

The Contemporary Jewish Museum

DARIA MARTIN: TONIGHT THE WORLD

Jun 27, 2019 – Feb 19, 2020

**CONTEMPORARY
JEWISH MUSEUM**

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Excerpt from *Remembrance of Things Past* by Marcel Proust

Images

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource explores how memory, history, and art intertwine to create powerful learning experiences. Students will consider the impact of family history and inherited memories by investigating Daria Martin's installation *Tonight the World*, which reimagines the dreams of the artist's grandmother. Martin's grandmother left her childhood home in Brno, Czechoslovakia ahead of the Nazi occupation and the Holocaust. The dreams that Martin explores are centered in this childhood home. This resource guide includes images from the exhibition, a film clip from the exhibition, discussion prompts, activities, and a link to a videogame. This resource is geared toward middle school, high school, and university students and teachers.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

***Daria Martin: Tonight the World* revisits dreams and memories from her personal family history to create a complex portrait of migration, loss, and resilience.**

Through atmospheric film and gaming technology, the exhibition explores 20th century European migration history. Staging a series of intimate encounters with an extensive archive of her grandmother's dream diaries, the artist creates an immersive film environment exploring the subconscious and vivid memories of her grandmother, Susi Stiasni, who fled from the imminent Nazi invasion in 1938. Eventually settling in Marin County, where her granddaughter Daria was born and raised, Susi spent the rest of her life reliving these fragmented memories in her dreams. These dream diaries, made over a thirty-seven year period, were initially for the purposes of psychoanalysis. They frequently return to Stiasni's childhood home, a modernist villa in the city of Brno in the former Czechoslovakia. The installation is simultaneously a portrait of the artist's grandmother, a self-portrait, and an exploration of intolerance, migration, loss, empathy, and resilience. The exhibition includes a thirteen-minute short film, a videogame, pages from the dream diaries, and paintings by Stiasni.

THE ARTIST

Daria Martin was born in 1973 in Marin County, California. After studying humanities at Yale University, she received her M.F.A from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 2000. Martin has lived and worked in London since 2002. Her work has been exhibited extensively across the world. Martin is a Professor of Art and Director of Research at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford as well as a Supernumerary Fellow in Fine Art of St. John's College.

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Through this personal, human, memory-based work of art, we as viewers are able to develop empathy and new understandings of the time period on which it reflects. This exhibition comes at a moment when Holocaust survivors and those with personal accounts of Nazi invasion will no longer be able to give their testimony first-hand. How can we continue to share the stories in their absence? *Daria Martin: Tonight the World* implies that we have an obligation when we inherit someone's memories to use them to guide our path in the future.

DREAMS AND MEMORY

Dreams may incorporate fragments from our waking lives. In *Tonight the World*, Martin's grandmother's dreams of her childhood home relate to ideas of migration and loss. Carl Jung, a prominent early psychoanalyst, believed dreams are a window into the subconscious.

