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Virginia Woolf.Lovelady, Cambria. Virginia Woolf (9781429814997), Great Authors, 8/1/2017, p1-2, 2p. (Biography)

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Virginia Woolf**Background**

British author Virginia Woolf is often credited with citing World War I as the beginning of the modernist movement in literature and art. She was also one of the chief contributors to literary modernism. Well-educated and wealthy, she was an avant-garde novelist, salon member, essayist and publisher, all of which were highly uncommon vocations for a woman at that time. Though she was plagued with a mental illness that would eventually lead her to suicide, her contribution to the literature of the twentieth century is significant.

Adeline Virginia Woolf was born in London on January 25, 1882. Her mother, Julia, had previously married into a family of publishers. Her father, Leslie, was a well-known literary critic who founded the Dictionary of National Biography. They both had several children from previous marriages, and had four more children together. Two of Julia's sons from her first marriage sexually abused Woolf from the time she was six years old until she turned 21.

Woolf and her sister, Vanessa, were taught at home by their parents while their brothers were sent away to school. Though Woolf enjoyed access to her parents' vast private library, she was also aware of the differences in her educational opportunities. She would revisit this them later in her essays and lectures.

Woolf's mother died in 1895, after which she experienced her first mental breakdown. Her father died in 1904. She had always had a strained relationship with him, so she viewed his passing as a liberation.

Woolf and her three siblings (Thoby, Vanessa and Adrian) moved into a home at 46 Gordon Square in Bloomsbury, where they hosted a group of intellectuals that came to be known as the Bloomsbury Group. After the unexpected death of Woolf's youngest brother, Thoby, in 1906, Woolf suffered another extended breakdown.

Woolf began writing for the "Times Literary Supplement" in 1905, while teaching at a women's college. In 1912, she married Leonard Woolf, a political theorist. By her own admission, she said she did not feel strong or stable enough to really write until she married Leonard. However, she would have several homosexual liaisons throughout her life, most notably with feminist author Vita Sackville-West.

"The Voyage Out," published in 1915, was Woolf's first novel. Like Woolf's "Night and Day" in 1919, the book was traditional and realistic in form. It wasn't until her later novels, "Mrs. Dalloway" (1925), "To the Lighthouse" (1927), and "The Waves" (1931), that Woolf established herself as an innovative and groundbreaking author, experimenting with new forms and techniques.

Despite her literary success, Woolf struggled with manic depression throughout her life. Her illness magnified her self-doubt, and her work suffered. During her bouts with depression she did not create or write. Feeling another manic period coming in 1941, compounded by Germany's attacks on England, Woolf put stones in her pockets and drowned herself in the River Ouse near her Sussex home on March 28.

The Bloomsbury Group & Hogarth Press

When the four Stephens siblings moved into a house together in Bloomsbury, their home became the center of England's intellectual community. Woolf's brother Thoby brought home several Cambridge friends for Thursday

night discussions about truth, beauty, art and sexuality. These were some of the great salon gatherings of the early twentieth century.

The men who attended meetings of the Bloomsbury Group were members of a college group called the Apostles, and would all become successful in intellectual and literary circles. These included author E.M. Forster, biographer Lytton Strachey, economist John Maynard Keynes, Woolf's sister Vanessa and her husband Clive Bell, and Leonard Woolf and Virginia. All of the Bloomsbury Group were influenced by the philosopher G.E. Moore, and aimed to match their views on art and literature to his philosophy.

The ideas espoused and discussed by this group of thinkers represented a world that was largely to women of this period. The Bloomsbury Group included Woolf in their conversations, asked her opinion and encouraged her intellectual growth. She wrote that she was surprised when they didn't seem to even notice (or care) that she was a woman.

Educated at home and brought up by Victorian-principled parents, Woolf came of age at a time when intelligence in a woman was something to be frowned upon and suppressed. The Bloomsbury Group allowed her to explore her intellectual side and participate in discussions about the changing nature of the world after World War I. The group continued meeting until 1930. Woolf's lifelong correspondence with members of the group was published in six volumes between 1975-1980.

Shortly after they were married, Leonard set up a printing press on the kitchen table of their home in 1917. Leonard was devoted to Woolf's writing, and passionate about ensuring that it reached its audience. His original goal in setting up the press was to help Woolf through a bout with depression, thinking it would be therapeutic. But it soon grew to be something much more far-reaching.

Hogarth Press would eventually publish T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland," 24 volumes of the translated works of Sigmund Freud, and works by Katherine Mansfield, fellow Bloomsbury member E.M. Forster, and Maxim Gorky. Leonard would be the director of the press until his death in 1969.

