abord, et aux autres ensuite" (I, 556). The work creates a link between the artist and his audience and offers each the possibility of transcending and attaining the joy which accompanies creation. Although the mature and "enlightened" Marcel is able to appreciate the importance of translating his impressions and sensations into a more permanent form, the young Narrator searches aimlessly and fruitlessly for his "philosophic" topic. This is why Martinville becomes such a crucial moment, a turning point, whose importance is only recognized retrospectively: Martinville remains one of the few instances when Marcel places the emphasis on his impressions and pursues his thoughts to the point that he is able to express them. Martinville brings with it a realization of the importance of impressions to the creation of the work of art: "Le jour où le jeune Bergotte (and we might also include Marcel) put montrer au monde de ses lecteurs le salon de mauvais goût où il avait passé son enfance et les causeries pas très drôles qu'il y tenait avec ses frères, ce jour-là il monta plus haut que les amis de sa famille; plus spirituels et plus distingués" (I, 555): it is at this moment that they become artists and understand the nature of art.

The episode in which Marcel is introduced to Vinteuil's sonata is the final section which is entirely devoted to this composition. In the fourth section the emphasis is placed upon the composer's septet, the piece which corresponds to the growing insight in Marcel's thought. The more naive and innocent sonata

is associated with Swann and his erroneous ideas concerning life, love, and art. It also reflects Marcel's younger years, his association with Swann, and his own misconceptions concerning art. The sonata prevails for the greater part of the sections concerning music since it comes to be associated with the years of error; since only a small section of the narrative deals with revelation, relatively speaking the septet is only spoken of briefly. The intensity of the septet reflects the greater maturity characteristic of the composer's later years and corresponds to Marcel's own increasing sense of understanding concerning art. Swann is not introduced to the septet since he never evolves to the point at which he is able to appreciate its intrinsic meaning; he remains fixed within his limited interpretation of the sonata. The sonata and septet correspond to different levels of understanding in Vinteuil, Swann, and Marcel. Since the sonata is associated with Swann, as his influence decreases, so does this piece's importance. It is at this point that the emphasis is placed on Vinteuil and the septet.

The episode at Martinville to which I have already referred at various points in this study is intrinsically linked to this period of initiation in Marcel's life. If the Narrator's introduction to Vinteuil's sonata may be seen as a point of departure from doubt to understanding concerning music, the episode at Martinville may be considered his first literary experience. A comparison of these two experiences reveals a similarity in Marcel's feelings upon viewing the steeples and in

Swann's response to Vinteuil's sonata. Although Marcel does not come to any definite conclusions concerning his impressions of the steeples, the importance of this experience will be recognized throughout his process of evolution. Martinville is one of those rare moments in which Marcel approaches the essence of reality and feels that the possibility of creation still remains within his reach. These impressions are recalled whenever Marcel experiences the joy which accompanies an extratemporal moment, including at the moment when he is introduced to Vinteuil's septet and begins to recognize the message which is intrinsic to this piece. Vinteuil's music incarnates the feelings and emotions inherent to each of these "moments." Marcel even recalls Martinville when he receives his ultimate revelation concerning the nature of art at the afternoon party given by la Princesse de Guermantes.

In the following chapter I will examine Marcel's experience at Martinville and attempt to determine its importance in the evolution of his thoughts concerning literature and music.

Chapter 4  
Martinville

As we saw in the preceding chapter, although Marcel's initial introduction to Vinteuil's sonata produces very little progress toward the realization of "sa vocation" as an artist, the thoughts and emotions which the steeples at Martinville evoke in him are recognized throughout his lifetime as one of those moments which offer a glimpse of the possibility of a more fruitful existence: "L'impression éprouvée devant les clochers de Martinville" (III, 261) is recognized as one of "les amorces pour la construction d'une vie véritable" (III, 261). Although this episode should be viewed as a positive experience and the paragraph which Marcel produces is seen as "sa première oeuvre et le signe de sa vocation" (Genette, Figures, III, 167), Martinville offers no explanation for the joy which he feels at the sight of the steeples. The paragraph which the Narrator writes is a description of his impressions and poses questions and suggests ideas which will be reconciled in the septet. Although no forward movement is made in the progression from doubt to understanding as a result of this episode, it reflects a similar attitude as that displayed by Swann in relation to the sonata: just as Swann detects the existence of a mystery within the phrases of the sonata, Marcel recognizes something beyond the physical form of the steeples he admires. Neither, however, is able to detect the cause of his respective pleasure; Swann is

content with associating the sonata with his relationship with Odette, while Marcel feels himself totally "débarrassé de ces clochers et de ce qu'ils cachaient derrière eux" (I, 182) as a result of the paragraph he composes. The superficial response which follows the temporary enthusiasm which both Swann and Marcel display in their respective experiences serves to link these two characters and to place them at a similar level of development at this point in the narrative.

With reference to the sections devoted to music, the importance of the episode at Martinville is two-fold: this episode emphasizes the link which exists between Swann and Marcel through the similarity of response which each displays toward art. Once this link is established, the possibility of a shift in emphasis between these two characters with respect to the sonata becomes more acceptable. The transition from Swann to Marcel becomes the initial step in the introduction of the septet. Also, since the sections describing Vinteuil's compositions represent a kind of microcosm of the evolution of thought which Marcel undergoes in the course of the narrative, a comparison of what is considered his initial literary experience and of his introduction to the sonata reveals a difference in the levels of maturity regarding these two art forms which is apparent at this early stage in Marcel's development. Even at the moment of revelation in Le Temps retrouvé, the importance of his impressions at Martinville is seen in conjunction to the message inherent to Vinteuil's septet.

The doubling effect and multiple perspectives which permeate the characterizations of people and situations in A la Recherche, and which are of particular importance in the sections devoted to Swann and Marcel's reactions to Vinteuil's music, become intrinsic to the development of the episode related to Marcel's experiences at Martinville. The impressions and emotions which are evoked within the child and the composition of the paragraph which is attributed to the young Marcel may be viewed on several different levels and from several varying points of view: the initial impressions and sensations evoked by the sight of the steeples are experienced by Marcel, the child, who perceives the sight and is impressed by it. The experience is revived through the paragraph he supposedly writes in an effort to uncover the cause behind the pleasure he feels: "The experience is thus cast in the classic Proustian double form: first the material sensations as they are experienced sur le vif, then (as with the mémoire involontaire) the recovering of the sensations by a different, indirect means--here, voluntarily, through the act of writing" (Cohen, p. 160). The more mature Marcel discovers the paragraph he had written years earlier, recalls his childhood impressions and reproduces his writing for the reader. In actuality, the paragraph which the Narrator claims to present in its original form, is written by Proust himself who strives to imitate the style of a child. Finally the two accounts are read by the reader who experiences his own sensations and feelings in relation to the episode. The distinction which is made by

Genette between the "Je narré" and the "Je narrant" (Genette, Figures, III, 259) is specifically applicable to the episode at Martinville where the two tend to become one temporarily: the "Je narré" or Marcel, the child, takes on the role of the "je narrant" as he writes down his impressions, something which is normally done by Marcel, the adult. Years later, when the "je narré" has developed into the "je narrant" as a result of the fulfillment of "sa vocation," the latter comments upon the paragraph which can now be viewed as having been written by the "je narré." In keeping with the palimpsestic quality which operates throughout the narrative, the child and adult become extensions of one another rather than two separate stages in the Narrator's development.

At this early point in his life, the creative potential is already inherent within Marcel and is apparent through his ardent desire to become a writer. However, despite his enthusiasm, he very often experiences an intense feeling of inadequacy when faced with the possibility of pursuing a literary career. This same feeling of inadequacy is seen when he considers the works of Bergotte. He is still searching for that special topic of "philosophical proportions" to which he will devote his work. However, when he is too intent upon thinking about a work, the possibility of creation seems to retreat from him entirely. Only when he allows his mind to wander aimlessly and his impressions are evoked spontaneously, is Marcel able to perceive things more acutely and appreciate the beauty of his surroundings more

intensely. At this moment, a roof, a tree, or the play of the sun upon a particular portion of the landscape seem to possess a deeper meaning which goes beyond the limitations of their physical form; only then does Marcel seem to detect the essence of reality which transcends the limits of time and space but remains concealed within the object. However, the strict reliance he places upon his reason, prevents him from delving too deeply within any object's secret. The arduous effort he makes almost seems to retard his success, perhaps even negates it. Marcel misplaces the point of emphasis: he does not yet realize that the more important things of existence cannot be examined intellectually, but must be felt; once these impressions have been received, the intellect enables the individual to understand his feelings more fully and to translate them into a more permanent form. As Deleuze writes: "L'intelligence vient toujours après, elle est bonne quand elle vient après, elle n'est bonne que quand elle vient après" (Deleuze, p. 123). Instinctively, Marcel feels that something extremely important lies beneath the deceiving appearances of the objects with which he comes into contact: "je sentais que cela se trouvait en eux" (I, 178) but continues "à tâcher d'aller avec ma pensée au delà de l'image ou de l'odeur" (I, 178). He attempts to penetrate to the depths of their mysteries by examining their outer qualities: he studies "la ligne du toit, la nuance de la pierre" (I, 178) and realizes that "elles n'étaient qu'un couvercle" (I, 179) to the impressions which remain hidden; he approaches these

objects in the same way as Swann who detects the existence of a mystery within the strains of the sonata but mistakenly tries to uncover the secret of the "petite phrase" by examining the theoretical aspect of the music. Marcel does not yet understand that he must turn his attention inward and concentrate upon the impressions and feelings which his surroundings evoke within him, nor does he realize that these feelings and impressions are the material from which his work will stem. He mistakenly continues to search for "un sujet philosophique pour une grande oeuvre littéraire" (I, 179) which will be "de valeur intellectuelle" (I, 179). The works of Bergotte will play a significant role in Marcel's initial understanding of the importance of impressions to the work of art.

Presently, however, it seems impossible to him that anything of any great value could stem from the subjectivity of his feelings: "Certes ce n'était pas des impressions de ce genre qui pouvaient me rendre l'espérance que j'avais perdue de pouvoir être un jour écrivain et poète, car elles étaient toujours liées à un objet particulier dépourvu de valeur intellectuelle et ne se rapportant à aucune vérité abstraite" (I, 179). This manner of thinking will remain a major obstacle to the realization of his objective for many years to come: until the moment when Marcel realizes that the subject for his work is dependent upon his own experiences, something he will not fully understand until an afternoon in the distant future at la Princesse de Guermantes', his dream will remain unfulfilled. Vinteuil's music, however,

will introduce him to the importance of the artist's vision of reality, a vision which is linked intrinsically to his unique conception of his surroundings. Although Vinteuil's music incarnates the notion of essence entrapped within a physical form, Marcel's initial impressions of the sonata are totally devoid of any realization of an intrinsic meaning. In contrast, at Martinville he recognizes the existence of something beyond the physical form of the objects he views without, however, determining exactly what it is. It is the role of the artist to discover essence within an object and release it from its captivity.

Marcel is initially attracted by the beauty of the three steeples, and attempts to uncover the cause behind the pleasure they evoke by examining their physical appearance. His approach is similar to that used by Swann who tries to discover the intrinsic meaning behind Vinteuil's music by reducing it to notation. At this stage in his development, Marcel is more easily impressed by what is concrete in nature and able to arouse a sensual impression, than by the intangible beauty of a musical composition. He does not yet possess the necessary awareness needed for the perception of abstractions. An attractive woman, the presence of Mme Swann, a picturesque sight, the hawthorns during the month of Mary celebration, the thought of Mlle Vinteuil's cheeks below her freckles are all appealing to the senses and potential stimuli for a sensual impression. Perhaps this is why he is able to pursue his thoughts concerning the

steeple more readily than with the music: the steeple is a tangible object within the realm of time and space evoking a spontaneous reaction in him, rather than an abstraction. Since music is an incarnation of essence, it remains too far beyond his reach to be appreciated in a similar fashion as an object might be. Marcel's tendency to procrastinate gets the better of him in relation to the music of Vinteuil, although Swann's own limited perspective may in fact be at least partially responsible for Marcel's disinterest. Swann's comments on the sonata are much too personal to be of any use to Marcel in clarifying the confusion associated to his first exposure to the composer's music. Although Marcel attempts to uncover the cause behind the joy which he experiences, the paragraph remains a description of his emotions, rather than an explanation of them; at this point in his life he remains unaware of the nature of the joy which is evoked by the sight of the steeple, although he realizes he has felt this same emotion at various other moments in his life: "Il est vain d'essayer de chercher à travers elle (the description of the steeple) le pourquoi de l'émotion du jeune Marcel..., elle est un résultat de la question posée par les choses, elle n'est pas encore une réponse" (Butor, p. 116). He is still unaware that it is this same sense of joy which permeates all of Vinteuil's music and which culminates in the final passages of the composer's septet. It is a joy which is evoked each time Marcel comes into contact with the essence of reality and feels that the possibility of creation is still alive within him.

Marcel is attracted by the play of the setting sun upon the steeples and their constantly changing position caused by the windings in the road and the movement of the carriage. The importance of motion and the play of light upon a given subject was mentioned earlier in relation to Vinteuil's sonata. In that section the imagery used to describe the music shifts to encompass the visual arts. One can never appreciate the beauty of a cathedral from a photograph since the perspective in which it is seen is much too limited. The steeples at Martinville seem to be the beautiful cathedral in question in the earlier section. Many of the elements which are particularly striking to Marcel would be completely lost in a photograph. What he is impressed by is not so much the stationary appearance of the steeples, which might be captured quite faithfully in a photo, but by the play of the sun on the steeples and their changing positions as seen in relation to the movement of the carriage. When viewed from different locations, the rays of the setting sun produce various effects of chiaroscuro as the intensities of light shift from daylight to twilight and then finally to darkness. One photograph would be insufficient to capture the entire effect: the movement of the carriage and the changing perspective from which Marcel views the steeples produce a semblance of motion in the steeples which appears to remain distinct of any interference from the observer: "Thus, Marcel's own locomotion causes an elusive fluidity of vantage point, which results in a reversal of subject and object qualities, just as we

noticed in other texts of this period that do not necessarily exploit the mobile point of view. As in the cinema, where distance, angle, and mobility of the camera are the three outstanding factors that condition the image, so here the distance that separates Marcel from the steeples distorts the 'actual' distance between the steeples; the angle of the roads with regard to the valley below flattens the terrain in a way that makes the Vieuxvicq steeple 'level' with the others; and finally, Marcel's constantly shifting point of view vis-à-vis the steeple confers upon them an autonomous movement all their own' (Cohen, p. 161).

The appearance, disappearance, and reappearance of the steeples in the course of the carriage ride is reminiscent of the movement of the "petite phrase" throughout Vinteuil's sonata: when the phrase seems to disappear among the themes, Swann anticipates the moment when it will reappear. In terms of music, one photograph might be considered a theme from which an entire development might emerge. When seen from the moving carriage, the observer can appreciate a 3-dimensional building whose image is in constant flux. The changes in appearance in the steeples might in turn be compared to the variations a piece of music might seem to undergo when listened to under varying circumstances evoking different emotions. This might then be extended to encompass the different reactions the same compositions might evoke in different individuals who listen to it. These variations in point of view are readily demonstrated

by Swann's and Marcel's changing reactions to Vinteuil's music depending on their emotional state. The steeples, as seen by Marcel, provide a physical manifestation of the constant motion which is characteristic of music since they have temporarily lost the static quality of their form.

Despite the beauty of the steeples, Marcel realizes that the attraction and pleasure he has experienced stems from some deeper mystery which lies hidden beneath their physical appearance; he realizes that a thorough examination of the dimensions and physical form of the steeples is insufficient to reveal their secret: "En constatant, en notant la forme de leur flèche, le déplacement de leurs lignes, l'enseulement de leur surface, je sentais que je n'allais pas au bout de mon impression, que quelque chose était derrière ce mouvement, derrière cette clarté, quelque chose qu'ils semblaient contenir et dérober à la fois" (I, 180). He has experienced this same inexplicable pleasure on various occasions, but has never been able to determine its source. He is so inebriated by his feelings that he is even able to overcome the reluctance which once again begins to beset him at the possibility of uncovering the cause behind the pleasure he has experienced. The steeples themselves seem to be as illusive as the message which they conceal. At one moment "les clochers paraissaient si éloignés" (I, 180) whereas in the next, "nous nous arrêtons devant l'église de Martinville" (I, 180). The pleasure is compared to the emotion which might be produced by "une jolie phrase" (I, 181). They are one and the same thing

since art is the immortalization of the essence of life, and life is the material upon which art is founded. The pleasure becomes more tangible as it passes through the intermediary stage of the metaphor. In fact, it is almost as if the pleasure presents itself to Marcel in the form of the metaphor since "c'était sous la forme de mots qui me faisaient plaisir que cela m'était apparu" (I, 181). He must commit these feelings to paper in order to unburden himself of the oppression caused by them. When he thinks about the steeples and the impressions resurge in him, he is filled with "enthousiasme" (I, 181) at the possibility of finally pursuing his feelings and overcoming his recurring lethargy. There seems to be an indication that the short piece he writes helps to assuage his guilty conscience for having so often pushed aside his emerging impressions while intending to return to them at a more opportune moment.

