

CILIPS COVID-19 Book Reviews – Swann's Way (In Search of Lost Time Vol.1)

Reviewer name: Scott Main

Book title: Swann's Way (In Search of Lost Time Vol.1)

Author name: Marcel Proust

Genre: Classic Fiction

Overall Rating: Excellent

Brief summary: Originally published as 'A La Recherche du Temps Perdu' in 1913. In this opening volume of Proust's (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcel_Proust) masterpiece, the narrator seems at first to be launching a fairly traditional life-story. But after the prelude the narrator travels backwards rather than forwards in time, in order to tell the story of a love affair that had taken place before his own birth. Swann's jealous love for Odette, together with the comic antics of the Verdurins and the adoring members of their 'little clan', provide a prophetic model of the narrator's own love-relationships and peregrinations in salon society. All Proust's great themes – time and memory, love and loss, art and the artistic vocation – are bubbling away here. If you can manage to kindle an appreciation for Proust after reading Swann's Way there are another 6 heavyweight volumes to saturate your mind with Proustian pre-occupation!

What you liked: Reading Proust slows down time to focus on the detail and texture of life thereby enhancing it.

Any additional comments?: Delving into the secondary literature, kick off with 'The Cambridge Introduction to Marcel Proust' (2011) by Adam Watt (http://www.amazon.co.uk/Cambridge-Introduction-Marcel-Introductions-Literature/dp/0521516439/ref=tmm_hrd_title_0?ie=UTF8&qid=1389195940&sr=8-1)

With the appetite whetted go to 'The Cambridge Companion to Marcel Proust' (2001) edited by Richard Bales (http://www.amazon.co.uk/Cambridge-Companion-Proust-Companions-Literature/dp/052166019X/ref=tmm_hrd_title_0?ie=UTF8&qid=1389196200&sr=8-1)

Exalted claims have been made for Proust's work. A recent paean is that of Alain de Botton – 'How Proust Can Change your Life' (1998) (http://www.amazon.co.uk/How-Proust-Change-Your-Life/dp/0330354914/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1373702201&sr=1-1&keywords=de+botton+proust). We may not be able to regain the past, but Proust teaches us how to slow down, deepen, and intensify the present. A useful enchiridion for the long journey. Bonne chance mes amis!

For the life reach for Edmund White's 'Marcel Proust' (1998) (http://www.amazon.co.uk/Marcel-Proust-Penguin-Biography-Biographies/dp/0670880574/ref=tmm_hrd_title_0?ie=UTF8&qid=1389195703&sr=8-1)

Volker Schlöndorff directed the 1983 film version (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088315/?ref=sr_1) with Jeremy Irons as Charles and Ornella Muti as Odette de Crecy. Available on DVD at http://www.amazon.co.uk/Swann-Region-Compatible-Amour-Swann/dp/B0085SU0RC/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1373702014&sr=8-1&keywords=swann+in+love

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