Participation in the Bloomsbury Group and the Hogarth Press gave Woolf the courage and experience to succeed as a woman writer, addressing the confining nature of Victorian culture, the exclusion of women in British society, and the plight of the outsider.

Literary Style

Woolf was one of the first feminist writers in modern literature. Intelligent yet unable to access the same educational resources her male counterparts, she took up the feminist cause on behalf of all women.

The watershed book "A Room of One's Own," published in 1929, was expanded from lectures Woolf had given at Cambridge University in 1928. The book's major theme is that women must write for women, because they can not use the same conventions and structure that male writers have been using for centuries; they must establish a way of writing for themselves. She cautioned, however, that women should not do this just for the sake of breaking with tradition, but for the sake of creating something entirely new.

In "A Room of One's Own," Woolf introduced the idea of William Shakespeare's imaginary sister, Judith. She maintains that even if Judith had the exact same talent as her brother, she still would not have been able to write. Without free time, access to schooling, and a means to support herself, a woman in Elizabethan England could not have pursued a career as a writer. Woolf encouraged women to create a room of their own in which to write, and to support themselves both financially and creatively.

For Woolf, writing was not about waging a gender battle or maligning the characteristics of the opposite sex. On the contrary, writing was intended to bring together the virtues of male and female into a something without

gender. She called this idea the "androgynous mind." According to Woolf, the androgynous mind utilizes all of its resources and is able to transcend purely male or purely female. Woolf believed that an entirely masculine mind or an entirely feminine mind could not fully create anything.

Woolf's search for the androgynous mind is perhaps best exemplified in her experiments with "stream of consciousness" writing. The idea behind this technique is that a person's perception of the present is constantly changing because it is confused with impressions, thoughts and memories from the past. Therefore, a person's consciousness is continually evolving.

Stream of consciousness became something of a plot device in Woolf's work. Instead of exterior action (in which things happen to characters), most of the action was interior, with things happening in the minds of the characters. Woolf wanted to explore the depth of her characters, something she felt could not be done with traditional narrative.

Stream of consciousness is an essential component of "To the Lighthouse," "The Waves," "The Years," and "Mrs. Dalloway." In these novels, action and plot take a backseat to the interior monologues and thoughts of the characters. Action becomes the result of a person's consciousness instead of the other way around. It was with these novels that Woolf was recognized as a major force in modern literature. Some critics have credited her with single-handedly moving the novel forward into the twentieth century.

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By Cambria Lovelady

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## Virginia Woolf: Some Literary Influences

Although **Virginia Woolf** (née Stephen, 1882-1941) always resented not having been sent to university as her brothers had been, she was well-versed in English classics like Shakespeare, Dickens, Austen, and the Brontës. Growing up in her parents' busy and intellectual London household, young Virginia Stephen met many luminaries of the literary world, including the great novelists Henry James and George Eliot (Marian Evans). In adulthood, Woolf was part of a vibrant literary and artistic circle known as the Bloomsbury Group. Woolf and her husband Leonard started a publishing company, the Hogarth Press, in 1917, and throughout her life Woolf kept abreast of avant-garde literature in Europe. In the 1920s, as Woolf was thinking about and writing *Mrs. Dalloway*, she was reading the works of Irish novelist James Joyce and of French novelist Marcel Proust. These modernist authors' influences on Woolf are visible in *Mrs. Dalloway*.



**James Joyce** (1882-1941) was the author of *Ulysses*, one of the first truly experimental modernist novels. All the action of the novel takes place on a single day, June 16, in Dublin, Ireland. Joyce uses extremely experimental writing techniques, most notably **stream of consciousness** writing, which is meant to reflect the way the human mind actually works as it leaps back and forth between present experience, memories, and other thoughts. Virginia Woolf did not think highly of Joyce—the Hogarth Press declined to publish *Ulysses*—but *Mrs. Dalloway* is often seen as Woolf's response to Joyce's novel. Both works take place during a single day in June; both follow the path of a central character

moving through a bustling urban landscape; and both use stream of consciousness techniques. Read the attached excerpt from the famous Molly Bloom section of *Ulysses* and compare it to Woolf's use of stream of consciousness. (Molly Bloom is the wife of the *Ulysses*/*Odysseus* figure of the novel, Leopold Bloom, and the book ends with Molly's long, mostly unpunctuated interior monologue.)