In the paragraph which he produces, Marcel makes use of the technique of the metaphor, which is so essential to the creation of Proust's own work. In the sections devoted to Vinteuil's music, Proust uses the metaphor to help make the intangible and illusive quality of the music more comprehensible by relating his images to something which is easily recognizable. At Martinville, Marcel, the youngster, uses the metaphor to describe something which is concrete and physical, that is the steeples, in order to uncover their intrinsic mystery. Several of the images which Marcel makes use of are essential to Proust's descriptions of the music: imagery of birds and women recur

frequently within the sections devoted to music. In fact, the "petite phrase" is always described in terms of a woman. Initially, Marcel compares the steeples to "trois oiseaux posés sur la plaine, immobiles et qu'on distingue au soleil" (I, 181). The imagery changes from the birds to "trois pivots d'or" (I, 182), and then to "trois fleurs peintes sur le ciel au-dessus de la ligne basse des champs" (I, 182). Finally, they are compared to "trois jeunes filles d'une légende, abandonnées dans une solitude où tombait déjà l'obscurité" (I, 182). Marcel also makes use of personification in describing the steeples. For example, the steeples bid the travelers farewell "en signe d'adieu" (I, 181) while the sun appears to "jouer et sourire" (I, 181) on them.

After having written the paragraph Marcel experiences a total release from the oppression of his feelings; he is no longer encumbered by the pressing need he had felt earlier to uncover the mystery hidden beneath the steeples. Although the source of the pleasure has not yet been revealed to him, this moment leaves a lasting impression on Marcel: he will recognize on a much later occasion that Martinville was one of the special moments in his life which indicate that meaning is present and can become an integral part of our existence. The essence which lies hidden below appearances which are readily seen by the individual are what make our mortal existence worthwhile. Moments wherein these essences become recognizable offer glimpses of the possibility of a more fruitful existence. It is the artist who translates these

essences into a tangible form. Just such a moment is manifested at Martinville.

Unlike his introduction to Vinteuil's music which relies heavily upon the interference of Swann and Odette's reactions to the music, Marcel's reaction to the steeples is a purely personal experience. The influence of these two can be considered limiting since they only see the music in terms of their own relationship. At Martinville, Marcel achieves a deeper understanding of his individual experience. He pursues the impressions which manifest themselves to him until he finally relieves himself of the obsession of the steeples. Unlike his usual reaction and attempt at procrastination, he devotes himself wholeheartedly to the expression of the impressions he is receiving. With the sonata, Marcel is faced with a confusion of impressions of which he attains no ordering or comprehension: the sonata becomes one of the many impressions placed in the reserve of his memory to be examined more completely at a later time.

Although the joy and fulfillment which are characteristic of Marcel's experience at Martinville will recur at various moments in his life, it will not be for many years before he accepts the importance of his impressions to the realization of his ideal and dream, and understands the cause behind his joy. The epitome of this joy will be manifested to him through Vinteuil's septet. However, even at this moment, doubt will continue to plague him: can art indeed reveal a higher, more spiritual reality or is it a

manifestation of nothingness, not to be treasured any more than life itself? 'Voilà posé le grand problème qui paralysera le Narrateur, tant qu'il n'en aura pas trouvé la solution définitive: l'art est-il réel? correspond-il à une 'réalité spirituelle' et individuelle ou, comme le monde, l'amitié, l'amour, l'action, ne représente-t-il qu'une réalité matérielle, un 'néant'.'"1

With the introduction of the septet, Marcel reaches a turning point in the evolution of his thought: the emphasis is no longer on Swann or on his limited perspective of the sonata, but on a Marcel who is steadily growing to a deeper understanding of the meaning inherent to Vinteuil's music. Once the Narrator is introduced to the composer's more mature work, the sonata loses in importance and is rarely mentioned. Before we leave this composition and turn our attention to Vinteuil's septet, I would like to briefly discuss several episodes of Jean Santeuil which anticipate the sections in A la Recherche devoted to the composer's sonata and Swann's "petite phrase." The characters are different but the situation is the same and the "petite phrase" once again becomes the incarnation of love for its listener rather than the means to attain the essence of reality.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>René de Chantal, Marcel Proust: Critique Littéraire  
(Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1967), I,  
213.

## Chapter 5

## Companions in Sorrow

In the previous chapters we saw that despite Swann's highly personal interpretation of Vinteuil's sonata and his inability to recognize the true meaning intrinsic to the "petite phrase," that his impressions and reactions to the composer's music represent the initial stages in the development of Marcel's thoughts concerning the nature of art. Although Swann does at times detect the possibility of a more universal truth inherent within the phrase of music, for the most part, Vinteuil's sonata is never totally separated from its association with Odette: it becomes a witness to his love in moments of joy and a source of consolation when faced with sorrow. Even years later when the music no longer evokes painful memories of his relationship with Odette, it reminds him of a particular period of his life and the places he visited at that time. Swann misunderstands the message of the sonata and never realizes that it incarnates the composer's vision of a more meaningful existence rather than the listener's emotions. He never realizes that the music offers the composer the possibility of transcending his impressions and emotions in order to achieve a reality which bypasses the limits of time and space and leads to immortality. Swann's misguided conceptions concerning music, and art in general, are representative of the years which anticipate Marcel's final revelation and the ultimate realization of his vocation as an artist.

As is indicated in Genette's essay "Proust Palimpsest," the progression from doubt to understanding which is characteristic of the evolution from Swann to a more mature Marcel, may be said to begin in Jean Santeuil since this earlier work already prefigures what will eventually be developed in A la Recherche. Genette feels that Jean Santeuil should be considered "sketches for the Recherche du temps perdu" in which "we witness the appearance of a whole series of first drafts of certain episodes, settings, themes, or characters of the 'definitive' work" (Genette, "Proust Palimpsest," p. 233). In the course of his discussion, Genette enumerates many of the images which undergo transformations in the evolution of A la Recherche, including "the sonata by Saint-Saëns, with Françoise, (which) already suggest(s) Odette" (Ibid, p. 223). In this earlier version, the "petite phrase" has been specifically identified as coming from a sonata composed by Saint Saëns. In A la Recherche, the use of a fictitious composer, Vinteuil, gives the character less of a physical existence and encourages more use of the imagination in the reader. It also contributes to the timeless quality of the music. The composer becomes extratemporal since he is no longer limited to a particular period, but represents the leap beyond time. In addition, since the composer cannot be definitely identified, the reader is less likely to be biased by his own opinion of the composer in question and is more likely to become caught up in Swann's reactions and be able to appreciate them.

Vinteuil is the product of the best of several composers, the ideal artist whom Proust would like to become.

Both in Jean Santeuil and A la Recherche, the discussions of music are intrinsically linked to a character's experiences in love, and the pain and suffering which are associated with it. For Swann and Jean, the music remains a revelation of self and an affirmation of their respective emotions; each maintains a basically personal approach to the music which limits the possibility of raising their impressions to a level of universal significance.<sup>1</sup> The music becomes the means to justify the character's love in his eyes, and to assuage any insecurities he may feel with respect to it: "la musique vient alimenter notre esperance et consolider notre amour" (Marc-Lipiansky, p. 175). In both cases, the "petite phrase" becomes associated with various circumstances which are evoked each time the music is heard; in a sense, it becomes their love. Neither Jean nor Swann recognizes the connotative potential of the music or the possibility of using art in order to achieve a metaphorical leap into a transcendent reality. Although there is an indication in both cases that something exists which transcends the ephemeral nature of their respective loves, neither character comes to any conclusions concerning where the essence of reality is to be found. The importance of the music lies in the role it plays in memory, its ability to capture the past and resurrect it each time the sonata is heard.

The section of Jean Santeuil devoted to the discussion of Saint-Saëns' sonata is found at the point in the narrative when Jean and Françoise are separating: "Françoise s'était assise loin de lui" (J.S., p. 816). The physical distance which separates them at this moment is representative of the psychological distance which has come between them. The dying love is described in terms of a physical malady which progressively deteriorates the strength of the body without removing any of the pain. It seems to be moving steadily toward death and Jean snatches at every ray of hope "avec le bonheur désolé et pieux de ceux qui entendent encore parler, qui voient essayer de marcher encore celui qui bientôt ne sera plus" (J.S., p. 816). If not love, he seeks to at least find regret at the loss of their love in her eyes. However, even such moments of consolation become less and less apparent. The malady is even more fatal because of the intensity and duration of their love; a newly developing love might have survived the arguments and may even have been strengthened by them in its growth. Now it is doomed to perish: "Tout d'un coup elle se leva. Il crut qu'elle venait à lui. Mais elle s'arrêta devant le piano, s'assit et joua" (J.S., p. 816). The music is able to speak more intimately of their love than Françoise ever could and can sympathize more with him since it speaks to his soul and resides therein: she could never know his most personal feelings as thoroughly. One would have to become the other individual in order for this to be possible; one would have to penetrate into the other's

self-conscious, just as the phrase is able to do. Françoise would never be able to reproduce his reactions and impressions to a given situation since as is stated in A la Recherche with reference to Swann and Odette, Françoise "était seulement à côté de lui," whereas "la petite phrase" was "en lui" (I, 534); the "petite phrase" is able to evoke the past more faithfully each time it is heard than any mortal could ever hope to. When Jean hears the sound of the "petite phrase," all of the pleasant moments of the time they have spent together resurge adding to the grief he now feels.

Just as Swann is struck by "une si déchirante souffrance" (I, 345) in light of the appearance of the introduction of the sonata, Jean is taken by "une angoisse extraordinaire" (J.S., p. 816) and it is only through extreme self-control that he is able to avoid an outburst of tears. A physical reaction is evoked in each of them: Swann is overcome by such a pain "qu'il dut porter la main à son coeur" (I, 345), and Jean "fit une grimace pour ne pas pleurer" (J.S., p. 816). His tears are suppressed at the thought of "l'âpreté glaciale" (J.S., p. 816) which they are sure to meet with; it is almost as if the tears are conscious of the reception which awaits them, and base their decision on whether to "couler" (J.S., p. 816) on this awareness. Therefore, Jean checks his feelings in the presence of his beloved Françoise. One would think that the cause behind all his pain and suffering might be more sympathetic and compassionate in the presence of these emotions. But it seems that she will be as indifferent as

the spectators at Mme de Saint-Euverte's gathering who know nothing of Swann's love for Odette. At least their coldness can be attributed to their unawareness of his suffering. In both cases, only the "petite phrase" can offer consolation in their disillusioned love affairs.

Jean now realizes, as does Swann, that even in the time of their joy the phrase foreboded suffering and pain: "il écoutait cette phrase dont le divin sourire déjà au temps de leur bonheur lui paraissait désenchanté" (J.S., p. 817). The juxtaposition of "bonheur" and "désenchanté" in one sentence serves to emphasize the transient nature of their love. However, at the time that Jean and Swann are enjoying the favors of love, each is under the mistaken impression that this emotion will endure despite the phrase's warning of its fragility:

Il (Jean) écoutait cette phrase dont le divin sourire déjà au temps de leur bonheur lui paraissait désenchanté. Mais alors leur amour avait vite fait de noyer la tristesse, ce pressentiment qu'il était fragile, dans la douceur de sentir qu'ils le gardaient intact (J.S., p. 817).

Il est vrai que souvent aussi elle l'avait averti de leur fragilité. Et même, alors que dans ce temps-là il devinait de la souffrance dans ce sourire, dans son intonation limpide et désenchantée, aujourd'hui il y trouvait plutôt la grâce d'une résignation presque gaie (I, 348).

The verb "noyer" used in the passage of Jean Santeuil quoted above suggests the image of the sea which is employed to describe the sonata in A la Recherche, where the music is in a state of constant flux; here the image refers to the love itself: the

phrase warns that the music will remain constant while their love will change.

The security they feel in their love helps to intensify their happiness now, but will also be the source of added anxiety later: "La tendresse de chacun s'inquiétait ensemble de la vie mais non point l'une de l'autre, et le chagrin d'entendre que tout passe rendait plus profond le bonheur de sentir leur amour durer" (J.S., p. 817). At that time the "petite phrase" was "comme une caresse" (J.S., p. 817), and "la tristesse" (J.S., p. 817) which is inherent in its message, "était légère à leur amour" (J.S., p. 817). The same mixture of feelings is felt in both passages: a feeling and foreboding of pain at the moment of happiness and then the hope, if not of happiness, at least of resignation during the moments of intense suffering:

Et si jadis il semblait que c'était dans le pli d'un regret qu'elle faisait passer devant eux la douceur de leur amour, maintenant le désenchantement dernier, le désespoir irrémédiable, le néant final où elle l'entraînait, il lui semblait que c'était avec la grâce d'un sourire (J.S., p. 817).

Et même, alors que dans ce temps-là il devinait de la souffrance dans son sourire, dans son intonation limpide et désenchantée, aujourd'hui il y trouvait plutôt la grâce d'une résignation presque gaie (I, 348).

In spite of the ephemeral nature of all that they have based their lives upon, the "petite phrase" is able to maintain its air of gaiety.

A dichotomy is established between the phrase and Jean's life which foreshadows the distinction which will be established

between Marcel's two conflicting conceptions of art: art as materialism or a manifestation of a spiritual reality. Jean questions the reality of this love which has totally encompassed him just as Marcel questions the nature of art itself: if art remains merely a manifestation of life and love is it worth devoting all one's energies to it since the world has always left an emptiness within him: "Peut-être cet amour alors n'était pas bien réel" (J.S., p. 817)? The "petite phrase" remains constant despite the transitoriness of this earthly existence and of its joys: "Tout avait changé autour d'elle, mais elle n'avait pas changé. Elle avait duré plus longtemps que leur amour, elle durerait plus longtemps qu'eux" (J.S., p. 817). In Jean Santeuil, there is already a suggestion that the music incarnates something which transcends their lives and their loves: "Il y avait donc quelque chose de plus durable que leur amour. Peut-être cet amour alors n'était pas bien réel? Qu'était-ce donc, cette chose qui, déjà triste dans le bonheur, restait heureuse dans la tristesse, et pouvait survivre à ces coups auxquels lui ne se croyait pas la force de survivre? Qu'était-ce" (J.S., p. 817-818)? A sense of questioning remains apparent: there is a definite realization that something more permanent and of a higher level of reality exists, and yet, there is no revelation as to what the secret of the phrase is.

Jean Santeuil becomes a manifestation of Proust's own search for truth and the initial stages in the development of his own understanding of where the essence of reality can be found:

"Proust, dans Jean Santeuil, en est au stade de Jean: il s'interroge, il cherche autour de lui une vérité en laquelle il puisse croire, sur laquelle il puisse établir sa vie; cette vérité, il croit la trouver tantôt dans l'amitié, tantôt dans la nature, tantôt aussi dans ces moments privilégiés, soustraits au temps dont il pu faire l'expérience, mais sans voir encore avec certitude la signification qu'il pourrait leur donner. C'est dans l'art que, bientôt, par l'intermédiaire de Ruskin, il allait placer toute sa foi" (Marc-Lipiansky, pp. 175-176). Jean Santeuil may be considered the initial step in the process of evolution which permeates the length of A la Recherche and is reflected in the development of Swann and Marcel. Jean's mistaken impressions concerning the sonata prefigure Swann's own misguided conclusions concerning Vinteuil's music. Jean and Swann totally misunderstand the message of the "petite phrase" and in fact no mention is ever made in the earlier work of the importance of art to the realization of a more worthwhile existence. No answers are provided in Jean Santeuil to all the doubts and questions which are posed just as no explanation is given concerning the nature of the joy which Marcel expresses in the paragraph written at Martinville: "Il faut attendre la Recherche du temps perdu pour trouver la réponse à l'interrogation amenée par la petite phrase dans Jean Santeuil: ce n'est pas Swann, mais le narrateur, qui aura la révélation de la vérité dont elle était messagère" (Marc-Lipiansky, p. 176). The reconciliation of all doubts and the revelation of the

importance of art in the life of the individual is directly linked to the realization of the significance of the secret inherent to the phrase of music. As the Narrator's understanding and appreciation of Vinteuil's music increases, the possibility of fulfilling "sa vocation" as an artist becomes more attainable: "Ainsi la vérité de la petite phrase, comme celle que recélait l'expérience de la madeleine, n'est rien d'autre en définitive qu'un appel à la création...Telle est la révélation qui va permettre à Proust de mener à bien son oeuvre, tâche à laquelle il avait échoué dans Jean Santeuil, faut d'avoir su déchiffrer la signification profonde de la petite phrase et des moments privilégiés du souvenir" (Marc-Lipiansky, p. 176). Jean and Swann both fail since although each attains the feeling of resignation of which the phrase spoke, neither is able to transcend his impressions and emotions in order to achieve a more universal truth through art; the phrase never serves as the means to transcend the limits of time and space, but rather becomes the vehicle to capture a given moment in the past. Jean tries to uncover the mysteries of the phrase in nature: "Il s'était alors tourné vers la nature, croyant trouver dans sa permanence, cette vérité supérieure que la petite phrase lui avait laissé entrevoir" (Marc-Lipiansky, p. 175). The futility of such a course is seen in Swann, who attributes the importance of the sonata to his reminiscences of the Bois de Boulogne and completely ignores the true message hidden within the music. Once Swann no longer associates the "petite phrase" with painful

memories of his love, it incarnates the beauty and freshness of nature captured in a moment of time. Like Swann, many years after his love affair with Françoise, the sonata no longer reminds Jean of his love but of the places which are associated with the music:

Et il (Jean) n'essaya pas de penser à elle. Mais il pensait sans fin avec un grand désir, avec un grand bonheur, avec un grand amour, à l'été de cette année-là, à la douceur profonde des heures (J.S., p. 818).