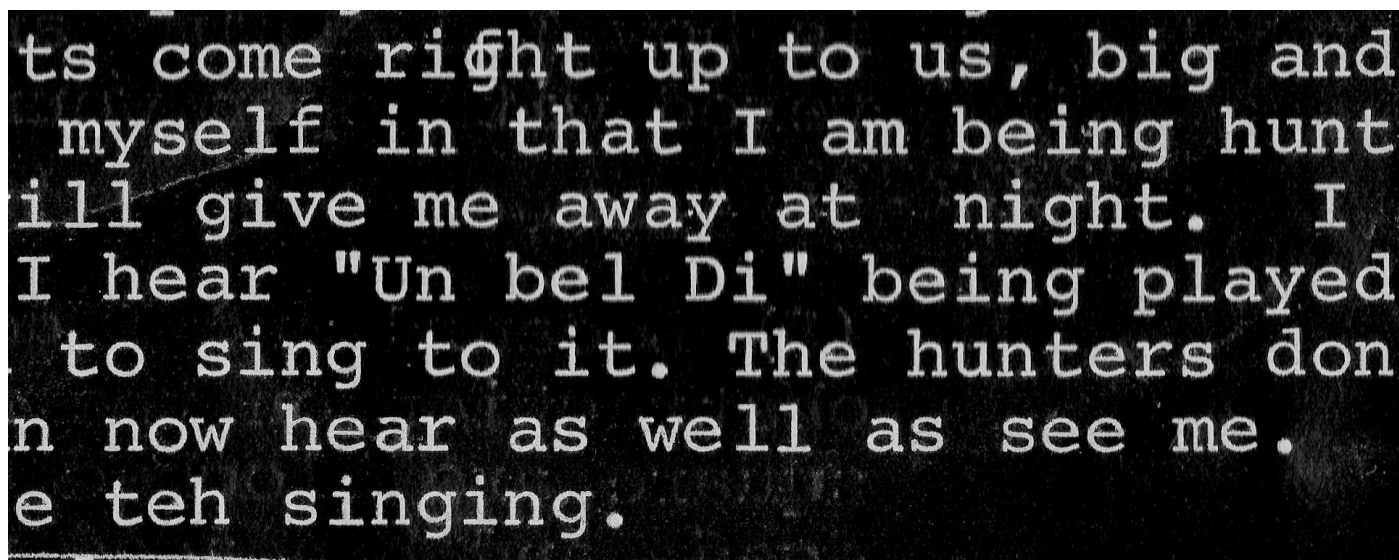
“The dream is a little hidden door in the innermost and most secret recesses of the soul, opening into that cosmic night . . .”

Carl Jung, “The Meaning of Psychology for Modern Man” (1933). In CW 10: Civilization in Transition. p.304

SET INDUCTION

Daria Martin's grandmother, Susi Stiassni, recorded her dreams over a thirty-seven year period, writing almost every day. Stiassni's psychoanalyst then analyzed her dream diaries to help her make sense of her subconscious experiences. Martin's film is a cinematic recreation of five of these dreams.

Share the photo of the fragment from Stiassni's dream diary with students. You may also study Carl Jung's Redbook as an example of an artistic dream diary.



ts come right up to us, big and
myself in that I am being hunt
ill give me away at night. I
I hear "Un bel Di" being played
to sing to it. The hunters don
n now hear as well as see me.
e teh singing.

Daria Martin, *Tonight the World*, 2019 anamorphic 16mm film transferred to HD 13.5 minutes © Daria Martin, courtesy Maureen Paley, London.

ACTIVITY

Dream Diaries

Have students record their dreams for at least one week. Instruct them to keep a notebook by their bed so they may write it down as soon as they wake up.

- Keep the journal and a dedicated pen by your bed.
- Record your dreams in the morning.
- Record any emotions and thoughts you remember having in the dream.
- Give the dream a title.

After recording a week's worth of dreams, discuss or consider the following questions. Write your responses down.

- Did anything surprise you about your dreams?
- Are there any symbols that recurred?
- What did your dreams sound like?
- Is there a smell associated with any of your dreams?
- What colors are prominent?
- Are there any textures that you remember?
- Were there any parts of the dream that relate directly to your waking life?

Ask students to consider how these dreams may be a starting point to create a piece of writing, music, film, or visual art.

Watch the clip of Daria Martin's *Tonight the World* (<https://vimeo.com/318497170>)



Daria Martin, *Tonight the World*, 2019
anamorphic 16mm film transferred to HD
13.5 minutes © Daria Martin, courtesy
Maureen Paley, London

Ask students to use answers to the questions on the previous page about their own dream diaries to create an artistic response. Options may include copying the dream into a handmade journal, setting to music, drawing, collaging, stained glass-making, painting, making a game, creating a tunnel book, or making a movie. The possibilities are endless!

INHERITED MEMORY AND OBJECTS

Martin inherited her grandmother's dream diaries, linking her to her grandmother's past through physical objects. Martin further explored this connection by visiting her grandmother's childhood home—since transformed into an architectural museum—to research the villa extensively and create a film onsite.