While Woolf was not a Joyce fan, she had great admiration for another contemporary novelist, the French writer **Marcel Proust** (1871-1922). Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (translated into English as *Remembrance of Things Past* or *In Search of Lost Time*) was published in seven volumes between 1913 and 1927. (Proust was in poor health all his life; he wrote much of the book in bed and died before the last several volumes were published.) Purportedly inspired by a memory triggered by the flavor of a small cake called a madeleine soaked in tea, Proust's novel explores the psychology of memory and human perceptions of time, as well as love, sexuality (including homosexuality), art, music, and society. This packet contains the famous madeleine episode from the first section of *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Think about ways in which both Woolf and Proust are exploring and expressing theories about how the human mind processes and responds to memory.



This excerpt is <sup>from</sup> the conclusion of the Molly Bloom stream-of-consciousness chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. This 35-page chapter, which ends the novel, contains almost no punctuation.

*Ulysses* was originally published in serialized form, and was immediately banned for obscenity in Britain and the United States. The novel was first published in book form in Paris in 1922, but could not legally be imported to the U.S. or Britain because of the ban. The U.S. ban was lifted in 1933 after the courts ruled that the book was not pornographic, and the novel was published in Britain four years later.

1430 cards this morning hed have something to sigh for a dark man in some  
perplexity between 2 7s too in prison for Lord knows what he does that I  
dont know and Im to be slooching around down in the kitchen to get his  
lordship his breakfast while hes rolled up like a mummy will I indeed did  
you ever see me running Id just like to see myself at it show them attention  
and they treat you like dirt I dont care what anybody says itd be much  
better for the world to be governed by the women in it you wouldnt see  
women going and killing one another and slaughtering when do you ever  
see women rolling around drunk like they do or gambling every penny they  
have and losing it on horses yes because a woman whatever she does she  
knows where to stop sure they wouldnt be in the world at all only for us  
1440 they dont know what it is to be a woman and a mother how could they  
where would they all of them be if they hadnt all a mother to look after  
them what I never had thats why I suppose hes running wild now out at  
night away from his books and studies and not living at home on account of  
the usual rowy house I suppose well its a poor case that those that have a  
fine son like that theyre not satisfied and I none was he not able to make one  
it wasnt my fault we came together when I was watching the two dogs up in  
her behind in the middle of the naked street that disheartened me altogether  
I suppose I oughtnt to have buried him in that little woolly jacket I knitted  
crying as I was but give it to some poor child but I knew well Id never have  
1450 another our 1st death too it was we were never the same since O Im not  
going to think myself into the glooms about that any more I wonder why he  
wouldnt stay the night I felt all the time it was somebody strange he brought  
in instead of roving around the city meeting God knows who nightwalkers  
and pickpockets his poor mother wouldnt like that if she was alive ruining  
himself for life perhaps still its a lovely hour so silent I used to love coming  
home after dances the air of the night they have friends they can talk to  
weve none either he wants what he wont get or its some woman ready to  
stick her knife in you I hate that in women no wonder they treat us the way  
they do we are a dreadful lot of bitches I suppose its all the troubles we have  
1460 makes us so snappy Im not like that he could easy have slept in there on the  
sofa in the other room I suppose he was as shy as a boy he being so young  
hardly 20 of me in the next room hed have heard me on the chamber arrah  
what harm Dedalus I wonder its like those names in Gibraltar Delapaz  
Delagracia they had the devils queer names there father Vilaplana of Santa  
Maria that gave me the rosary Rosales y OReilly in the Calle las Siete  
Revueltas and Pisimbo and Mrs Opisso in Governor street O what a name  
Id go and drown myself in the first river if I had a name like her O my and  
all the bits of streets Paradise ramp and Bedlam ramp and Rodgers ramp  
and Crutchetts ramp and the devils gap steps well small blame to me if I am  
1470 a harumscarum I know I am a bit I declare to God I dont feel a day older  
than then I wonder could I get my tongue round any of the Spanish como  
esta usted muy bien gracias y usted see I havent forgotten it all I thought I