Et remarquez que le phrase de Vinteuil ne me montre que tout ce à quoi je ne faisais pas attention à cette époque. De mes soucis, de mes amours de ce temps-là, elle ne me rappelle plus rien, elle à fait l'échange (I, 534).

Both Jean and Swann are impressed by reminiscences of the Bois de Boulogne and the surroundings which were associated with that period of their lives. They are impressed by the "fraîcheur" which the phrase evokes: "Il (Jean) écouta la petite phrase de Saint-Saëns sans d'abord la reconnaître, mais il sentait en lui une grande fraîcheur, comme si tout d'un coup il était redevenu plus jeune" (J.S., p. 818). "Le moment où il fait nuit sous les arbres, où les arpèges du violon font tomber la fraîcheur" (I, 533).

The music is no longer associated with pain and suffering. In fact, they both experience a "rajeunissement" (I, 210) through the phrase since they are able to recapture the impressions of an earlier period of their lives, which they had been unconscious of at the time because of their preoccupation with love. Now they can look back upon this time of their lives without being

overwhelmed by pain; they have both achieved the resignation of which the "petite phrase" had spoken to Swann. It is interesting to note that the following quotation might apply just as well to Swann as to Jean and that out of context it would be quite difficult to guess to whom it actually refers:

La petite phrase se pressait, et maintenant comme autrefois elle lui était douce. Si au temps de son bonheur elle avait anticipé par sa tristesse sur le temps de leur séparation, au temps de leur séparation par son sourire elle avait anticipé sur le temps de son oubli (J.S., p. 818).

Since A la Recherche is a much more complex and mature work than Jean Santeuil, what is given briefly in the latter work is extensively expanded in the three sections devoted to the sonata in the former. In A la Recherche, Proust goes into detailed descriptions of the music through the use of the metaphor, an element which is entirely lacking in the earlier work. However, this very short chapter already outlines the three sections of the later work. Although the composer's sonata is essentially associated with Swann it serves as Marcel's initial introduction to Vinteuil's music. Like Françoise, Mme Swann often plays the sonata for Marcel when it is still too warm to set out on their afternoon walk: "Elle (Francoise) la lui jouait souvent chez elle avant de partir, quand il faisait encore trop chaud pour ces promenades" (J.S., p. 819). "Au reste, le plus souvent, nous ne restions pas à la maison, nous allions nous promener. Parfois, avant d'aller s'habiller, Mme Swann se mettait au piano" (I, 529).

Jean Santeuil and its indication that something exists which transcends the love which it comes to be associated with already prefigures the appearance of Vinteuil's septet: "On reconnaît déjà le thème du grand commentaire sur le Septuor: 'Et pourtant quelque chose de plus mystérieux que l'amour d'Albertine semblait promis au début de cette oeuvre...'" (Butor, p. 132). The "petite phrase" of Saint-Saëns' sonata which incarnates Jean's love for Françoise becomes the initial step in the progression from Vinteuil's sonata to the composer's monumental septet, with the relationship between Jean and Françoise anticipating the development into the characters of Swann and Odette, and Marcel and Albertine. In the following chapter I will discuss the transformation which the sonata will undergo in order to become Vinteuil's septet, the epitome of his genius and the work which will ultimately lead Marcel to an understanding of the true nature of art.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Mireille Marc-Lipiansky, La Naissance du monde Proustien  
dans Jean Santeuil (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1974), pp. 174-175.

## Chapter 6

## Genius Fulfilled:

Vinteuil's Septet

As we have seen thus far, the first three sections devoted to the music of Vinteuil deal primarily with the composer's sonata for piano and violin, and the impressions and reactions which this piece evokes in Swann. In the course of these sections, Swann comes to represent the early stages in the development of Marcel's understanding of the composer's music and by extension may be seen as a personification of one of the two conflicting interpretations of art between which the Narrator fluctuates throughout his life: Swann embodies a worldly conception of art in which creation is seen as nothing more than a manifestation of life itself, a means to evoke memories of particular events or moments in time rather than the vehicle to achieve a transcendent reality beyond the confines of time and space. Despite the appeal of the "petite phrase" concerning the possibility of a more meaningful existence attainable through art, Swann chooses to limit the importance of the music to the phrase's association with his love for Odette. Even when a complacent reality replaces the painful memories which were heretofore evoked by the music, Swann's impressions of the sonata continue to be limited to reminiscences of the surroundings in which he used to listen to the "petite phrase" being performed: "le Bois de Boulogne en catelepsie." His limited perception of art stands in direct

opposition to the message incarnated within the sonata and to the conception of art as the manifestation of a spiritual reality which Vinteuil comes to represent. As Marcel approaches a deeper understanding of the significance of Vinteuil's music, the importance of Swann tends to decrease in the remainder of the narrative. Swann is never introduced to the composer's later work nor does he develop beyond the level of maturity which characterizes his conception of the sonata. Swann is never able to transcend his personal impressions of the sonata in order to perceive the universal meaning which lies hidden within the music. Marcel's introduction to the septet becomes a turning point in the evolution of his understanding of Vinteuil's music and anticipates the Narrator's realization of the true nature of art.

Once again, as was the case during the evening party given by Mme de Saint-Euverte, the music is introduced in the midst of an assembly of artificial and superficial individuals. This society exemplifies a lifestyle which has left an emptiness and a sense of unfulfillment within Marcel thus far. Proust emphasizes the limited appreciation of this audience, for whom the arts are seen as a fashionable pastime; they are merely present at this concert since it would be considered a socially acceptable gathering despite the fact that Mme Verdurin is the hostess: "'Montrez-moi où est la mère Verdurin; croyez-vous que ce soit indispensable que je me fasse présenter? J'espère au moins qu'elle ne fera pas mettre mon nom dans le journal demain, il y aurait de quoi me

brouiller avec tous les miens'" (III, 245). Proust describes this group as "une foule aussi mal élevée qu'élégante" (III, 248), which lacks any trace of understanding of the music.

In the first section devoted to music we saw that Mme Verdurin and her "petite scène" come to represent a superficial attitude toward art which is in direct contrast to the message of the "petite phrase"; the music always produces a physical indisposition in her rather than an emotional reaction. Although she professes a genuine understanding of Vinteuil's music, any attempt to delve deeper into the mysteries of the phrase is met with one of her sarcastic retorts: "--Tiens, c'est amusant, je n'avais jamais fait attention; je vous dirai que je n'aime pas beaucoup chercher la petite bête et m'égarer dans des pointes d'aiguilles; on ne perd pas son temps à couper les cheveux en quatre ici, ce n'est pas le genre de la maison'" (I, 213). Now, in keeping with the more refined surroundings, and the guests which are of a higher station in society, her "petite scène" has also taken on a much more dignified tone. She assumes a kind of Stoic attitude and no longer gives an outward display of suffering; the "petite scène" has been reduced to a fixed expression on her face. There is an ironic union of the spiritual and material in Proust's description of Mme Verdurin as "une divinité qui présidait aux solennités musicales, déesse du wagnerisme et de la migraine" (III, 248). The irony becomes even more poignant since the woman whose name becomes synonymous with an artificial response to music scorns the superficiality of this

audience. Her expression displays disdain for these women of the Faubourg who profess such admiration for the music and yet whose appreciation goes no further than nodding their heads in time to the music. She alone, or so she believes, can profess a true understanding of Vinteuil's music; no one can claim to appreciate it as well as she can. The "Patronne's" stoic immobility seems to be in silent defiance of "les battements de mesure exécutés par les têtes ignorantes des dames du Faubourg" (III, 251). Her "petite scène" has transcended the level of words and is reflected in her whole bearing:

Mme Verdurin ne disait pas: "Vous comprenez que je la connais cette musique, et un peu encore! S'il me fallait exprimer tout ce que je ressens, vous n'en auriez pas fini!" Elle ne le disait pas. Mais sa taille droite et immobile, ses yeux sans expression, ses mèches fuyantes, le disaient pour elle. Ils disaient aussi son courage, que les musiciens pouvaient y aller, ne pas ménager ses nerfs, qu'elle ne flancherait pas à l'andante, qu'elle ne crierait pas à l'allegro (III, 251).

How sad that she doesn't realize that her "petite scène" is as meaningless as the ladies' nodding. Her resentment stems to the fact that there is no one at this gathering to appreciate her performance; she has lost her position as focal point of the evening, having been replaced by the Baron de Charlus. In the earlier sections, Swann's attitude toward the sonata is an extension of Mme Verdurin's limited approach to music. In this section Swann has disappeared and Mme Verdurin's position is threatened by the presence of the Baron, whose interest in the music is as self-centered as that of Swann: the Baron and Swann

each demonstrate similar responses and reactions to Vinteuil's music. Just as Swann limits the music to its association with Odette, the one with whom he has often heard the music being performed, Charlus' interest lies not in the music itself, but in the person who is performing it. Both the Baron and Swann reduce the music to its ephemeral proportions and bring it into the confines of time and space; each attributes the importance of the music to its association with the beloved rather than as a means to achieve transcendence.

M. de Charlus assumes almost comic proportions in his interactions with his guests. He strives to establish the appropriate atmosphere which should be maintained during the performance. This is not the moment for frivolous talk: a reverent, almost religious ambiance must pervade the room. Perhaps M. de Charlus' only reason for displaying such concern in preparing the audience stems from his interest in Morel. However, despite M. de Charlus' almost comic appearance, Proust is able to present his feelings concerning the atmosphere which should permeate the room during the performance: "le religieux silence qu'il convenait d'observer" (III, 248). During the second section devoted to music, the performance had eventually achieved the proportions of a ritual in which the musicians had served as priests invoking the presence of the deity while the spectators watched in awe: "La parole ineffable d'un seul absent, peut-être d'un mort..., s'exhalant au-dessus des rites de ces officiants, suffisait à tenir en échec l'attention de trois

cents personnes, et faisait de cette estrade où une âme était ainsi évoquée un des plus nobles autels où pût s'accomplir une cérémonie surnaturelle" (I, 352-353). Now M. de Charlus has been able to plunge this group into a hypnotic state: "Tous furent hypotisé, on n'ôsa plus proférer un son, bouger une chaise" (III, 248). However, they have not been left spell-bound by the music, since the performance has not even begun yet, but by "le prestige de Palamède" (III, 248); they are impressed by M. de Charlus and not by the music. There is almost an ironic twist to the following statement: "Il présentait lui-même, élevant vers son beau front ses mains gantées de blanc, un modèle (auquel on devait se conformer) de gravité, presque déjà d'extase, sans répondre aux saluts des retardataires, assez indécents pour ne pas comprendre que l'heure était maintenant au grand Art (III, 248). Unlike the musicians in section two, the only deity whose presence M. de Charlus is invoking is that of Morel, whom he has idolized; his attention has been displaced. As viewed through the sections devoted to music, Charlus' presence serves to maintain the misguided influence which is in direct contrast to the message inherent to Vinteuil's music. This worldly influence and the interference which it causes to the fulfillment of Marcel's "vocation" as an artist remains apparent, despite the septet's urgent appeal, until the final revelation in Le Temps retrouvé: it is at this time that all his doubts are dispelled and he is able to devote himself to his creation. As seen through the sections devoted to music, in the course of Marcel's

total evolution of thought concerning art, the Narrator replaces Swann, and Vinteuil replaces all that is associated with the world and society. The earthly and mundane quality of the audience is extended to the violincellist whose manner of performing is compared to a domestic chore: "Il se penchait sur sa contrebasse, la palpait avec la même patience domestique que s'il eût épluché un chou" (III, 251). The metaphor is grounded in reality just as the material for any work of art also depends upon reality. However, the juxtaposition of the description of the violincellist and of the harpist shows the transcendence which the music makes possible. She is compared to a divine creature, a "petite déesse allégorique" (III, 251) who works to gather up the stars in the sky. The sounds themselves are compared to celestial bodies: "des étoiles" (III, 251).

Although Swann introduces him to Vinteuil's sonata at a much earlier date, it is not until the fourth section devoted to music that Marcel recognizes the importance of this composer to the realization of his vocation as an artist; it is in this section of La Prisonnière that Proust describes Vinteuil's septet, the culmination of the composer's artistry. Marcel is unable to identify the piece which is being performed: "je me trouvais en pays inconnu" (III, 249). In the second section, the composer is compared to an explorer going through yet unknown realms. Here the listener's confusion with reference to the music is described in terms of his inability to identify the physical area in which he is located. Marcel wishes for the appearance of "un génie ou

une adolescente d'une ravissante beauté (who will) révèle exactement ce qu'il désire savoir" (III, 249). The genie does appear in the form of the "petite phrase," comparing the music as in an earlier section, to a supernatural being. The metaphor of physical territory is extended so that the piece of music is a familiar plot of land which has been approached from a different direction; themes from the sonata are readily recognizable "au milieu de cette musique nouvelle" (III, 249). The "petite phrase" acts as the neighbor's daughter "qui est venue dire bonjour au passage" (III, 249). And yet, the phrase is "plus merveilleuse qu'une adolescente" (III, 249), the same adjective used to give the "oiseau" of the second section a more divine nature. The phrase is still recognizable as being a theme from the sonata, but it has undergone various transformations to make it appropriate to the septet. It has undergone various physical changes while maintaining its essence intact, just as a woman might change her accessories, "ces parures" (III, 249). Since this is a different situation and she is acting in a different capacity, she has changed her costume; she is no longer the major attraction but is a guide through other unexplored territories: "sa signification, d'ailleurs, n'était cette fois que de me montrer le chemin" (III, 249). The "petite phrase" disappears into the new motifs. The ideas recognizable from the sonata which are expanded upon in the septet reflect the greater understanding and maturity of the composer in the later piece.

As he approaches the essence of reality, the sonata is outgrown by Vinteuil.

The fact that Vinteuil has composed pieces other than the sonata comes as a surprise to Marcel. However, when compared to the septet, the sonata seems to be a mere sketch which lacks the depth of insight and the artistic polish of the more mature work. The septet is the masterpiece which outshines the sonata and upon which Vinteuil's fame as a composer must rest: "À côté de ce Septuor, certaines phrases de la Sonate, que seules le public connaissait, apparaissaient comme tellement banales qu'on ne pouvait pas comprendre comment elles avaient pu exciter tant d'admiration" (III, 263). Although the sonata is a beautiful piece of music, when compared to the septet, it loses much of its importance. A major part of its value lies in the fact that the sonata already has "en quantités infinitésimales..., quelque chose de l'originalité des chefs-d'oeuvre qui rétrospectivement comptent seuls pour nous" (III, 263). The sonata reflects the early stages in the development of the composer. The earlier piece also aids in the process of assimilation which all art must undergo; having already accepted the sonata, the public will be more receptive to the septet. Perhaps without this preparatory stage, the septet might not be understood. However, even if these earlier works do contain some suggestion of the mysteries which will be revealed later, "elles laissaient celles-ci dans un inconnu complet" (III, 263). The septet is based on a progression of seven notes, a more complex scheme than the sonata

which depends upon five notes and the interplay between two of these same notes. The septet is also a more complex form since it is composed for several instruments whereas the sonata is written for piano and violin; more complex feelings, experiences, and ideas demand a more complex form to express them. If the septet had been left unpublished, the epitome of the composer's artistry would have remained unknown, and the depth of his insight and perception would never have been appreciated. Vinteuil's composition is compared to "ces univers jusqu'auxquels notre perception n'atteint pas, dont nous n'aurons jamais une idée" (III, 264). Vinteuil's music transcends the bounds of our perception and becomes the means to transcend what can be expressed through words and can be understood through the intellect.