Martin questions and reflects on ancestral and collective memory, ultimately attempting to make sense of and connect with her own past. This relates to the groundbreaking work by Dr. Marianne Hirsch on postmemory.¹

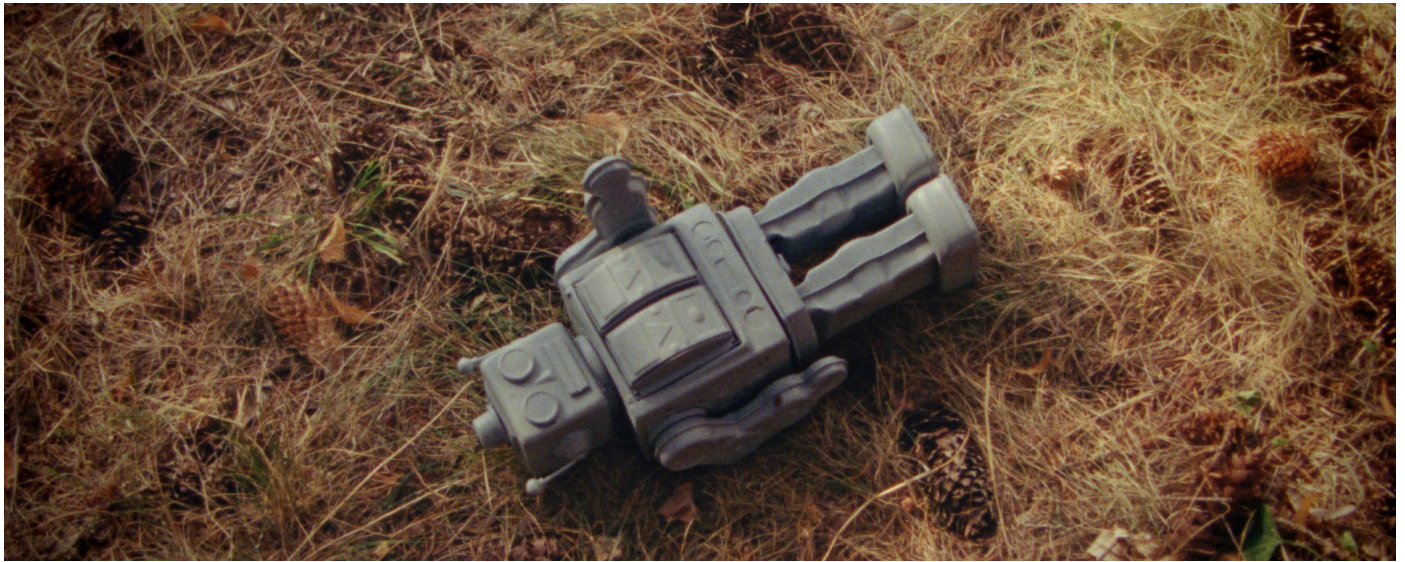
1. Postmemory, defined as “the relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.” (Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, 2012)

The immersive video installation, *Tonight the World*, comprises both a film and a computer game. In the computer game, players must find Martin's grandmother's childhood objects, such as a toy robot, from throughout the Villa Stiassni, which she fled as a teenager, and return them to her playroom. Upon completion of the game, all of her grandmother's diary pages are released and put into proper order. The videogame *Refuge* can be played on PC or MAC via refugegame.co.uk.

Discuss

Using the picture of the toy robot as a prompt, discuss with students what objects remind one of one's past.

- When you learn about history, what helps you remember it?
- How do objects, music, or photographs remind us of the past?



Daria Martin, *Tonight the World*, 2019 anamorphic 16mm film transferred to HD 13.5 minutes © Daria Martin, courtesy Maureen Paley, London

EXPLORING INHERITED MEMORY

In *Tonight the World*, film, objects, diaries, photographs, and a computer game are used to tell the story of Susi Stiassni's past. After Stiassni and her family fled the former Czechoslovakia from the imminent threat of the Nazi occupation, she never returned to her childhood home, but frequently visited the villa in Brno in her dreams. The artist inherited her grandmother's memories through the diaries themselves, creating a fragmented account through the landscape of dreams.

Use the following worksheet to explore the idea of inherited memory.

INHERITED MEMORY EXPLORATION

Share a story, memory, or incident that has been passed down to you (family or cultural).
How was it shared?

What objects, images, etc. do you associate with this inherited memory?