had only for the grammar a noun is the name of any person place or thing  
pity I never tried to read that novel cantankerous Mrs Rubio lent me by  
Valera with the questions in it all upside down the two ways I always knew  
wed go away in the end I can tell him the Spanish and he tell me the Italian  
then hell see Im not so ignorant what a pity he didnt stay Im sure the poor  
fellow was dead tired and wanted a good sleep badly I could have brought  
him in his breakfast in bed with a bit of toast so long as I didnt do it on the  
knife for bad luck or if the woman was going her rounds with the  
watercress and something nice and tasty there are a few olives in the kitchen  
he might like I never could bear the look of them in Abrines I could do the  
criada the room looks all right since I changed it the other way you see  
something was telling me all the time Id have to introduce myself not  
knowing me from Adam very funny wouldnt it Im his wife or pretend we  
were in Spain with him half awake without a Gods notion where he is dos  
huevos estrellados senior Lord the cracked things come into my head  
sometimes itd be great fun supposing he stayed with us why not theres the  
room upstairs empty and Millys bed in the back room he could do his  
writing and studies at the table in there for all the scribbling he does at it  
and if he wants to read in bed in the morning like me as hes making the  
breakfast for 1 he can make it for 2 Im sure Im not going to take in lodgers  
off the street for him if he takes a gesabo of a house like this Id love to have  
a long talk with an intelligent welleducated person Id have to get a nice pair  
of red slippers like those Turks with the fez used to sell or yellow and a nice  
semitransparent morning gown that I badly want or a peachblossom  
dressing jacket like the one long ago in Walpoles only 8/6 or 18/6 Ill just  
give him one more chance Ill get up early in the morning Im sick of Cohens  
old bed in any case I might go over to the markets to see all the vegetables . . .

1480

1490

and the devil knows who else from all  
the ends of Europe and Duke street and the fowl market all clucking  
outside Larby Sharons and the poor donkeys slipping half asleep and the  
vague fellows in the cloaks asleep in the shade on the steps and the big  
wheels of the carts of the bulls and the old castle thousands of years old yes  
and those handsome Moors all in white and turbans like kings asking you  
to sit down in their little bit of a shop and Ronda with the old windows of  
the posadas 2 glancing eyes a lattice hid for her lover to kiss the iron and  
the wineshops half open at night and the castanets and the night we missed  
the boat at Algeciras the watchman going about serene with his lamp and O  
that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like  
fire and the glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes  
and all the queer little streets and the pink and blue and yellow houses and  
the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and  
Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the  
rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and  
how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as  
another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he  
asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my  
arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts  
all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will  
Yes.

1590

1600

She found, to tackle them in the required tone, the warmth of feeling which pre-existed and dictated them, but which is not to be found in the words themselves, and by this means she smoothed away, as she read, any harshness or discordance in the tenses of verbs, endowing the imperfect and the preterite with all the sweetness to be found in generosity, all the melancholy to be found in love, guiding the sentence that was drawing to a close towards the one that was about to begin, now hastening, now slackening the pace of the syllables so as to bring them, despite their differences of quantity, into a uniform rhythm, and breathing into this quite ordinary prose a kind of emotional life and continuity.

My aching heart was soothed; I let myself be borne upon the current of this gentle night on which I had my mother by my side. I knew that such a night could not be repeated; that the strongest desire I had in the world, namely, to keep my mother in my room through the sad hours of darkness, ran too much counter to general requirements and to the wishes of others for such a concession as had been granted me this evening to be anything but a rare and artificial exception. To-morrow night my anguish would return and Mamma would not stay by my side. But when my anguish was assuaged, I could no longer understand it; besides, to-morrow was still a long way off; I told myself that I should still have time to take preventive action, although that time could bring me no access of power since these things were in no way dependent upon the exercise of my will, and seemed not quite inevitable only because they were still separated from me by this short interval.

Start Here  
And so it was that, for a long time afterwards, when I lay awake at night and revived old memories of Combray, I saw no more of it than this sort of luminous panel, sharply defined against a vague and shadowy background, like the panels which the glow of a Bengal light or a searchlight beam will cut out and illuminate in a building the other parts of which remain plunged in darkness: broad enough at its base, the little parlour, the dining-room, the opening of the dark path from which M. Swann, the unwitting author of my sufferings,

would emerge, the hall through which I would journey to the first step of that staircase, so painful to climb, which constituted, all by itself, the slender cone of this irregular pyramid; and, at the summit, my bedroom, with the little passage through whose glazed door Mamma would enter; in a word, seen always at the same evening hour, isolated from all its possible surroundings, detached and solitary against the dark background, the bare minimum of scenery necessary (like the decor one sees prescribed on the title-page of an old play, for its performance in the provinces) to the drama of my undressing; as though all Combray had consisted of but two floors joined by a slender staircase, and as though there had been no time there but seven o'clock at night. I must own that I could have assured any questioner that Combray did include other scenes and did exist at other hours than these. But since the facts which I should then have recalled would have been prompted only by voluntary memory, the memory of the intellect, and since the pictures which that kind of memory shows us preserve nothing of the past itself, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue of Combray. To me it was in reality all dead.

Permanently dead? Very possibly.