Although both the sonata and the septet are impressive in themselves, their beauties are of two distinctly different types. The sonata is characterized by a kind of rustic innocence; an almost virginal quality, as exemplified by "une aube liliale" and "des géraniums blancs" (III, 250). The septet is "une rose d'aurore" (III, 250); it no longer embraces the whiteness of purity, but incarnates more turbulent passions and has a kind of fieriness to it. The music begins with the turmoil, pain, and disillusionment which must have been characteristic of a certain period of the composer's life, an idea which is reflected in the metaphor of "un matin d'orage" (III, 250). This picture of the sea is reminiscent of the

opening passages describing the sonata. Now above this sea spans the redness of a new dawn full of mysterious hope, realizable through art. The septet has the added dimension of color to it which is representative of a certain maturity and experience on the part of the composer; an added insight into the mysteries of the soul: "Ce rouge si nouveau, si absent de la tendre, champêtre et candide Sonate, teignait tout le ciel, comme l'aurore, d'un espoir mystérieux" (III, 250). It is a hope which is not related to any earthly experience which may be seen as ephemeral in nature, but looks towards transcendence and infinity. In this section, the music is described in visual imagery and in terms of painting. The redness of the dawn reminds us of the image of the rainbow and its message of hope in the earlier section. This technique had already been employed in the episode concerned with the evening party given by Mme de Saint-Euverte. In the third section dealing with the afternoon spent with Mme Swann, the Narrator had also compared the music to painting by suggesting that a certain distance is often necessary to appreciate art to its greatest possible extent. Proust exploits the image of the rainbow to its fullest here, suggesting that the various colors correspond to the infinite number of passions and possibilities open to the musician; they represent the greater experience characteristic of the more mature Vinteuil. To the two initial themes, described as "couleurs" (III, 253), are added "toutes celles du prisme" (I, 352), in order to produce the effect of orchestration. In the final

section the septet becomes the piece of music which has been orchestrated, the pencil sketch to which the added dimension of color has been added. Further down in the passage, the colors are applied directly to the pieces: we have "le rougeoyant septuor" in comparison to "la blanche Sonate" (III, 255). Vinteuil chooses "la couleur de tel timbre," (III, 253), colors so personal that they can be tarnished neither by time nor imitation; they may be surpassed, but their originality will not "pâlir" (III, 254). These colors are so individual and express what is so deeply rooted within the composer, that they cannot be recreated even by the best composers simply by following certain rules of music theory. They are a reflection of the composer's most personal being which is resurrected each time the music is performed, be it now or generations after the composer has died. The immortality of the composer is a direct result of his individuality.

The music is compared to a beam of light which is broken down into its component parts as it passes through a window. Each of the colors incarnates one of various emotions or impressions which have inspired the music and have been raised to a universal level in order to be captured within the composition. Each sound, each note becomes a color so distinct from all others, since it is a revelation of the composer's soul, that it remains inimitable. This idea will be further developed later in the chapter with reference to the existence of the individual. This thought is reminiscent of an earlier passage in which the music

is described as being something which cannot be reduced to various configurations of the eight notes of the scale. Once the composer's impressions have attained a more general form, they become recognizable to all receptive individuals who act as a prism and decompose the "masse" (I, 208) of the music into the emotions and experiences which have occasioned its creation. It is at this time that the listener is able to substitute his own impressions for those he has been able to identify with. When Swann experiences pain at the entrance of the "petite phrase" he realizes that Vinteuil must have experienced intense suffering in order to have insight into such a state of mind. The other listeners are unconscious of this suffering and pain. As Marcel pictures Albertine asleep, the picture of the child who is sleeping is readily recognizable to him. The others see the composition as a whole and do not detect these intimate details; they simply nod their heads in time to the music without being at all sensitive to what lies below the surface.

Through the use of the entire orchestra, the lines of music and the different motifs become more diffuse since they are not solidly confined to one instrument but are given the opportunity to be scattered among instruments of different registers and tones; they are given the possibility for variety. When a piece is transposed to a piano arrangement it becomes a "sketch" of the original work, to employ a term which might be used in painting; it lacks all the vitality and color of the finished product. There is a certain whiteness to the ray of light before the

colors have been added to it. This notion of color and the added dimension it gives to an artistic sketch or metaphorically to a piano arrangement of an orchestral work was introduced in a much earlier section of A la Recherche: as a young boy Marcel is particularly taken by the beauty of the white hawthorns he sees scattered among the gardens through which he wanders during his walks in Combray. On one occasion, however, his grandfather points out a pink hawthorn to him. Marcel is in ecstasy; nature, too, has added color to one of its creations in order to produce a flower which is even more beautiful than the original "sketch." He experiences the same joy which might be his "devant un tableau dont nous n'avions vu jusque-là qu'une esquisse au crayon, si un morceau entendu seulement au piano nous apparaît ensuite revêtu des couleurs de l'orchestre" (I, 139). The beauty of the hawthorns is of a transitory nature; it is only in their depiction through art or music, that the possibility of transcending their ephemeral nature lies.

The composer who has produced "des couleurs" is compared to the painter who "peignait sa grande fresque musicale, comme Michel-Ange attaché à son échelle et lançant, la tête en bas, de tumultueux coups de brosse au plafond de la chapelle Sixtine" (III, 254). The tumultuous brush strokes are reminiscent of the waves which symbolize the confusion of the music in its pure state. The joy which accompanies creation reaches such an intensity that it attains the proportions of frenzy: "haletant, grisé, affolé, vertigineux" (III, 254), an almost sexual response

leading to a release which ends in creation; it is a physical response which ends in the revelation of what lies deep within the artist, what very often is in complete contrast to what is readily seen. In the case of Vinteuil, his physical bearing gives the impression of being "si timide et si triste" (III, 254) though his music betrays "des audaces" and "un bonheur" (III, 254); he is "le triste petit bourgeois bienséant" who is able to achieve "l'approximation la plus hardie des allégresses de l'au-delà" (III, 261). The juxtaposition of these opposing characteristics in the same sentence serves to further emphasize the contrast which is evoked through the music. The composer experiences a joy from the creation of his work which acts as a strengthening force allowing him to continue on toward even more startling discoveries. Through this force he gains the ability to make himself more comprehensible to the listener so that he too may be taught the means to attain greater insight into his own being; to make discoveries into his own soul: "L'auditeur (is led) de trouvaille en trouvaille, ou plutôt c'était le créateur qui le conduisait lui-même" (III, 254). As the composer approaches the essence of reality, the greater intensity of his emotions is reflected within his music. Vinteuil has achieved the joy of "l'éternel matin" (III, 250), the joy and resignation which follows the pain and suffering of which the "petite phrase" had spoken to Swann. Now it is Marcel who is receiving the phrase's message of transcendence with the sole difference that Vinteuil himself seems to have been resurrected and is personally

leading the listener through unknown regions, through the realm of the spirit. Marcel realizes that he too has experienced such intense emotions whenever he has attained an extratemporal moment and approached the essence of reality. The emotions which are evoked at the moment when he sips the tea in which the madeleine has been dipped, his impressions at Martinville, and the strange pleasure he feels as he stumbles on the uneven pavement stones are all accompanied by a lack of concern regarding death since in each of these experiences, Marcel attains a realm beyond time. Vinteuil's music incarnates this leap beyond time which leads to the immortality of the artist. Through his music, Vinteuil is given the opportunity "de poursuivre, pour un temps illimité, une part au moins de sa vie" (III, 255). The composer is given the gift of immortality to an even greater extent than to the painter, since his works are less vulnerable to the effects of time and the elements. The resistance of the artist's work depends upon many physical factors. If the wall upon which the fresco is painted is destroyed, so is the masterpiece: if the paints are not of a very good quality, they may begin to chip and peel; the passage of time will also wear away the painting. It is not so with music. Music is the least concrete of the arts since it is not dependent on any physical properties, but is auditory in nature. Each time the composition is performed, it will be as young and alive as the day it was envisioned.

Music has one added dimension beyond color, namely motion; it is of a higher order than the beam of light since it incarnates

life itself, in all of its activity and motion. Music has "vie" (III, 254) and the movement which springs from it is "perpétuel" (III, 254), further proof of the immortality which can be achieved through art. Painting, on the contrary, receives its "vie" from the observer. The music is never static, but always in a state of constant flux: the added dimension characteristic of music is emphasized through the juxtaposition of the "immobile éblouissement de la lumière" to the "mouvement perpétuel et heureux" (III, 254) of the music. This notion of motion points to Proust's idea that music incarnates the potential for rejuvenation through its ability to constantly renew itself.

Since Proust considers music to be the art form he strives most to emulate, many of the characteristics which he discusses in conjunction with Vinteuil's music are included in his own writing. In an earlier section, we saw that Proust tries to exploit the musical quality of language in order to have the language become music (Genette, Figures, III, 178). He also attempts to introduce the feeling of movement and flux which is intrinsic to music into the narrative. Genette feels that Proust achieves this sense of motion, what this critic refers to as "dizzy rotation" (Genette, "Proust Palimpsest," p. 222), through the doubling of images and characters and the doubling of time itself; no incident can be isolated to any given moment in time: "In fact each moment of the work appears in a sense twice over: first in the Recherche as the birth of a vocation and second in the Recherche as the exercise of this vocation"--two events which

remain separate since the reader is "informed in extremis that the book which he has just read remains to be written and that this book that is to be written is more or less (but only more or less) the one which he has just read." The work is "constantly thrown into a dizzy rotation....a single glance is enough to set off a circulation that nothing can then stop" (Ibid., p. 222).

The contrast between the sonata and the septet is further emphasized through a kind of auditory imagery. There is a certain dissonance in the sound of the septet, as suggested by "un chant perçait déjà l'air" (III, 250), which was absent in the sonata; a shrillness which is reminiscent of "le chant du coq" (III, 250) and is quite distinct from the quiet and gentle "roucoulement de colombe" (III, 250). The cry of the cock seems to suggest that the septet is based upon a much more dissonant progression of notes than the sonata. Even the choice of birds reflects the change in emphasis: the purity and virginity characteristic of the dove is in direct contrast to the coarseness of the rooster: to its "plus épaisse joie" (III, 250). Its cry is "déchirant" and "suraigu" (III, 250), a disturbing sound which is in complete contrast to the pacifying tendency of the sonata; it is the composer's final appeal to accept art as the means to a more fruitful existence. It is "un appel" (III, 250), an awakening which asks the reader, or listener to go beyond himself to "l'éternel matin" (III, 250), to a state of transcendence in order to achieve a state of rejuvenation and renewal through art. The cry of the cock is

"mystique" (III, 250), revealing the spiritual nature of the message which the music incarnates, just as the "oiseau," the bird of Paradise, was "merveilleux." The vivid description of the piercing, rending, cry of the cock almost seems to send a shudder down our spines at the thought of the pain and agony which must have inspired these cries.

The music is dissonant and even seems to be cacophonous, to the point that it becomes displeasing to the Narrator to listen to it; the rhythm does not flow smoothly but moves "péniblement" (III, 250). This is music in its virginal and pure state, devoid of any order imposed by the intellect; it is almost noise, primeval in nature: "On aurait pu en imiter presque tout l'essentiel, rien qu'avec des bruits, en frappant d'une certaine manière des baguettes sur une table" (III, 250-251). The difficulty which Marcel has in listening to the music causes his attention to wander, so that he begins to survey the audience and the musicians, scarcely heeding the music. Marcel's response to the music at this point is characteristic of his response to art in general: the world is a constant distraction to him, just as it was to Swann.

In light of the septet, the sonata and the other works composed by Vinteuil are "que de timides essais, délicieux mais bien frêles, auprès du chef-d'oeuvre triomphal et complet qui m'était en ce moment révélé" (III, 252). This serves to further emphasize the difference between the two pieces: the virginal quality of the sonata is suggested by "timides," whereas

"trionphal et complet" denotes the greater insight of a more mature composition; the sonata is only un "essai" whereas the septet is a "chef-d'oeuvre." The evolution from the earlier composition to the later one is marked by a growing experience on the part of Vinteuil himself and reflects his gradual acceptance of his earthly condition as a result of the realization that something exists which goes beyond his pain and his ultimate transcendence of his suffering, a transcendence which is expressed through "le motif triomphant des cloches" (III, 252). The composer's increasing insight points to Marcel's own development and his ultimate sense of fulfillment.

"La blanche Sonate" is a "timide interrogation" (III, 255), a virginal questioning, which is in striking contrast to the more experienced "rougeoyant septuor" which strives for the fulfillment of "l'étrange promesse" (III, 255) with a passion. There is no longer this naive questioning, but "la supplication haletante" (III, 255) which reflects a change in tone through added emotion. The sonata seems to be a more tranquil piece moving more quietly and slowly toward a given point. On the other hand, the septet seems to move at a faster tempo, perhaps not even allegro, which would denote a happiness of a more controlled nature. The descriptions suggest prestissimo moving breathlessly in search of this promise; there is a kind of frenzy which is readily transferred to the reader, leaving him breathless. The colors and language used to describe the septet are suggestive of sexual passion. Composed of loud and piercing

sounds, the piece seems to move from dissonance to cacophony. As the piece progresses, its continual fortissimo is in striking contrast to the opening sections which suggest a child sleeping. It is almost as if the sonata and septet are respectively the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of a single personality. And yet, although these two pieces seem so drastically different, in essence they are the same since they both spring from the same soul. They are merely reflections of two different periods in one man's life, when different emotions may have been dominant in this consciousness; two different moments on the road to maturity, the path from happiness to suffering and then to ultimate acceptance and resignation:

Ces deux interrogations si dissemblables qui commandaient le mouvement si différent de la sonate et du septuor, l'une brisant en courts appels une ligne continue et pure, l'autre ressoudant en une armature indivisible des fragments épars, l'une si calme et timide, presque détachée et comme philosophique, l'autre si pressante, anxieuse, implorante, c'était pourtant une même prière, jaillie devant différents levers de soleil intérieurs, et seulement réfractée à travers les milieux différents de pensées autres, de recherches d'art en progrès au cours d'années où il avait voulu créer quelque chose de nouveau (III, 255).

The image of these different risings of the internal sun is reminiscent of the metaphor of the dawn presented at the beginning of this section. Depending upon the psychological state of the artist and his progress in his struggle toward maturity, the sun may rise upon "un matin d'orage," or upon "un rose d'aurore" (III, 250). These conflicting attitudes will

significantly effect the translation of his so-called "univers" (III, 255) which lies deep within him. This is why there may be so many contrasting emotions captured within one composition. "Prière, espérance qui était au fond la même" (III, 255) and in essence is immutable but which is often disguised behind the changing emotions and passions of the artist and remain unique to him: "et d'autre part qu'on ne trouvait que dans les oeuvres de Vinteuil" (III, 255).

The realization of the connection between all of the compositions of any given artist is extended to become the connection between all of the Narrator's loves: "Si je considérais maintenant non plus mon amour pour Albertine, mais toute ma vie, mes autres amours n'y avaient été que de minces et timides essais qui préparaient, des appels qui réclamaient ce plus vaste amour: l'amour pour Albertine" (III, 252). The music is always intimately associated with the course of the love affair of the listener. In the first sections the sonata and the "petite phrase" become synonymous with Swann's love for Odette, a relationship which anticipates the appearance of Albertine. Now the septet is associated with Marcel's present relationship. Mlle Vinteuil is the stimulus behind the composer's work and is also able to inspire jealousy in Marcel since he feels that she has been seeing the composer's daughter. This thought distracts his attention from the septet; from the spiritual embodiment of Mlle Vinteuil in the music: "avait-elle été inspirée à Vinteuil par le sommeil de sa fille" (III, 253), Marcel moves to the

contemplation of the physical woman: "Et je cessai de suivre la musique pour me redemander si Albertine avait vu ou non Mlle Vinteuil ces jours-ci" (III, 252). The pain which springs from jealousy is described in terms of a physical malady: "Ce que je voyais d'elle me lésait comme un malade dont les sens seraient si fâcheusement transposés que la vue d'une couleur serait intérieurement éprouvée par lui comme une incision en pleine chair" (III, 253). The possibility that Albertine may love Mlle Vinteuil is enough to delay his separation from her; his love always increases when some obstacle seems to be placed in the way of it. As long as any trace of emotion still can be detected in him, he will not be able to tolerate any unfaithfulness from her. The suffering Marcel experiences as a result of his love for Albertine puts him in a more receptive state to appreciate Vinteuil's "chef-d'oeuvre." Since love is something which is not experienced through the intellect, and in fact, very often goes quite contrary to it: "Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point,"<sup>1</sup> love tends to shift the point of emphasis from the reason to the heart or spirit. Once the spirit predominates, it is possible for the individual to appreciate "pure music," something which is neither notation nor something which can be reduced to an intellectual process. Swann, however, becomes trapped within his love rather than using it as a means to gain a deeper sense of the composer's message.

