

NAXOS
AudioBooks

Marcel Proust
Swann In Love

Read by **Neville Jason**

**CLASSIC
FICTION**

**MODERN
CLASSICS**



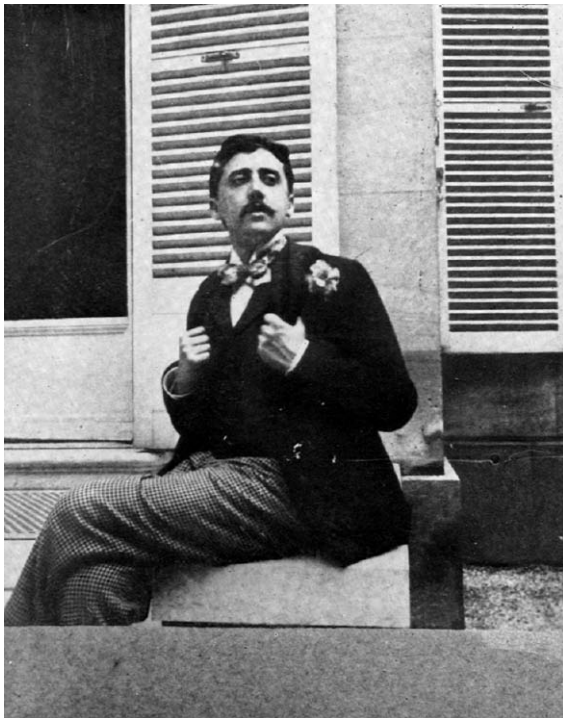
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REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST • II

1	The little clan at the Verdurins'	9:03
2	M. Swann – so ardent a lover	10:49
3	Odette de Crécy – a ravishing creature	8:23
4	Swann's first night at the Verdurins'	4:50
5	A new society for M. Swann	9:19
6	Memories of Vinteuil's sonata	5:52
7	Odette's charming entreaties	4:25
8	Tea at Odette de Crécy's	7:08
9	A search – and a rearrangement of orchids	10:25
10	Evening diversions	8:14
11	Comte de Forcheville – arrival at the Verdurins'	7:49
12	The first public slight – 'No orchid tonight?'	9:27
13	A fresh turn of the screw	13:35
14	Different carriages	7:02

15	Not tonight at the Verdurins'	6:49
16	A Wagnerian duplicity	11:17
17	Kept on tenterhooks	7:17
18	Music at the Marquise de Saint-Euverte's	6:16
19	The arrival of the Princess des Laumes	9:47
20	Vinteuil's sonata again	7:25
21	The questioning of Odette	11:50
22	More questions – 'procuresses?'	4:22
23	Daylight falling – waves against a cliff	9:22
24	Place Names: The Name	8:54
25	Gilberte – in a Poussin garden	4:51
26	Consumed by Gilberte	12:33
27	A special street – Swann's street	10:09
28	The disquieting acacias of the Bois de Boulogne	8:45

Total time: 3:56:12



Marcel Proust at Illiers

Marcel Proust

Swann In Love

Marcel Proust was born on July 10, 1871. His father, a distinguished professor of medicine, was from a Catholic family, while his mother was Jewish.

Although intent on becoming a writer from an early age, Proust was riddled with self-doubt. During his twenties he co-founded a short-lived review, *Le Banquet*, contributed to *La Revue Blanche* and had his first book published, a collection of articles and essays entitled *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*. He became an enthusiastic admirer of the work of Ruskin and translated his *Bible of Amiens* and *Sesame and Lilies* into French. A novel, *Jean Santeuil*, was eventually abandoned and only published long after his death, in 1954. For much of his youth he led the life of a man of fashion, frequenting fashionable Paris drawing rooms and literary salons, and these formed the background for a number of his stories and sketches.

The death of his adored mother in 1905 resulted in a nervous collapse and aggravated his chronic asthma and insomnia. But despite his grief and the sense of loss from which he never recovered, his mother's death freed him

with regard to his homosexual emotional life and allowed him to express his feelings, at least in fictional form, in his work.