There is a large element of chance in these matters, and a second chance occurrence, that of our own death, often prevents us from awaiting for any length of time the favours of the first.

I feel that there is much to be said for the Celtic belief that the souls of those whom we have lost are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate object, and thus effectively lost to us until the day (which to many never comes) when we happen to pass by the tree or to obtain possession of the object which forms their prison. Then they start and tremble, they call us by our name, and as soon as we have recognised their voice the spell is broken. Delivered by us, they have overcome death and return to share our life.

And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm,

beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling. And it depends on chance whether or not we come upon this object before we ourselves must die.

Many years had elapsed during which nothing of Combray, save what was comprised in the theatre and the drama of my going to bed there, had any existence for me, when one day in winter, on my return home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, offered me some tea, a thing I did not ordinarily take. I declined at first, and then, for no particular reason, changed my mind. She sent for one of those squat, plump little cakes called "petites madeleines," which look as though they had been moulded in the fluted valve of a scallop shell. And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory—this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it *was* me. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I sensed that it was connected with the taste of the tea and the cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savours, could not, indeed, be of the same nature. Whence did it come? What did it mean? How could I seize and apprehend it?

I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, then a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time to stop; the potion is losing its magic. It is plain that the truth I am seeking lies not in the cup but in myself. The drink has called it into being, but does not know it, and can only repeat indefinitely, with a progressive diminution of strength, the same message which I cannot interpret, though I hope at least to be able to call it forth again

and to find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final enlightenment. I put down the cup and examine my own mind. It alone can discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty, whenever the mind feels overtaken by itself; when it, the seeker, is at the same time the dark region through which it must go seeking and where all its equipment will avail it nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not yet exist, to which it alone can give reality and substance, which it alone can bring into the light of day.

And I begin again to ask myself what it could have been, this unremembered state which brought with it no logical proof, but the indisputable evidence, of its felicity, its reality, and in whose presence other states of consciousness melted and vanished. I decide to attempt to make it reappear. I retrace my thoughts to the moment at which I drank the first spoonful of tea. I rediscover the same state, illuminated by no fresh light. I ask my mind to make one further effort, to bring back once more the fleeting sensation. And so that nothing may interrupt it in its course I shut out every obstacle, every extraneous idea, I stop my ears and inhibit all attention against the sounds from the next room. And then, feeling that my mind is tiring itself without having any success to report, I compel it for a change to enjoy the distraction which I have just denied it, to think of other things, to rest and refresh itself before making a final effort. And then for the second time I clear an empty space in front of it; I place in position before my mind's eye the still recent taste of that first mouthful, and I feel something start within me, something that leaves its resting-place and attempts to rise, something that has been embedded like an anchor at a great depth; I do not know yet what it is, but I can feel it mounting slowly; I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed.

Undoubtedly what is thus palpitating in the depths of my being must be the image, the visual memory which, being linked to that taste, is trying to follow it into my conscious mind. But its struggles are too far off, too confused and chaotic; scarcely can I perceive the neutral glow into which the elusive whirling medley of stirred-up colours is fused, and I cannot

distinguish its form, cannot invite it, as the one possible interpreter, to translate for me the evidence of its contemporary, its inseparable paramour, the taste, cannot ask it to inform me what special circumstance is in question, from what period in my past life.

Will it ultimately reach the clear surface of my consciousness, this memory, this old, dead moment which the magnetism of an identical moment has travelled so far to importune, to disturb, to raise up out of the very depths of my being? I cannot tell. Now I feel nothing; it has stopped, has perhaps sunk back into its darkness, from which who can say whether it will ever rise again? Ten times over I must essay the task, must lean down over the abyss. And each time the cowardice that deters us from every difficult task, every important enterprise, has urged me to leave the thing alone, to drink my tea and to think merely of the worries of to-day and my hopes for to-morrow, which can be brooded over painlessly.

And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before mass), when I went to say good morning to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane. The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because I had so often seen such things in the meantime, without tasting them, on the trays in pastry-cooks' windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days to take its place among others more recent; perhaps because of those memories, so long abandoned and put out of mind, nothing now survived, everything was scattered; the shapes of things, including that of the little scallop-shell of pastry, so richly sensual under its severe, religious folds, were either obliterated or had been so long dormant as to have lost the power of expansion which would have allowed them to resume their place in my consciousness. But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remember-

ing, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

And as soon as I had recognised the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set to attach itself to the little pavilion opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated segment which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I used to be sent before lunch, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. And as in the game wherein the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little pieces of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch and twist and take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, solid and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.