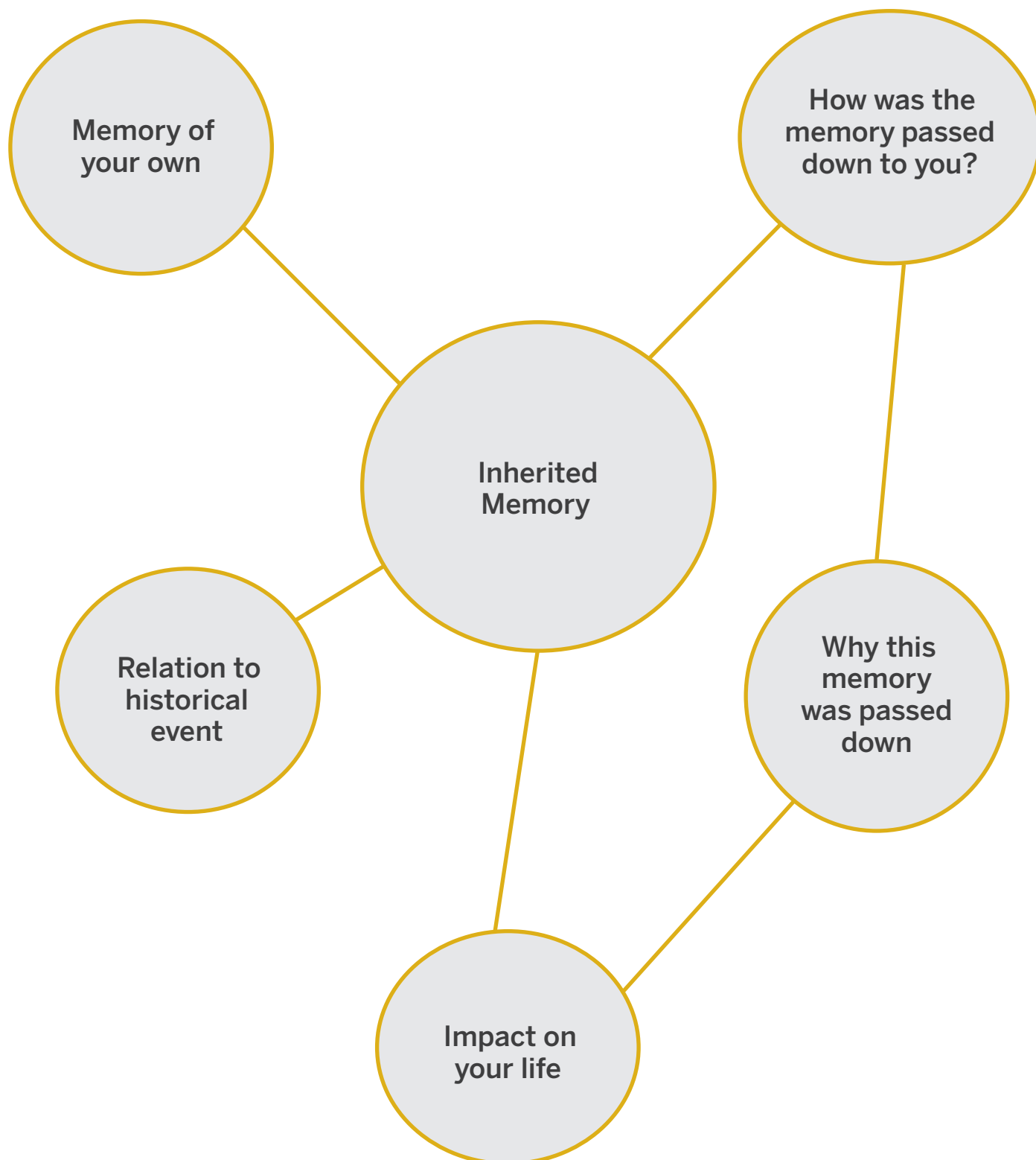
Describe a story, memory, dream, or incident that you have shared with others.

Has your retelling of it changed over time?
Explain.

MEMORY MAP

Activity

Using your responses from the Inherited Memory Exploration, expand on your answers to create a Memory Map starting in the center.