In 1907 he moved into an apartment in the Boulevard Haussmann where, in the bedroom which he had had lined with cork to keep out noise, he embarked upon his great work *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*) of which *Swann's Way* forms the first part.

This long cycle of autobiographical novels was published in eight sections: *Du Côté de Chez Swann* (*Swann's Way*) in 1913; *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* (*Within A Budding Grove*) in 1918; *Le Côté de Guermantes I* (*The Guermantes Way I*) in 1920; *Le Côté de Guermantes II* and *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (*Cities of the Plain I*) in 1921; *Sodome et Gomorrhe II* in 1922; *La Prisonnière* (*The Captive*) in 1923; *Albertine Disparue* (*The Sweet Cheat Gone*) in 1925; *Le Temps Retrouvé* (*Time Regained*) in 1927.

Proust was obliged to publish *Swann's Way* at his own expense, and even after it had appeared he had trouble finding a publisher for the next volume *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*. However, when it appeared in 1918 it received considerable

acclaim, and was awarded the Prix Goncourt the following year.

By the time Proust died, on November 18, 1922, the first four parts of the cycle had been published, leaving the others to appear posthumously. The English translation from which this abridged version has been prepared, was made by C.K. Scott Moncrieff.

In *Remembrance of Things Past*, the minuteness of Proust's observation, the depth of his psychological understanding and the vividness of his descriptive powers have combined to create one of the most poetic and magical works in all literature.

In Part One – *Overture* and *Combray* – the narrator (who, if not literally Proust himself is, in all significant respects, a fictionalised version of him) introduces the listener to his beloved mother and his loving but unsympathetic father; to the relations, friends and servants who people his childhood; to the little village of Combray, where Marcel's family spend their holidays at his great-aunt's house, and to the beauties of the springtime countryside, which evoke in him feelings of ecstasy to which he longs to give expression.

Part Two – *Swann in Love* and *Place Names: The Name* – brings into focus the figure of Charles Swann, whom we have already met in Combray but only as a minor

figure, whose significance in the child Marcel's life centres around his evening visits. These are the cause of Marcel being sent early to bed, thus depriving him of his mother's goodnight kiss, so precious to him, and so necessary to enable him to sleep peacefully through the night. Swann is already somewhat estranged from Marcel's family due to his unfortunate marriage to Odette de Crécy, a *demi-mondaine*, whose dubious past prevents her from being received by 'respectable' people such as Marcel's family.

In *Swann in Love*, Marcel relates the story of Swann's love affair with Odette (which, chronologically, took place before his birth). We are introduced to the raffish Bohemian circle of M. and Mme Verdurin, an unlikely social milieu for Swann, the highly sought after man of fashion whose presence normally graces the most aristocratic and select drawing rooms, but into which he is now drawn by the powerful sexual appetite which rules his life.

To begin with, it is Odette who sets out to conquer Swann's heart. At first he is unresponsive to her style of beauty, until his aesthetic sensibilities are satisfied by the discovery of her likeness to a painting by Botticelli. Once he has succumbed to her charms he finds himself at the mercy of a passion for a woman neither of his social

class nor his intellectual equal. When Odette meets the Baron de Forcheville, and the baron appears to be replacing him in Odette's affections, Swann falls prey to a consuming jealousy which, together with his discoveries relating to Odette's past, ends by poisoning his love for her.

In *Place Names: The Name* we find ourselves chronologically back in a time which follows that of *Combray*. Once again the child Marcel is central to the narrative. Cheated by illness of his anticipated visit to either the wild Breton shores of Balbec or the golden streets of Florence, he is obliged to substitute for these delights daily visits to the gardens of the Champs-Élysées in the company of the family's servant, Françoise. The tedium of these visits is suddenly and miraculously lifted when he once again meets Gilberte, the daughter of Swann and Odette, whom he first saw through the hawthorn hedge at Combray and with whom he fell instantly in love.

Having rediscovered Gilberte in Paris, Marcel now becomes obsessed with her, and his childish passion parallels Swann's love for Odette, in that Marcel too is obliged to suffer the indifference towards him of the one he loves. Like Swann (and perhaps like all lovers), Marcel is in love not with a real person, but with the creation of his fantasy.