In A la Recherche, love is essential to both the "creation" and appreciation of Vinteuil's music. Marcel is now able to

appreciate Vinteuil's more mature work whereas at an earlier period of his life he was unable to draw any conclusions concerning the sonata. Perhaps his lack of appreciation for the piece upon his initial introduction to it, was due to the fact that he was not yet involved in any mature emotional experience; during that period of his life he was more involved in increasing his intellectual perspective toward reality. His relationship with Gilberte could never be considered of the same intensity as that with Albertine: "...mais toute ma vie, mes autres amours n'y avaient été que de minces et timides essais qui préparaient, des appels qui réclamaient ce plus vaste amour: l'amour pour Albertine" (III, 252). Just as a composer's early works anticipate the creation of his "chef-d'oeuvre," an individual's early loves point to his more mature relationships. Once Marcel has fallen in love with Albertine, and has experienced the pain and suffering which often accompany love, he is able to truly appreciate and understand Vinteuil's music. Vinteuil's love for his daughter is instrumental in putting the composer into a receptive state for the "creation" of his works. Although in this case the love is not of a romantic nature, it is no less intense since his paternal love reaches almost the level of idolatry. It is common knowledge in Combray that Vinteuil caters to all of the desires of his daughter. This point concerning the importance of love to the appreciation of music might be extended one step further: the respect inspired in Mlle Vinteuil's friend after the death of the composer, might be considered a kind of

love leading to a genuine appreciation of his work and ultimately the transcription of all of his notes into publishable form. In fact, it is due to her diligent efforts in deciphering Vinteuil's "indéchiffrables notations" (III, 261) for the septet, that the composer owes his fame: "Indéchiffrables, mais qui pourtant avaient fini à force de patience, d'intelligence et de respect, par être déchiffrées par la seule personne qui avait assez vécu auprès de Vinteuil pour bien connaître sa manière de travailler, pour deviner ses indications d'orchestre: l'amie de Mlle Vinteuil" (III, 261). Earlier, Vinteuil was described as the scientist seeking to uncover the mysteries of the world of the spirit. Now his notebooks are compared to "les illisibles carnets où un chimiste de génie, qui ne sait pas la mort si proche, a noté des découvertes qui resteront peut-être à jamais ignorées" (III, 262). Although his investigation is described in terms of scientific language: "la formule éternellement vraie" (III, 262), his discoveries deal with what lies beyond the realm of time and space.

It is ironic that one of the qualities attributed to Mlle Vinteuil's friend with regard to the composer should be "respect." This is one quality which definitely seemed to be lacking in her relationship with Vinteuil. However, "du vivant même du grand musicien, elle avait appris de la fille le culte que celle-ci avait pour son père" (III, 261). The love inspired in Mlle Vinteuil's friend for the composer makes her sensitive and aware of the workings of his personality and therefore

capable of understanding and appreciating his music; only love places the individual in a receptive state of mind for both "creation" and true appreciation of the arts. In Mlle Vinteuil's friend's case, the love is two fold: not only does she experience a filial love for the composer which makes her receptive to his music, but she loves his daughter which allows her to actually approach the source and stimulus of the music. Although she may have shortened his physical existence through the sufferings she caused him as a result of her relationship with his daughter, she has assured his immortality through the transcription of his compositions: "L'amie de Mlle Vinteuil eut la consolation d'assurer au musicien dont elle avait assombri les dernières années une gloire immortelle et compensatrice" (III, 262). Vinteuil's fame as a composer rests upon the fact that this young woman "avait mis au jour toute une série d'oeuvres géniales et qui avaient été une telle révélation qu'une souscription n'allait pas tarder à être ouverte, sous le patronage du ministre de l'Instruction publique, en vue de faire élever une statue à Vinteuil" (III, 264). Without Mlle Vinteuil's friend's efforts, the public's knowledge of the composer's music would have been limited to several phrases from the sonata. Although these phrases are crucial to the understanding of the composer's later works, they are inconsequential in light of the genius of his septet. Just as the sonata causes Swann untold anxiety since it recalls all his past memories of Odette, so too, the septet and its association

with Mlle Vinteuil's friend "devait surtout dans l'avenir être cause de tant de souffrances" (III, 263) for the Narrator.

As Marcel thinks of Albertine at home, awaiting his return, an almost conjugal picture is awakened in him: she is "une femme bien aimée" (III, 253). This picture of domestic tranquility is next reflected in the music itself: "je fus caressé au passage par une tendre phrase familiale et domestique du septuor" (III, 253). The image of a child sleeping peacefully is apparent through the motif which so pacifies him. In the mind of Marcel, Albertine is substituted for this child, Mlle Vinteuil becoming "Albertine, ma petite enfant" (III, 253). In fact, she too may be "endormie un instant dans sa chambre" (III, 253). The domestic image of Albertine is reminiscent of the complacent existence of Swann and Odette, an option which is also open to Marcel, but which negates any possibility of pursuing his "vocation." Although the image of the child is transferred to Albertine, the sleeping child becomes a stimulus to creation for Vinteuil, whereas his mistress is a major cause behind Marcel's procrastination.

Once the listener is able to identify with the emotions the composer evokes through the music, his own impressions are substituted for the original ones. These impressions must then be raised to a universal level so that they can be incorporated into a work of art and be easily recognizable by all. Marcel realizes that even at the very beginning of the piece a deeper meaning had been suggested by "ces premiers cris d'aurore" (III,

253); something which transcends his love for Albertine is inherent to the music. Although Swann had also perceived something in the "petite phrase" which would outlive the ephemeral nature of his love for Odette, he is never able to detach the music from its particular association with his mistress and uncover the mystery of its message. His impressions and emotions do not become the material for a work of art, but an end in themselves. Within this music lies the secret to transcendence and a more meaningful existence--a secret which was revealed quite vividly to Swann. This is a continuation of the theme introduced in Jean Santeuil, that the music incarnates something more permanent than their respective loves: "Et pourtant, me dis-je, quelque chose de plus mystérieux que l'amour d'Albertine semblait promis au début de cette oeuvre, dans ces premiers cris d'aurore" (III, 253); it is the dawn of a new existence for all those willing to hear the call. It is in conjunction with Vinteuil's septet, that Marcel verbalizes the essential question concerning the nature of art which remains a point of conflict throughout his life, and detains the reconciliation of his doubts and the realization of "sa vocation": "Si l'art n'était vraiment qu'un prolongement de la vie, valait-il de lui rien sacrifier? N'était-il pas aussi irréel qu'elle-même" (III, 255)? Marcel is not yet totally convinced that art is the incarnation of the innermost reaches of the artist's soul, the bringing to light of the universal truths which lie deeply imbedded within the darkness of the individual's

spirit, the unveiling of the artist's vision of the essence of reality. He does not understand that it is only by bringing these truths to the surface, these truths which are common to all humanity, that we can transcend the banality of our everyday existence and add greater meaning to it.

Although the essence of reality remains constant and transcends the limits of time and space, each artist will have his own personal vision of this reality. The artist's role is to unveil his vision of reality, a vision which is intrinsic to the very soul of the individual, and to incorporate it into the work of art; only through art can one hope to approach the spiritual essence of the individual. Works of art are the impressions themselves, the inner depths of the artist's soul which distinguish him from all others and establish his existence as an individual: "Celle que donnaient ces phrases de Vinteuil était différente de toute autre, comme si, en dépit des conclusions qui semblent se dégager de la science, l'individuel existait" (III, 255-256). Since each individual perceives the universe in a slightly different manner from another, the best possible way to obtain the greatest outlook on life would be to see the world through the eyes of as many individuals as possible. However, this is only feasible through contact with the works of men such as Vinteuil. Not even space travel nor journeys through strange territories could lead to such vital discoveries as those inherent to the works of the artist. It is through these differences in the perception of the universe that the artist's

individuality is defined; the artist's vision is what lends him his individuality (Deleuze, p. 53).

Despite the apparent differences which may seem to exist between the various works of a given artist, his vision of reality remains constant throughout his lifetime. Even when the composer consciously "cherchait puissamment à être nouveau" (III, 256), the most profound similarities to his previous works arise unconsciously. When he tries to vary a theme, change its rhythm, or even tries to bring it back to its original form, these are changes and similarities formed by the intelligence and are therefore more superficial than those which arise spontaneously: "n'arrivaient jamais à être aussi frappantes que ces ressemblances dissimulées, involontaires, qui éclataient sous des couleurs différentes, entre les deux chefs-d'oeuvre distincts" (III, 256). Each artist has an "accent" (III, 256) which differs from that of every other artist and separates him from them, since this "accent" springs from his soul. Once again, as during the gathering given by Mme de Saint-Euverte (I, 351), the composer is compared to the scientist who speculates and investigates. However, he performs "les éternelles investigations...débarrassée des formes analytiques du raisonnement" (III, 256). Since the process of "creation" is devoid of all rational thought, it is almost as if "elle s'était exercée dans le monde des anges" (III, 256), a thought further emphasized by the adjective "éternelles." This lack of logic and order makes it impossible for the music to be translated into a

medium which is based on the intellect; it cannot be translated into human language. In an earlier section the dialogue which seemed to be going on between the piano and violin parts of the sonata was described as "la suppression des mots humains" (I, 351). Music possesses a depth and penetration which make all spoken language seem trivial. Man has developed a written and spoken language based upon the intelligence, but perhaps if this had not been the case, music might have been the means for "la communication des âmes" (III, 258).

The composer is "un médium" (III, 256) who must invoke these experiences and then translate them into a comprehensible form. This undeniable originality which is characteristic of the composer is "une preuve de l'existence irréductiblement individuelle de l'âme" (III, 256). No matter what changes Vinteuil would like to make, they are all submerged within an individuality which makes them identical in essence: "Ce chant, différent de celui des autres, semblable à tous les siens, où Vinteuil l'avait-il appris, entendu? Chaque artiste semble ainsi comme le citoyen d'une patrie inconnue, oubliée de lui-même, différente de celle d'où viendra, appareillant pour la terre, un autre grand artiste" (III, 257). This idea of the "patrie inconnue" is an extension of a thought presented earlier in this section by Proust: the music of Vinteuil incarnates "les colorations inconnues, inestimables, d'un univers insoupçonné" (III, 255). Although the composer is not consciously aware of his "patrie," he remains "toujours inconsciemment accordé en un

certain unisson avec elle" (III, 257). Even when he rejects it and tries to be original in his quest for fame, its eternal message emerges proving "la fixité des éléments composants de son âme" (III, 257).

The "patrie inconnue" is an incarnation of the transcendent realm wherein the essence of reality resides before it is confined within the limits of time and space. The mission of the artist is to recapture this lost country and remain faithful to it once it is found (Benoist-Méchin, p. 114). The joy which accompanies creation is intensified when the artist approaches his "patrie" since he is returning home. As the artist becomes more and more mature, and approaches the essence of reality, he comes closer to his "patrie inconnue." Changes in the degree of development of the artist are recognizable in the evolution which occurs from the sonata to the septet. The questions asked are much more pressing, as is exemplified by the quality of the music: the sounds are "perçant, presque criards" (III, 257), with a certain sense of "âcreté" (III, 257), and the responses are much more "mystérieuses" (III, 257), showing that the composer is coming closer and closer to the spirit and being separated from the physical. Proust becomes more specific, extending the "patrie inconnue" to "la patrie intérieure" (III, 257). As the composer's insight into himself and the universe becomes deeper and more refined, this change will definitely be reflected in his music. The music will reflect changes in the artist's impressions of reality and the passions and emotions

which these impressions evoke within him. Earlier we saw that the intense joy experienced by Vinteuil as a result of the creation of his work was apparent in the frantic and breathless quality of the tone and tempo of the music. The slower and more tender rhythm of the "andante" movement reflects the emotions of a father who is watching his child sleep; it is reminiscent of the peace and tranquility of an earlier section of the composition which had been "inspirée à Vinteuil par le sommeil de sa fille" (III, 253). Therefore, it is not changes in the soul which the music reflects, but changes in the degree of insight of the artist, and changes in his emotional state. The artist's works represent an evolution in his thought: from impressions evoked by his surroundings, to a total understanding of where the essence of reality actually lies.

The septet becomes the culmination of the composer's genius, the work in which he reaches his greatest understanding as to the existence of the essence of reality. The greater maturity which accompanies the development from the sonata to the septet, may be extended to reflect the progression from Swann to Marcel and his ultimate revelation as to the importance of art in achieving a more fulfilled existence. In light of the septet, all Vinteuil's other works become mere attempts to approach this essence; it is in the septet that Vinteuil comes closest to his "patrie." Marcel is able to recognize themes from the sonata which have undergone variations and development in the final passages of the septet. These constantly recognizable themes in the works of a

composer are what gives his compositions their individuality and prevents them from ever being attributed to any other: "elle sont les fées, les dryades, les divinités familières" (III, 259); creatures from the world of the spirit, from the composer's soul. One theme from the sonata which is scarcely perceptible through "le brouillard violet qui s'élevait" (III, 259) around it is reminiscent of the "petite phrase" which always appeared to Swann behind a protective covering. However, the violet mist which surrounds it is something characteristic of Vinteuil's later works. This theme is obviously less dissonant than the earlier passages and working through more "traditional" forms of harmony since it speaks "d'une voix si douce" (III, 260). This theme continues to be varied until it is transformed into the phrase of "bonheur" which opened the septet. A simultaneous movement between two distinct lines of music is established in which the theme of "bonheur" is juxtaposed to another theme which is so "douloureux" (III, 260) that it seems to have almost a quality of physical pain. These two themes represent the psychological and emotional turmoil which Vinteuil must have experienced in his life; they incarnate the appeal to transcend the pain and suffering of our existence through art. The music goes beyond the limits of time and space by its very nature and is devoid of all physical properties since the two themes struggle "corps à corps d'énergies" (III, 260): it is a "combat immatériel et dynamique" (III, 260). These themes are pure essences which defy the arbitrary labelling of language and carry

on a communication of souls with the Narrator. Marcel is able to comprehend and appreciate what is happening "insoucieux lui aussi des noms et du particulier" (III, 260) since he is "un spectateur intérieur" (III, 260). The music incarnates renewal and rebirth, a movement which is lacking from the other arts, which are basically static.

The composition ends with the triumph of "le motif joyeux" (III, 260), with the realization that there exists a transcendent reality which can be attained through art. It ends in a joy which makes all the concerns and pleasures of this world seem sterile: "Enfin le motif joyeux resta triomphant;...c'était une joie ineffable qui semblait venir du paradis" (III, 260). The intensity of emotion which permeates the final passages of the septet is of a greater degree than that felt in the sonata, since the composer has achieved a deeper understanding of the importance of art to a more meaningful existence and offers a more urgent appeal to the listener to dedicate his own life to art: the triumph of the joyous motif indicates Vinteuil's ability to transcend the pain and suffering characteristic of his life and attain the essence of reality. Through his deeper sense into the nature of reality, the composer is able to approach his "patrie inconnue." The difference in intensity between the sonata and septet is further emphasized through their respective comparisons to Bellini and Mantegna: the sonata is "un ange doux et grave de Bellini" (III, 260), whereas the septet is "vêtu d'une robe d'écarlate, quelque archange de Mantegna" (III, 260).

The gentle and calm sonata reflects the soft colors and glowing light which creates the meditative mood of Bellini's painting whereas the more dynamic septet reflects the turbulence and agitation which abound in a fresco by Mantegna.<sup>2</sup> Each composition possesses its own special beauty, but the later piece is characteristic of the increased maturity of an individual who has experienced life and wishes to share his insight with others.

The joyous motif of the septet holds the solution to the enigma of the unknown pleasure which characterizes various moments of Marcel's life, including Martinville. At Martinville, Marcel experiences an unexpected joy as he becomes aware of the existence of something which goes beyond the appearance of the objects he perceives, but is never able to determine the source of this intense emotion. The joyous motif incarnates the joy which accompanies creation; in fact, the triumph of creation over the suffering and pain characteristic of our lives. The phrase incarnates the realm of energy, the essence of reality, devoid of any physical properties and beyond the limits of time and space. This theme externalizes what he has recognized to be inherent within his own being at various moments in his life and offers proof that the possibility of doing something worthwhile with his life is still open to him. Although the ideas and emotions embodied in these themes are often submerged under "de satisfactions quotidiennes" (I, 210), they remain an integral part of his nature and provide "les amorces pour la construction d'une vie véritable" (III, 261). The septet warns Marcel that

his own chance for achieving fulfillment and avoiding the sterile sort of existence which characterizes the audience which surrounds him at the concert lies in devoting himself to art. The music reveals that something more than what he has sought in life, in love, and in society is realizable through art.

The glimpse Marcel has often had of the possibility of a more meaningful existence through art is reinforced and culminates in the septet and the crow of the cock. Vinteuil's septet incarnates "l'espérance mystique de l'Ange écarlate du Matin" (III, 263). The continual renewal of the morning, the coming of light characterizes this composition rather than the obscurity of dusk. Although Vinteuil's music serves as "un appel" to creation for both characters it cannot push either one of them to action. Swann is never totally capable of detaching the sonata from its association with his love for Odette. The love which ought to serve as a stimulus to creation is limiting in nature since it becomes an end in itself. Swann is content to spend the rest of his life reminiscing over the memories which the music evokes for him. Marcel realizes that the septet embodies something that transcends his earthly pleasures and makes even his love for Albertine seem insignificant. In fact, Marcel feels that it is an honor for Albertine, a mere mortal, to be associated in his mind with the music, something "si sublime" and "si grand" (III, 259). However, "Albertine ne sût pas, et si elle avait su n'eût pas compris" (III, 259).

The theme that music incarnates something which surpasses the love which has become associated with it was already recognizable in Jean Santeuil. Art is never seen as the solution to the mystery of the phrase by either Jean or Swann. The joy evoked by the music is mistakenly attributed by Swann, to its association with his relationship with Odette rather than as a manifestation of a certain state of the soul which Marcel refers to as Siegfried's immortal laugh with reference to Wagner's music. Swann never understands that it is the joy which accompanies creation and it is not until the end of his life that he is able to appreciate the loss he has experienced. Marcel realizes that the feeling of elation which he experiences in relation to the final sections of the septet, is the same joy he had experienced at Martinville. Although his doubts concerning the nature of art and the existence of the individual will not be totally dispelled until that afternoon at la Princesse de Guermantes' when all his ideas will be reconciled, Marcel is more receptive and more deeply affected by the message inherent within Vinteuil's music than Swann is. He recognizes that transcendence and the joy of which these great composers speak can only be achieved through creation. The septet and Marcel's understanding of it serves to refute the various interpretations of Vinteuil's music which have surfaced thus far: the music incarnates something more than Swann's love for Odette, something more than the beauty of nature and the reminiscences he has of a particular period in his life,

and now, the septet points to something beyond Marcel's love for Albertine.

The episode describing the septet represents a kind of end in the progression from doubt to understanding which characterizes the four sections devoted specifically to Vinteuil's music. With the septet, the composer reaches his point of maximum maturity and insight concerning the ideas which were introduced in the sonata. Although Marcel does attain a greater degree of insight through the final passages of the septet than he has ever achieved through the sonata, his understanding of this composition does not constitute an end in the evolution of his thoughts concerning Vinteuil's music, but a beginning which ultimately leads to the realization of "sa vocation" as an artist. The septet offers a solution for the emptiness he has experienced in his life thus far through its message that fulfillment lies within the confines of art: the septet offers "la promesse qu'il existait autre chose, réalisable par l'art sans doute, que le néant que j'avais trouvé dans tous les plaisirs et dans l'amour même, et que si ma vie me semblait si vaine, du moins n'avait-elle pas tout accompli" (III, 263). Through his compositions, Vinteuil offers the proof that the individual can transcend the suffering he experiences in life and as a result of his loves, to attain the joy which bursts forth in the final section of the septet: art offers the possibility to raise mankind to a higher and more meaningful level of existence; and it is the artist, like Vinteuil, who will lead the individual

to a kind of spiritual health. What remains to be seen, is how Marcel will apply this solution to his own life and how he creates his own work of art. In a sense, there is now a simultaneous progression with literature which ends in Le Temps retrouvé in an understanding of the nature of creation. This final revelation is received in conjunction with a greater understanding of Vinteuil's music and of the relationship which exists between these two art forms. Until then, in spite of his present enthusiasm, Marcel will continue to doubt whether art does in fact possess the special qualities which the septet suggests.

In the following chapter I intend to examine some ideas concerning music and literature which Marcel discusses with Albertine which will eventually be essential to the final dissolution of his doubts.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Blaise Pascal, Pensées (Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1964), p. 164.

<sup>2</sup>H.W. Janson, History of Art (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), p. 344.

## Chapter 7

## Spirituality and Nothingness

Although Marcel had seemed to be receptive to the message captured in the final sections of the septet, moments of doubt as to the reality of art prevent him from devoting himself to any productive work. Before his introduction to the septet, he is plagued by regret at not having pursued his dream of becoming an artist, but is still unable to overcome his doubts concerning the nature of art: "En abandonnant, en fait, cette ambition, avais-je renoncé à quelque chose de réel? La vie pouvait-elle me consoler de l'art? y avait-il dans l'art une réalité plus profonde où notre personnalité véritable trouve une expression que ne lui donnent pas les actions de la vie? Chaque grand artiste semble, en effect, si différent des autres, et nous donne tant cette sensation de l'individualité que nous cherchons en vain dans l'existence quotidienne" (III, 158)!. The final passages of Vinteuil's septet evoke an enthusiasm within him which seems to point to a wholehearted effort to dedicate himself to a dream which has thus far been left unfulfilled by his continuing lapses into procrastination. However, his thoughts lead to doubts which not even the composer's music can totally dispel: does art, in fact, incarnate a spiritual reality which transcends our earthly existence, proves, in effect the existence of the individual, or is it nothing more than an extension of life itself and therefore can be reduced to be an abyss of

nothingness? If the latter supposition is true, he can quite readily find consolation for not having lived a more fruitful existence. His doubts concerning music and creation tend to postpone the forward progression toward an understanding of the importance of art to a more fulfilled existence, a thought which seemed to have been revealed to him through the jubilation apparent in the septet.

Music seems to be a witness to the existence of the individual, an idea which is explored further as the artist's "patrie inconnue" (III, 257) in relation to Vinteuil's later composition. However, presently he experiences a setback in the evolution of his thoughts. He is distinctly aware of the introspective quality of music in relation to his own role as listener, a quality which is in complete contrast to his life with Albertine. Through the influence of the music he is able to become more conscious of his innermost feelings and is able to divert his attention from his superficial and mundane existence. At this point, the transference and substitution of impressions between the composer and listener which we discussed earlier seems to take on an added dimension: the music is no longer solely an incarnation and revelation of the artist's vision of the world, since his impressions are raised to a universal level making them easily recognizable to all receptive listeners. The music allows the listener to delve into and explore his own psyche more closely. It becomes the vehicle for him to discover and examine areas of his own soul which had heretofore remained

unknown. As a result of his interaction with the music, the listener is able to approach his own vision of the world and attain greater self-knowledge. The image of the prism which breaks down light into its component parts was applied earlier to Swann's attempt to penetrate into the mysteries of the "petite phrase." For Marcel, the music serves as "le spectre" (III, 159) to help penetrate into the mysteries of the artist's soul; art allows us the possibility of coming into contact with another's vision of reality. Not even love can afford as deep an insight into another's soul as music. It would be necessary to enter the mind and heart of the beloved in order to be truly certain of his feelings. Music offers just such an opportunity. Earlier, it was mentioned that the "petite phrase" was able to evoke Swann's feelings concerning his love for Odette, more faithfully than Odette herself, since the phrase was "en lui," rather than next to him. A similar idea was also given with reference to Jean's love for Françoise. Music becomes the incarnation of an individual and the artist always remains faithful to his "originalité première" (III, 160). One composition, for example in opera, may incarnate a diversity of personalities since many characters are portrayed; the technique of the leitmotif permits individuality through diversity. The "diverses individualités" (III, 159) which are united in one opera represent the different sensations and responses evoked within a given individual by various circumstances. The diversity of characters may also represent the changes in the degree of maturity of the individual

as he approaches his vision of the essence of reality--his "patrie inconnue." The complexity of the individual is reflected within his composition: the individual is a product of all his impressions and sensations, each of which may become the model for a character or a given motif. And yet, despite this diversity, the unity which permeates the works of any artist is a direct result of his vision of reality which remains constant throughout his life; his impressions, his level of maturity, his proximity to his "patrie" may all change, but the essence of reality remains constant. One opera can become a panorama of various souls in which the vision of the composer always prevails.

Marcel's understanding of Vinteuil's music represents an evolution in his thoughts concerning art: as Marcel achieves a deeper understanding of the composer's sonata and septet, he comes to a realization concerning the nature of art and the existence of the individual. The final passages of the septet seem to embody a message of hope which points to the possibility of transcending the sterility of the type of existence which has thus far been unable to provide him with the fulfillment he is searching for, an existence based upon the worldly pastimes exemplified in the characters of Swann and Charlus. Marcel's life with Albertine provides a domestic scene which reflects the complacency of Swann's marriage to Odette. Although Marcel's introduction to Vinteuil's septet acts as a kind of turning point in his acceptance of the important role which art must assume in his life, it is not until later that he will attain his final

revelation, and ultimately reconcile all the doubts that continue to plague him. He must learn to apply his new conception of art to his own life in order to fulfill his dream to write a book. Until then, he will continue to fluctuate between a materialistic and spiritual vision of art. At times, he attempts to belittle the importance of the music and of the truths he seems to feel are incarnated within it. The spiritual quality of the music is reduced to a rational process in which the states of the soul he thought the music revealed no longer represent a transcendent reality, but remain incomprehensible because they have not been sufficiently analyzed. And yet, despite his attempts to undermine the importance of the music, his awareness of the sense of joy incarnated within the phrases of Vinteuil's music continues to act as an extremely influential force in the resolution of his doubts, and the surmounting of his recurring tendency to procrastinate. He recognizes the same emotion in the works of various great composers, including those of Wagner: "Je continuais à jouer Tristan. Séparé de Wagner par la cloison sonore, je l'entendais exulter, m'inviter à partager sa joie" (III, 162). Marcel is invited to share in the joy, but remains separated from Wagner, who has achieved transcendence through art, since he attributes this happiness to "l'habileté technique de l'ouvrier" (III, 162). He hears "redoubler le rire immortellement jeune" (III, 162) of Siegfried, but is not convinced of its authenticity. The sense of doubt which assaults him at various moments and causes him to question the validity of

art, should it be considered spiritual in nature or is it nothing more than an extension of life itself, a manifestation of the principles of nothingness, results in a mistaken interpretation of this pleasure. He feels it is the work of a skillful man who is able to create an illusion of satisfaction despite the melancholia which may characterize his life: "Cette joie, du reste, ne l'abandonne jamais. Chez lui, quelle que soit la tristesse du poète, elle est consolée, surpassée--c'est-à-dire malheureusement un peu détruite--par l'allégresse du fabricant" (III, 161). Supposedly, as a result of his dexterity and talent, the artist is able to create a semblance and simulation of happiness and individuality which is an extension of life itself rather than the incarnation of a higher more spiritual reality.

Marcel does not recognize it as the infectious joy which he experienced at Martinville, an emotion he faithfully describes, but is unable to explain, in the paragraph he composes. It is not an artificial pleasure concocted by a crafty artist in an attempt to deceive his audience. It is the joy which permeates the final sections of Vinteuil's septet; a happiness which seems to possess the composer's entire being and becomes the herald of a more meaningful existence: the artist who has transcended his earthly woes, and approaches the essence of reality. The idea of the immortal laugh of Siegfried is intensified in the septet through the motif of the triumphant ringing of the bells and the crowing of the cock announcing "l'espérance mystique de l'Ange écarlate du Matin" (III, 263). Initially, Marcel finds the

dissonant quality of this motif to be quite displeasing. However, the motif increases in significance as he gains a deeper understanding behind the cause of the emotions which he realizes it incarnates: it is the joy which is evoked in the artist as a result of the realization that a more meaningful existence is attainable through art. For Vinteuil, this motif testifies to the composer's ability to overcome the pain and suffering characteristic of his life. The similarity Marcel detects between the works of Vinteuil and Wagner and is the link among all great artists, is due to this intrinsic joy caused by their ability to transcend their earthly existences. The pleasure is indicative of the rejuvenative factor inherent to art: the constant assurance of the hope of a new day. If it is eternally morning, there is no fear of the sunset of life or death. Once the artist has made the leap beyond time to achieve the essence of reality, he need no longer fear death, a concept governed by time. Art becomes the means to overcome and surpass the melancholy side of life and achieve the immortal laugh characteristic of Siegfried. Vinteuil's life is typical of the artist who must endure untold hardships as a result of his earthly condition. However, Vinteuil's music witnesses to the fact that the individual can accept and transcend the sadness, the trials, and the harshness of his life; Vinteuil's music truly becomes "An Ode to Joy."<sup>1</sup>

In A la Recherche and Jean Santeuil, the characters who do not recognize the importance which art must assume in the life of

the individual, misinterpret the significance of this joy: when Swann can no longer attribute the happiness which characterizes certain passages of the sonata to its association with his love for Odette, he claims it is evoked by the beauty of nature. Jean also seeks to uncover the cause behind the pleasure evoked by the phrase of music he hears. Although he considers various possibilities, including the beauty of nature, art is never cited as the true source of this emotion. The way in which Marcel initially views the music undermines the fundamentals of art as will be revealed to him definitively in the final sections of Le Temps retrouvé. If Marcel's interpretation of the joy is accurate, art is not the incarnation of the individual, the externalization of a man's soul, it becomes mere fabrication and in a sense, he may be consoled for not having devoted his life to "cette habileté vulcanienne" (III, 161): "Si l'art n'est que cela, il n'est pas plus réel que la vie, et je n'avais pas tant de regrets à avoir" (III, 162). Even what might be attributed to the individuality of the human soul is now being reduced to "un labeur industriel" (III, 162). It is Vinteuil's music, and in particular his septet, which begins the process in Marcel's life which eventually ends in the total dissolution of his doubts concerning art and calls him to active participation in a new and more meaningful existence through creation.

In the section of La Prisonnière in which Marcel discusses some of his thoughts on music and literature with Albertine we receive another indication of the depth of his insight in spite

of the distance he still must travel before attaining his final revelation. His impressions on music and literature will be crucial to the ultimate reconciliation of his doubts concerning art and the acceptance of the importance which creation must assume in achieving fulfillment in his life. The beginning of this section is similar and is distinctly associated to the first section devoted to music in which Swann is first introduced to Vinteuil's sonata at Mme Verdurin's. The ideas previously developed in general, are now applied to Marcel's experiences in relation to the music. It traces the process of intellectualization which occurs each time the individual is introduced to a new composition. In the earlier section, the first impressions which are evoked in the listener are the only instances of "pure music," before it is reduced to the level of the intellect. In its pure state the music appears to be confused and disordered, and it is only through the efforts of the intellect that the music tends to become more comprehensible. When Marcel initially hears a composition, it appears to him to be "obscur" (III, 371). However, once the "dénaturante et étrangère" (III, 371) intellect intervenes, the music is able to take on more substance. The intangible and incomprehensible nature of the "pure music" is emphasized since it appears to be "presque ensevelie dans la brume" (III, 372). The process by which the music is transformed through the work of the intellect is described as "ce travail de modelage d'une nébuleuse encore informe" (III, 372). The intellect is needed in

order to achieve a critical response to the music, a response which should only follow the listener's spontaneous impressions of the composition (Deleuze, p. 123).

As the music is examined more closely and seems to become more comprehensible, it deviates further from the realm of pure music to become "construction" (III, 372). Marcel enjoys listening to pieces which are new to him in order to watch the effect of the intellect upon his understanding of the composition. He enjoys observing the solidification of all of the individual fragments of comprehension into a unified whole. The idea that there is a kind of hierarchy of phrases, an idea which was introduced in the earlier section, is also reinforced here. Those phrases which are more readily appreciated, are those whose importance is more easily dissipated. Unlike Swann who approached the music quite blindly, Marcel is consciously aware of the process the listener must undergo in order to appreciate the music more deeply. Through what he calls "sa tâche néfaste" (III, 372), a process which is destructive to the confines of pure music and yet necessary for the extraction of truth, the mystery of the artist's soul which is incarnated within his work, is uncovered: "Au moment où le travail de mon intelligence était arrivé à dissiper le mystère d'une oeuvre, il était bien rare qu'elle n'eût pas, au cours de sa tâche néfaste, attrapé par compensation telle ou telle réflexion profitable (III, 372). Once the composition leaves the realm of pure music and the intellect has managed to impose order upon the confusion

which initially surrounded the piece, it is no longer of interest to Marcel. However, he has usually been able to extract some element of truth from it. Perhaps his continuing interest in Vinteuil's music is a direct result of his incomplete understanding of the composer's message; Marcel remains puzzled by the complexity of his compositions. The truth uncovered from the work of art is unique to the artist and his particular vision of the universe. By coming into contact with this truth, the listener is able to get a glimpse of the composer's "patrie inconnue." It is only by coming into contact with the works of as many artists as possible that the individual can hope to gain the greatest possible insight into the mysteries of the universe.