Proust constantly reminds us that, as Shakespeare put it, 'nothing is, but thinking makes it so', and this is a theme which runs right through *Remembrance of Things Past*. It suggests the author's awareness of the dawning era of psychology, for Proust, like Freud, understood that each person's perception is dictated by his or her personal experience. Thus the Swann Marcel knows in Combray is quite different from the Swann he sees as Gilberte's father; and his grandparent's Swann is not the same as the Swann familiar to the occupants of fashionable Paris drawing rooms.

The book ends with the adult Marcel, many years later, wandering through the Bois de Boulogne seeking the shade of Odette. In attempting to experience again what he found so beautiful in the past, he realises the impossibility of his quest, and comes to accept that the past is not to be found in places or things, but only inside ourselves.

When Swann first hears the *Andante* from Vinteuil's *Sonata*, he is stirred to the depths of his soul, because through it, he senses the possibility of reclaiming his 'lost' life, of renouncing his superficial existence and finding once again the faith and idealism of his youth. This sense of renewal, of being offered a second chance, is identified in Swann's mind with his love for

Odette, and for this reason the musical theme becomes for him the 'national anthem' of their love.

Just as Marcel, the narrator, is a fictional version of Proust himself, so too Swann embodies many of the author's characteristics, and Proust, like Swann, was conscious of the time he had lost and of the brevity of life in the face of his failing health.

The precise translation of the French title, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*) – contains within it a clue as to what this great biographical work meant for Proust. Having wasted time living a dilettante existence in the fashionable world, Proust, in embarking on this monumentally ambitious work, was rededicating his life to art.

Here was his chance to justify his life, and to cheat death through an act of artistic creation. *Remembrance of Things Past* was Proust's attempt to conquer time through reliving in the mind his lost years. Memory was the material he used to weave the magic cord he launched into infinity; that cord which now binds us to him, and stretches forward into the future, linking his genius to unborn generations across the echoing void of time.

Notes by Neville Jason

The Author

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During his twenties he co-founded a short-lived review, *Le Banquet*, contributed to *La Revue Blanche* and had his first book published in 1896, a collection of essays entitled *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*.

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For much of his youth Proust led the life of a man about town, frequenting fashionable Paris drawing rooms and literary salons, which were to form the background of a number of his early stories and sketches, and subsequently of *Remembrance of Things Past*.

The death of his adored mother in 1905 resulted in a nervous collapse and aggravated his chronic asthma and insomnia. But despite his grief and the sense of loss from which he never recovered, his mother's death freed him with regard to his homosexual emotional life, and allowed him

to address homosexuality in his writing, albeit in a manner which treated such experiences as happening to others rather than to himself.

In 1907 he moved into an apartment in the Boulevard Haussmann where, in the bedroom which he had had lined with cork to keep out noise, he embarked upon his great work *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*).

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FAURE NOCTURNES 7-13	8.550795
Jean Martin, piano	
DEBUSSY ARRANGMENTS FOR TWO PIANOS	8.223378
Daniel Blumenthal and Robert Groslot, pianos	

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Marcel Proust

Swann In Love

Read by **Neville Jason**

Swann in Love is the continuation of *Swann's Way*, the first part of Marcel Proust's monumental cycle *Remembrance of Things Past*. It tells the story of man-about-town Charles Swann's passionate, tormented love affair with the courtesan Odette de Crécy, and of its surprising outcome. Set in the degenerate *demi-monde* of nineteenth-century Paris as well as in the fashionable drawing rooms of the aristocracy, this new audiobook vividly brings to life the descriptive genius of the original novel.



Neville Jason trained at RADA where he was awarded the Diction Prize by Sir John Gielgud. He has worked with the English Stage Co., the Old Vic Company and the RSC as well as in films and musicals. In television he has appeared in popular serials such as *Maigret*, *Emergency Ward 10* and *Dr Who*, as well as playing classical roles such as Orestes and Horatio. Formerly a member of the BBC Radio Drama Co., he is frequently to be heard on radio.

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3:56:12