In spite of his recurring doubts, Marcel realizes that Vinteuil's music incarnates several questions essential to life itself: "les questions de la réalité de l'art, de la Réalité, de l'Éternité de l'âme" (III, 374). The resolution of these questions resides in art itself: the immortality of the soul and a more meaningful existence lie within the confines of art. Only music, in particular of all the art forms is able to capture and recreate reality most faithfully. The feelings and sensations buried deep within the soul of the artist can be reproduced thereby allowing the same reactions to be evoked in the listener. The music becomes the feelings and sensations themselves, dismissing the intellectual stage through which by necessity, they must pass in order to assume a literary form. Before a sensation can be expressed in words, it must pass

through the realm of thoughts. In order to be expressed in a literary form, a feeling or emotion must be transformed from one realm, which might be referred to as the heart or spirit, to one governed by the intellect. Therefore a distinct dichotomy is established: the intellect vs. the spirit; literature vs. music; analysis and ideas vs. sensations. In the dichotomy which is established, the literary act becomes associated to an intellectual process, whereas music becomes the impressions themselves. In literature we are presented with a translation, a description, an equivalent, but not the sensation itself: "ce qui est senti par nous de la vie, ne l'étant pas sous forme d'idées, sa traduction littéraire, c'est-à-dire intellectuelle, en rend compte, l'explique, l'analyse, mais ne le récompose pas comme la musique où les sons semblent prendre l'inflexion de l'être" (III, 374). The impressions and sensations must pass through the intermediary stage of the metaphor in order to offer a somewhat faithful rendition of the original; the author must make a metaphoric leap from sensations to an intellectual equivalent. "Metaphor, then, like reminiscence, would seem to be merely an indispensable expedient" (Genette, "Proust Palimpsest," p. 208) in expressing the essence of reality through language. In themselves, words are not sufficient to express sensations and emotions since language is a general mode of expression related to an individual's particular impressions. Even metaphor is unable to give the most faithful representation of the artist's

vision since it is a comparison between two thoughts rather than the embodiment of one impression (Dobrovsky, p. 144).

Music offers the possibility of incarnating the artist's soul and of capturing truth directly. Through music, the composer is able to attain the essence of reality more faithfully than any of the other art forms, since its very nature defies the limits of time and space. Music does not depend upon the intellect since it is stimulation, rather than explanation; one feels, one does not think (Genette, Figures, III, 264). Unlike the visual arts such as painting and sculpture, it does not depend upon any physical properties for its existence. A painting or piece of sculpture will only survive for as long as the canvas, paints, marble or material of which it is made, is able to bear the effects of time and the elements. Whereas the visual arts may be subject to eventual destruction, music is characterized by renewal and motion through its ability to gain new life each time a composition is performed. At each performance, a composition is influenced by the emotions of three individuals: the composer, the performer, and the listener. A piece of music recreates the composer's original emotions, emotions which are then experienced by the performers and listeners. They, in turn, sympathize, appreciate, identify, and substitute their own impressions for those evoked by the artist and in a sense participate in the act of creation. They become witnesses to the immortality of the composer's soul and the possibility of immortality through art. The emotions of the performer will

influence the way in which a piece is performed. Therefore, a thousand musicians might each perform it in a slightly different fashion, each evoking his own impressions. In fact, even one particular musician's interpretations may differ depending upon changes in moods and attitudes. A listener's impressions of the music also reflect his maturity and his degree of understanding, as is seen through Marcel's own responses to Vinteuil's compositions. A piece which is hundreds of years old gains new life each time it is performed, and will continue to do so for as long as there is anyone to perform it. In contrast, a painting may be in ruins, having lost much of its beauty through the passage of time. There is a certain rejuvenative potential inherent to music which makes it appropriate that this art form should be the instrument through which the importance of creation to a more fruitful existence should be transmitted.

Although literature remains a more "intellectual" mode of expression through its dependency upon language, each reading may be considered analogous to a musical performance in that the individual's impressions of the work will be influenced by his experiences of reality. Each reading by any individual or by subsequent readers offers the possibility of approaching the author's vision of reality--a vision which can never be perceived in its entirety at any given moment as a result of the universality of its presentation.<sup>2</sup> "Thus, the real poem must be conceived as a structure of norms, realized only partially in the actual experience of its many readers. Every single experience

(reading, reciting, and so forth) is only an attempt--more or less successful and complete--to grasp this set of norms or standards" (Wellek, p. 150).<sup>3</sup> The work of art may be considered as the sum of all the experiences of its readers, while by extension, a better perception of reality can only be achieved by coming into contact with the works of as many artists as possible. The literary work is revitalized through the impressions of its readers and critics.

Music is able to capture the innermost reaches whence "cette ivresse spécifique que nous retrouvons de temps en temps" (III, 374) originates. Marcel experienced just such a feeling of "ivresse" at Martinville and at several other moments in his life. In fact, he once again cites, just as he did during the performance of Vinteuil's septet, this experience and the particular pleasure he received from observing the three steeples. The "ivresse" is not sterile nor a mere end in itself, but is "plus réelle, plus féconde" (III, 374), a witness that art must correspond to a state which transcends reality and incarnates "une certaine réalité spirituelle, ou la vie n'aurait aucun sens" (III, 374). The only possibility of attaining such a state is through art; all other attempts become futile. It is a joy which cannot be evoked by any circumstance or object, but is evoked in the artist as he approaches the essence of reality; it points to something beyond the limits of time and space.

The only state of mind capable of being compared to that which the music incarnates, is the moment when the individual

ceases to rely upon the intellect just before he drifts off to sleep. At this point the subconscious begins to gain ascendancy and the intellect is no longer the dominant force. Music becomes a means by which the individual can attain what remains inexplicable and invisible. Music is indicative of that joy and exhilaration which the individual experiences as he approaches the inner reaches of his own soul and transcends the artificial conversation and preoccupations of his everyday existence.

In A la Recherche, characters who are not devoted to art are superficial and lead sterile existences. The epitome of such an existence can be seen on the Faubourg with the women shaking their heads in time to the music. Even worse, are those who are apparently devoted to art, but who are merely demonstrating a false appreciation; they reflect the other end of the spectrum, or the principle of "nothingness." They are those who are more concerned with outward demonstrations of appreciation than any great depth of penetration or understanding: "Ils sont plus exaltés à propos des oeuvres d'art que les véritables artistes, car leur exaltation n'étant pas pour eux l'objet d'un dur labeur d'approfondissement, elle se répand au dehors, échauffe leurs conversations, empourpre leur visage" (III, 892). Their enthusiasm is not a result of any inner, spiritual growth, but merely of their desire to impress others with their knowledge and understanding. Their outward displays of admiration reduce the necessity for explanations and the discovery of what lies below the surface. The most striking example of this type of

individual is Mme Verdurin and her little group of admirers: she becomes a kind of parody of the true artistic spirit or connoisseur of the arts. Swann and Charlus reduce the music to ephemeral proportions by attributing its importance to the association it develops with the respective person each loves. As characters, they develop in complete contrast to the ideals incarnated within Vinteuil's music and represent a lifestyle which remains a distinct possibility for Marcel himself.

And yet, despite their negative example, it is from this superficial atmosphere that Marcel's understanding of the nature of art ultimately originates since Swann is introduced to the sonata at one of the gatherings of this group and in turn introduces Marcel to it many years later. Even Marcel's final revelation occurs in the midst of an artificial gathering of the Faubourg of which Mme Verdurin, who has become the Princesse de Guermantes, is the hostess. (It is ironic that she has become a prominent member of a group she heretofore claimed to despise.) Proust considers this type of individual as part of an evolutionary process, seeds from which the artist will spring: "Ils sont les premiers essais de la nature qui veut créer l'artiste, aussi informes, aussi peu viable que ces premiers animaux qui précèdent les espèces actuelles et qui n'étaient pas constitués pour durer" (III, 892). In fact, Swann, the epitome of the artist-manqué represents the initial stages in the development of Marcel's potential as an artist.

Proust recalls an image presented during an earlier section devoted to Vinteuil's sonata. Here, the immaterial state of the music, confirming its spiritual nature, is compared to the perfume of a geranium (III, 375). Earlier, Proust had made various comparisons becoming progressively more connotative of an immaterial existence: the phrases of the sonata are compared to the moonlight shining on an agitated sea and then to the fragrance of roses (I, 208). However, that which has evoked this impression cannot be reduced to a mere physical object, in this case, a geranium. It is a representation of the artist's vision, of his "patrie inconnue," a vision totally unique in relation to that of another. Art is the revelation of self, rather than an imitation of one's predecessors. The fact that the artist is able to present such a vision is an indication of his genius and proof of the existence of the individual.

In the section devoted to Vinteuil's septet, it was noted that the vision of the artist remains constant throughout all of his works; phrases from the sonata can be detected in the more mature septet. Changes in the mental attitude of the artist and changes in his degree of maturity can color his depiction of his vision. As the artist comes closer to an understanding of the essence of reality and approaches his "patrie inconnue," a corresponding change will be reflected within his works. Now, in his conversation with Albertine, this idea is extended to encompass literature. In literature, this uniformity can be noticed in similar themes, allusions, images, and language in a

writer's works. Similarities of this nature can also be detected within any given work of the artist. Therefore, in a sense, the artist only creates one work in the course of his lifetime. It is only by examining these passages, both in the writer and the musician, that one is able to know the artist and come to understand his "philosophy" and his vision of reality. Each artist, whether he be the composer, the painter, or the writer, reveals his own unique sense of beauty which remains constant throughout his works. It is the task of the critic, to examine these similarities in order to uncover the artist's esthetics: "Si l'art révèle une individualité unique, c'est donc la répétition de certains traits qui permettra au commentateur de les dégager et l'autorisera à y voir l'essence de l'artiste" (de Chantal, I, 146). Since no two individuals will respond identically to any given situation, even though two artists may examine the same sight, their impressions will be different. Proust reinforces the earlier idea that in order to obtain the most complete view of the universe one would have to learn the views of as many artists as possible on every given topic.

Marcel questions the validity of comparisons made between the works of one writer and those of another since each possesses a vision so uniquely his own. Each offers the possibility of uncovering one more perception of the universe. And yet, each artist achieves a kind of metaphoric leap by which what is intrinsically his own attains a kind of universality. This is what makes it possible for his works to be ultimately understood

and for them to survive for the benefit of posterity. The fact that the listener or reader can identify with what the artist has captured through his work, proves that the author has raised his impressions to a level which can be easily recognized by all receptive individuals. Comparisons become superficial in nature since they are based upon external resemblances between the works of various artists.

While considering the works of several authors, Marcel specifically points out that Tolstoy imitated Dostoyevsky in the production of his works. He intimates that Tolstoy was looking toward an outside source for the revelation of truth, perhaps another's conception of the universe, rather than his own. Marcel's skeptical nature seems to question an idea which had been revealed to him earlier, that is that the artist never really creates anything but translates what lies deep within his own soul. He labels Dostoyevsky as "un grand créateur" (III, 379); he has "created" the worlds and characters which he writes about instead of having experienced them personally. He seems to be obsessed with crime without being a criminal.

Similarly, although in reality Choderlos de Laclos is a model citizen and husband, he describes what might be considered the most perfidious acts in the course of Les Liaisons dangereuses. Although there seems to be an apparent contradiction between translating one's impressions and creating characters and situations, this contradiction can be reconciled with Proust's original tenet if we realize that Dostoyevsky, and perhaps many

other writers as well, are describing areas of the human psyche which are very often suppressed: realms which remain hidden, passions which lie latent, all of which possess the possibility of being awakened or of coming to light within the individual. Their characters, no matter how sordid, "révèlent des aspects vrais de l'âme humaine" (III, 380). As spring approaches, Marcel listens to the song of "un oiseau inconnu" (III, 388) from his window. This song which is described as being "riche et précieuse" (III, 388) is reminiscent of the cock's crowing in Vinteuil's septet. Perhaps its song reinforces the appeal of the bird described earlier. The bird both literally and figuratively sees the sun: the rising sun of the morning which brightens the shadows of the night and the sun, symbolizing the rejuvenative and renewing properties of art, which might lighten the barrenness and sterility, what he calls "mes ténèbres" (III, 388), of his existence. The spiritual nature is emphasized since the song of the bird is compared to "un harmonium d'église" (III, 388) and the bird has taken residence "dans le jardin des religieuses voisines" (III, 388). The cooing of the bird does not attain the same intensity reached by the crowing of the cock in the final passages of Vinteuil's septet. Perhaps the influence of the music has been overshadowed in his life by the domestic existence he has established with Albertine, an existence which reflects the complacency Swann shares with Odette.

Although Vinteuil's message has had its impact on Marcel, the doubts which continue to torment him and prevent him from

devoting himself completely to his work will not be entirely dissipated until the final revelation of Le Temps retrouvé: "Ainsi, en dépit de ce qu'on peut appeler la 'leçon de Vinteuil', le Narrateur hésite encore entre deux conceptions de l'art, l'une matérialiste, l'autre spiritualiste" (de Chantal, I, 217). Marcel still holds on to the possibility that art may be an incarnation of the principle "du néant" (III, 381) and is not more real than anything else. And yet, the joy which permeates the works of all great artists and which had accompanied certain moments of his life, including his experience at Martinville, seems to indicate a deeper sense of reality than we are accustomed to in our daily lives. It is a similar sense of pleasure which will be evoked at three distinct moments during the afternoon spent at la Princesse de Guermantes' which will eventually lead to an understanding of where the material for creation ultimately lies.

In the following chapter, I will examine Marcel's final revelation, the moment when all of his doubts concerning the nature of art will be reconciled so he can devote himself to his work.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Taken from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Beethoven was one of Proust's favorite composers.

<sup>2</sup>René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1970), p. 145.

<sup>3</sup>Two items in this quote should be clarified: poem should be viewed as an abbreviation for the literary work of art, in general. While "the term 'norms' as used here should not, of course, be confused with norms which are either classical or romantic, ethical or political. The norms we have in mind are implicit norms which have to be extracted from every individual experience of a work of art and together make up the genuine work or art as a whole" (Wellek, p. 150).

## Conclusion

### Revelation of Truth and Reconciliation of Doubts

As we have seen thus far, the four sections of A la Recherche devoted to Vinteuil's music are characterized by an evolution in Marcel's understanding of the composer's sonata and septet which reflects the development in his thoughts concerning the nature of art and the important role it must play in helping him to achieve a sense of fulfillment in his otherwise sterile existence. The Narrator's understanding of Vinteuil's music is directly linked to the possibility of fulfilling "sa vocation" as an artist and as his appreciation of the septet develops, he attains greater knowledge into the mystery of the composition's appeal and its application to his own life. Despite Marcel's enthusiasm upon hearing the final passages of the septet he postpones any serious attempt to devote himself to art and the creation of his work. In addition to his own procrastination, his doubts concerning the reality of literature still exist: he has never been able to totally reconcile his doubts as to whether art is spiritual in nature or nothing more than an extension of life itself. Since nothing seems to prevent it, he need feel no reservations about entering society and devoting himself to the demands its members will place upon him: "Je n'avais aucune raison de le leur refuser puisque j'avais maintenant la preuve que je n'étais plus bon à rien, que la littérature ne pouvait plus me causer aucune

joie, soit par ma faute, étant trop peu doué, soit par la sienne, si elle était en effet moins chargée de réalité que je n'avais cru" (III, 865-866).

At present, Marcel seems to have accepted a materialistic conception of art which incarnates the principle of nothingness and results in the denial of the joy which is intrinsic to art itself; he still doubts the possibility that art may embody a deeper and more meaningful sense of reality than that which has characterized his life thus far. However, just at the moment when he is completely disillusioned and totally discouraged by the possibility of literature causing him any happiness, quite unexpectedly, the Narrator experiences the three incidents which produce the effects of involuntary memory within him: Marcel stumbles on the uneven pavement stone (III, 866), he hears the knocking of a spoon against a plate (III, 868), and he feels the particular stiffness of the napkin as he uses it to wipe his mouth (III, 868). Each of these incidents is able to evoke the same sense of elation which he has experienced at various moments of his life, moments which seem to add meaning to his otherwise unfulfilled existence. Marcel recognizes it to be the same joy which announces the possibility of renewal through art, which "les dernières oeuvres de Vinteuil m'avaient paru synthétiser" (III, 866). This unexplained pleasure is able to dissipate all his doubts concerning the reality of literature and even concerning his own potential. It is as a result of this sense of intense happiness which is captured within the final passages of

Vinteuil's septet that Marcel continues his questioning concerning the nature of art, despite his rationalization that the joy which is intrinsic to the music of a composer such as Wagner is nothing more than the work of a crafty artist (III, 161). He is especially anxious to identify this pleasure since it is able "à me rendre la mort indifférente" (III, 867). Although, heretofore, Marcel has received an intimation of the mysterious message captured through Vinteuil's music, he has not been able to fully comprehend its meaning and apply it to his own life. The joy he experienced at Martinville, and at various other moments of his life, is captured in the septet, but is not entirely appreciated until this particular afternoon. Up until this time, he has only been able to "pressentir" (III, 878) the cause of this happiness, now it becomes a reality for him. It is in the section describing the afternoon party given by la Princesse de Guermantes that the process of evolution leading to a more complete appreciation of the message inherent to Vinteuil's music culminates and is linked to a better understanding of the nature of creation. This revelation initiates the process which ends in the creation of Marcel's work and the fulfillment of "sa vocation" as an artist. It is also in this section that we finally have an explanation of the joy which Marcel has often experienced but has never fully comprehended.

As was seen in the earlier sections devoted to music, the appeal of the sonata and septet to its listener to devote himself to a more fruitful existence, and the expression of truth which

resides within the work of art is always given in the context of an artificial gathering of superficial individuals. Now Marcel's return to society becomes the initial step to the fulfillment of his vocation as an artist: 'Mais je ne fus nullement troublé dans le raisonnement que je venais de commencer, par le fait qu'une réunion mondaine, le retour dans la société, m'eussent fourni ce point de départ vers une vie nouvelle que je n'avais pas su trouver dans la solitude' (III, 918). At the moment when Marcel is determined to dedicate himself to the demands of society, he encounters the Baron de Charlus, who in conjunction with Swann has come to represent the world, society and a materialistic conception of art. In complete contrast to the haughty nobleman who has presided over the Faubourg, we are now presented with a picture of total humility. The transformation which the Baron has undergone serves to negate what he has come to represent in the course of the narrative. The deterioration of Charlus in the final section emphasizes the futility of a life without art; it undermines the importance of the world and recognizes the sterility and barrenness of its practices: he exemplifies what there is "de fragile et de périssable (en) l'amour des grandeurs de la terre et tout l'orgueil humain" (III, 860). The picture of the humbled Charlus is reminiscent of the Bible's warning that the humble shall be exalted, and the proud, humbled ("Luke, 18"). In fact, Vinteuil, the lowly, introverted music tutor of Combray achieves immortality and a greatness which is recognized through the erection of a monument in his honor,

while Charlus falls into oblivion. With the final appearance of Charlus, Marcel's doubts are replaced with a more complete understanding of the nature of art and the importance it must play in the life of the individual in order to achieve a more fertile and fruitful existence. The superficiality which characterizes Charlus' life leads to destruction, whereas art leads to immortality and "l'éternel matin."

The joy which the artist experiences is in complete contrast to the lack of fulfillment which accompanies the pleasures of society. It tends to eliminate any doubts concerning the nature of art and is a verification of the reality of the experience it accompanies and presents its receiver with a glimpse of eternity: it is the joy which the artist experiences as he approaches his "patrie inconnue": "Je sentais que le plaisir qu'elle (the contemplation of eternity) m'avait, à de rares intervalles, donné dans ma vie, était le seul qui fût fécond et véritable. (Whereas,) Le signe de l'irréalité des autres ne se montre-t-il pas assez, soit dans leur impossibilité à nous satisfaire" (III, 875). In contrast to this feeling of sadness and dissatisfaction is the total feeling of fulfillment and the sense of release which is evoked each time Marcel experiences the effects of involuntary memory. This distinctive pleasure is also recognizable upon viewing the steeples at Martinville. Although in each of these instances the possibility of capturing these fleeting impressions in order to give them more permanence seems impossible, Vinteuil's septet professes that such a task is in

fact realizable through art. Artistic creation becomes the process of deciphering the impressions which reality evokes within the individual and to uncover what lies behind appearances. At Martinville, although Marcel realizes that there is something more behind what he observes, the paragraph which he composes does not offer any explanation concerning the nature of his happiness but merely describes the experience. Thus it is music which points to the possibility of renewal even during the darkest and most dismal moments of an individual's existence. It is art, in general, which allows the individual to make that leap to an extratemporal moment, common to both past and present, and yet part of neither, in order to catch sight of eternity.

When Marcel examines his present happiness and attempts to relate it to a previous moment in time, he realizes that the impressions which he feels in the present are reminiscent of an identical joy experienced at the moment the original impression was formed in the past. The intersection of these two points in time produces a moment which might be termed "en dehors du temps" (III, 871). This feeling of joy materializes when the two different points in time are joined allowing the individual to enter an extratemporal state, a moment which is beyond the limits of time and space. It is within this realm that the essence of reality can be found, a state which can be attained only after the individual has been liberated from the confines of time and space. The capturing of such moments and their transcription

into a more permanent form, through art, leads to immortality since the impression belongs to no precise time zone. Once outside the sphere of time, there can be no fear of death. This leads to Marcel's indifference to the idea of death each time he experiences an extratemporal moment. Through creation, the artist is able to participate in the forming of his own immortality. Marcel now realizes that what Bergotte had referred to as "la vie spirituelle" (III, 871) of art has nothing to do with logical reasoning. With this realization, he is able to eliminate an obstacle which has been present since his childhood: he has always held firmly to the belief that the topic of his work should be of great significance and encompass philosophic proportions. His lack of such a topic was always a major contribution to his feelings of inadequacy. And yet, as a boy he had experienced that the joys of the mind of which Bergotte speaks were far from being intellectual in nature, and that the joy he felt at Martinville was of a purely sensual nature. Only now does he possess a true conception of reality and can he experience life to the fullest; life becomes more meaningful and significant once it is seen from this perspective: "j'avais un tel appétit de vivre" (III, 872).

Marcel finally understands that the joy of which the "petite phrase" spoke to Swann and "l'appel rouge et mystérieux de ce septuor" (III, 878) were, in essence, the same emotion which he had felt at certain moments of his life. It is the joy which the individual experiences when he approaches the essence of reality,

and transcends the limits of time and space, those moments when the individual is able to penetrate the surface of objects and uncover the essence which remains hidden within them. Even at Martinville, Marcel realizes that something exists below the physical objects he comes into contact with, although he does not, as yet, understand what this reality may be. The pleasure and joy evoked when the individual comes into contact with the essence of reality is egotistical in nature, as all pleasure is, but can be extended to encompass others once the vision is raised to its universal proportions. It is as a result of the essence that a link can be universally created. Swann's pleasure is limited and ephemeral in nature since it remains on a personal level. Swann mistakenly limits this joy to the pleasures afforded by love and never attributes it to the fulfillment promised by art. When the sonata is no longer associated with painful memories, the music becomes a revelation of the beauty of nature for Swann and represents "le Bois de Boulogne tombé en catalepsie" (I, 533). His impressions of the music are transformed to reminiscences of a certain moment in time and a certain location in which he used to hear the sonata being performed. Swann comes closest to the true significance of the sonata when it causes him pain as it faithfully resurrects the past and establishes a link with a previous moment in time when he experienced an identical impression. Just such a moment occurs at the beginning of the second section devoted to music when Swann's spontaneous reaction to the music is one of

happiness, an emotion which immediately disappears once the realization that the cause for this former happiness no longer exists. Swann's reminiscences of the "Bois" never establish a link with any previous impressions but remain descriptions of a particular period in his life. Swann remains deaf to the appeal of the sonata and mistakes a complacent and mundane existence with Odette for transcendence through art. Swann attributes the happiness which is evoked through the sonata to its association with his love rather than as the joy which accompanies creation. He does not recognize it as the emotion which the artist, in this case Vinteuil, experiences as he examines and reflects upon his own impressions of reality and then commits them to a more permanent form, the work of art. In the septet, "ce bonheur proposé par la petite phrase de la sonate" (III, 877) takes on a much more pressing intensity to become "l'appel" to a joy which is "plus supra-terrestre encore" (III, 878). The message of the septet is more mature and more developed than that of the sonata and reflects the composer's deeper understanding into the mysteries of life, his increasing approach of the essence of reality; it is the testimony of the artist who has achieved this joy through art despite the sadness and anxiety of his life. Swann never uncovers the mystery inherent to the phrases of Vinteuil's music. It is true that Swann does not have the advantage of this more pressing call since the septet is not published until after his death. However, even so, although the phrase can call and coax its listener to action, it cannot

instill within him the will, desire, or ability to actually fulfill this appeal to devote oneself to creation; it cannot create artistic potential within the individual if it is not already inherent within him: "cette phrase pouvait bien symboliser un appel, mais non créer des forces et faire de Swann l'écrivain qu'il n'était pas" (III, 878). Marcel achieves an understanding of the importance of this "appel": this joy, the sense of fulfillment and the possibility of adding meaning to an otherwise sterile existence underlines "l'impuissance que nous avons à nous réaliser dans la jouissance matérielle, dans l'action effective" (III, 877). It also emphasizes Marcel's inability to find fulfillment in society and in an existence devoid of art, an existence which can potentially become identical to that of Swann and Charlus.

Although Swann might be considered an artistic dilettante, he remains just that, an admirer of the arts whose interest remains purely superficial despite the appeal of the music. He never delves deeper into his impressions than a sense of propriety might allow. On the other hand, Marcel's desire to penetrate the mysteries is apparent as early as Martinville. In fact, Martinville remains one of the rare occasions during which he exploits the sensations aroused by a pleasurable sight. The process of penetrating deep within the mystery of these sensations in order to uncover their "équivalent (s) spirituel (s)" (III, 879), to make the metaphorical leap from a personal impression to its universal equivalent, is what he now

understands to be the basis for the creation of a work of art: the act of creation becomes the process of uncovering the spiritual reality or the essence of reality which lies below the surface of an impression or reminiscence; Marcel now recognizes the importance which impressions must assume in the creation of the work of art. Art becomes the expression of an impression in order to uncover the truths which exist within the soul of the individual. Truths attained through the intellect are less profound than those evoked through impressions or reminiscences. The septet speaks of the possibility of fulfillment and of lending permanence to these impressions through the work of art.

After many years of doubt as to the subject of his work, Marcel finally understands that the artist's function is that of a translator, a translator of his own sensations and impressions: "le seul livre vrai, un grand écrivain n'a pas, dans le sens courant, à l'inventer, puisqu'il existe déjà en chacun de nous, mais à le traduire. Le devoir et la tâche d'un écrivain sont ceux d'un traducteur" (III, 890). Everyone and everything that the artist comes into contact with, in a sense, is able "poser pour lui comme chez les peintres" (III, 905). The artist's experiences, emotions, and impressions all become integral factors in the creation of the work of art; his impressions become the basis of truth. The simplest occurrence, act, or detail may find its way into the work; fragments of memories including facial expressions, features, gestures, sounds all become material the artist makes use of. Many individuals

will become models for the characters the writer creates so there can be no one to one correspondence with the people he has known. In fact, this reinforces the idea that it is useless to try to identify the character of Vinteuil from among the composers that Proust admired; he is a combination of the many attributes these composers possessed which have been raised to a universal level: "D'ailleurs, comme les individualités (humaines ou non) sont dans un livre faites d'impressions nombreuses qui, prises de bien des jeunes filles, de bien des églises, de bien des sonates, servent à faire une seule sonate, une seule église, une seule jeune fille" (III, 1034-1035). In Vinteuil's septet the sound of the bells ringing out in Combray and the image of the sleeping child are both captured in his music. In Marcel's case, the women he has known and perhaps loved, fragments of memories from Combray, his grandmother, impressions from walks and journies he has taken, the sound of a voice will all serve as material for his work; all of these memories, whether held in tact or pieced together to form a new whole, will be essential to his creation: "Et je compris que tous ces matériaux de l'oeuvre littéraire, c'était ma vie passée" (III, 899). The work of art creates a sort of continuity among the fragments of an individual's life and creates a whole from all his impressions and sensations: "The Recherche is a testament of this deeply felt but rationally uncertain retrospective imperative that continuity must exist, or rather that the discontinuity of

experience as stored in the memory can be forged into a continuous vision, a continuous piece of art" (Cohen, p. 194).

Since the work is a reflection of the artist's nature, and this will not change drastically with the passage of time, an early work may presage the artist's response in given situations in the future. It also becomes an indication of the works which the artist will produce at a later date. Any changes may be attributed to his greater maturity and a deeper understanding of the essence of reality. In the works of Vinteuil, elements which were essential to the septet are already apparent in his sonata. Each offers traces of the suffering which was an integral part of his life, while also offering a glimpse of the consolation and joy attainable through art. His works become the ultimate fulfillment of happiness; the attainment of the eternal joy. Art offers the possibility of passing from a particular moment of suffering to a state of universality which puts the artist and his audience in a state of communion. Once this sense of universality has been attained, the artist is totally released from his pain. It is at the moment when the artist is able to transcend his particular situation to attain a general truth, that the work becomes pertinent to the reader or listener and becomes a revelation of truth to the latter. At this point the work functions as a mirror, permitting the observer to view his own soul more clearly:

En réalité, chaque lecteur est, quand il lit,  
le propre lecteur de soi-même. L'ouvrage de  
l'écrivain n'est qu'une espèce d'instrument

optique qu'il offre au lecteur afin de lui permettre de discerner ce que, sans ce livre, il n'eût peut-être pas vu en soi-même. La reconnaissance en soi-même, par le lecteur, de ce que dit le livre, est la preuve de la vérité de celui-ci (III, 911).

The fact that the listener or reader is able to identify with what is captured within the work of art is a proof that truth has been achieved. The baring of his soul by the artist has a similar effect upon his audience. Once the artist has transcended his personal impressions and has been able to capture a more general truth within his work, the reader or listener is encouraged to make his own discoveries by delving deep within his own soul. The reader or listener recognizes his own feelings, ideas, emotions, and impressions within the universality that the artist presents. Therefore, we eventually have the reappearance of particular impressions within the general truths.

Pain and suffering are essential to the creation of the work of art. Since the work is a translation into a more permanent form of the feelings, passions, and impressions of the artist, pain becomes a crucial means by which these emotions are evoked. It is in moments of grief that the individual becomes more capable of seeing clearly. Grief and pain create a greater sense of awareness within the individual and offer the possibility of evoking a variety of sensations and emotions. Happiness is a more static emotion and becomes an end in itself. Happiness makes unhappiness possible since the ties which are established in contentment become important sources of grief. This is why

creation is so closely linked to love; love makes the individual vulnerable and offers him the possibility of experiencing happiness, sadness, and suffering. The happiness he experiences becomes a yardstick against which his unhappiness may be measured. In retrospect, the memory of this happiness will make its loss seem even more poignant. In addition, the sense of unhappiness may evoke a variety of sensations unknown to the individual. A work of art cannot be produced by imitating genius; it must be felt and translated. It is in the moments of tranquility between the stormy intervals that these sensations and impressions are commended to a more permanent form. In Vinteuil's case, by transcending the grief and sadness of his life, he is able to experience the joy represented by the triumphantly ringing bells and the crowing cock; a joy which ultimately stems from the anguish of betrayal. The happiness he experiences, however, is not an emotion which stems from mundane pleasures, it is the pleasure which accompanies creation and is evoked in the artist as he approaches the essence of reality. Therefore, the artist who expresses great joy has not necessarily experienced it personally in his life, but has achieved it through art.

Marcel realizes the importance that Swann has played in his life; Swann has served as a kind of mentor throughout, although his student far surpasses the teacher in the ultimate realization of the importance of art to a fruitful existence. Swann inspires him to visit places, including Balbec, which become crucial to

the course his life takes. He also introduces Marcel to people and works which will play an important role in his development including Bergotte, the Guermantes, the works of Elstir, and especially the music of Vinteuil. Marcel concludes that "je devais à Swann non seulement la matière mais la décision" (III, 915) of setting to work on his book. However, Swann could never have foreseen the consequences of his influence. He was the initial stimulus, but: "C'est notre sensibilité et notre intelligence qui ont exploité les circonstances, lesquelles, sa première impulsion donnée, se sont engendrées" (III, 916). Swann represents the initial stages in the development of Marcel's artistic potential, the individual that Marcel is before this final revelation. For in fact, it is the final scene that distinguishes Marcel from Swann. This scene becomes "l'accomplissement d'une destinée" (Genette, Figures, III, 142).

The turning point of Marcel's life is the moment when he realizes that art, in fact, incarnates a reality which transcends our everyday existence and that the revelation of truth can be found deep within the soul of the individual, ideas which go far beyond any influence Swann could have upon him. Art depends upon the transcending of one's personal impressions in order to discover one's own vision of reality. Once his doubts are dispelled, Marcel is able to appreciate the mystery inherent within the final passages of Vinteuil's septet: art offers the possibility of achieving a higher and more meaningful level of existence, the eternal joy which makes all earthly pleasures seem

insignificant. Art offers the only glimpse into "l'au-delà" (III, 261), which the individual can ever hope to attain, and it is the artist who serves as guide through the world of the spirit. Swann never shares in this striking realization. The process of spiritual growth and understanding which ceases abruptly in the character of Swann continues to its fulfillment in Marcel: "Il (Swann) était désigné pour entrer dans la Terre promise. Il n'a cru qu'un instant à cette éventualité. Un autre y entrera à sa place" (Piroué, p. 75). The evolution in Marcel's understanding of Vinteuil's music is completed when he realizes the importance of impressions to the creation of the work of art. It is at this moment that he is able to fully appreciate the appeal offered within the final passages of the composer's septet and devote himself to the creation of his work and the fulfillment of "sa vocation" as an artist.

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