Discuss

- How was your inherited memory passed down to you? Orally? Using objects or photos? What helps you remember it?
- Is the inherited memory a story with a beginning, middle, and end, or just a flash or fragment?
- Why do you think this memory was passed on? How may it have impacted you or your life?
- Does this inherited memory relate to a historical event? If so, how might this personal story differ from historical accounts?
- What memory of your own do you share with others? Why do you choose to share this memory?

EXPLORING MEMORY AND SENSES

Activity

Read the excerpt from *Swann's Way* by Marcel Proust.

Discuss

- In the story, the author's memory is triggered by the taste of the madeleine. Have you ever smelled or tasted something that brought you into another time or place? Could you control it?
- Is memory voluntary or involuntary?
- Does memory contain feeling? Touch? Smell? Sound?

HISTORY, MEMORY, AND ART

Tonight the World raises socio-political issues surrounding WWII, the Holocaust, and migration and identity. It also encourages the viewer to consider the impact of using film and gaming to document personal stories. Through her work, Martin combines references to architecture, fashion, dance, drama, sculpture, painting, and music. Martin has created an artistic retelling by restaging her grandmother's dreams onsite at the Villa Stiassni.

Study the photo. Explain that in this photo, taken at the Villa Stiassni, Brno, Czech Republic, the artist recreates her grandmother's dreams in the very same spot they took place almost 100 years ago.



Daria Martin, *Tonight the World*, 2019 anamorphic 16mm film transferred to HD 13.5 minutes © Daria Martin, courtesy Maureen Paley, London.

- What are the differences between history and memory?
- How might historical accounts change based on who is telling the story? Give an example.
- What is our responsibility to the memories we inherit? Can you think of a time that a story or memory influenced a decision you made?
- What role can an artist play in exploring history?

FURTHER STUDY

Explore various works of art created by second- or third-generation Holocaust survivors, such as *Maus* by Art Spiegelman or the art of Christian Boltanski.

Discuss

- What historical event would you want to learn about through a first-person account? Who would you like to ask about a moment in history?
- How might you prepare to meet someone who is giving a firsthand testimony? What would you want to know in advance?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Daria Martin:
dariamartin.com

Jungian Psychology and Dreams:
thesap.org.uk/resources/articles-on-jungian-psychology-2/carl-gustav-jung/dreams/

Post-Memory:
urokiistorii.ru/sites/default/files/hirsch_generation_of_postmemory.pdf

TOURS

Tours of *Daria Martin: Tonight the World* use works of art to explore memory and the past, and to make personal connections to history. All CJM tours are dialogue based, inviting students to observe, create interpretations, and make contemporary meaning from the works of art. Tours are one hour long, and encourage observation, conversation, and reflection. Tour groups may add a hands-on art workshop to their experience. Tours are geared toward grades 6 and up.

To book a tour of *Daria Martin: Tonight the World* visit thecjm.org/tours, call 415.655.7857 or email tours@thecjm.org.

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY

Tours + Survivor Talk

In conjunction with this exhibition, we are offering a special opportunity to hear a firsthand account of a Holocaust survivor in conjunction with a tour of *Daria Martin: Tonight the World*.

Tours + Survivor Talks are a 2.5 hour experience and are available on select dates only. Contact tours@thecjm.org for further information.

Excerpt from *Remembrance of Things Past* by Marcel Proust

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 so 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 recognized their voice the spell is broken. We have delivered them: they have overcome death and return to share our life.

And so it is with our own past. It is a labor 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) which we do not suspect. And as for that object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it or not 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, as I came 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 out for one of those short, plump little cakes called 'petites madeleines,' which look as though they had been molded in the fluted scallop of a pilgrim's shell. And soon, mechanically, weary after a dull 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, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate, a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, 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 myself. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I was conscious that it was connected with the taste of tea and cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savors, could not, indeed, be of the same nature as theirs. Whence did it come? What did it signify? How could I seize upon and define it?

I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, 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 object of my quest, the truth, lies not in the cup but in myself. The tea has called up in me, but does not itself understand, and can only repeat indefinitely with a gradual loss of strength, the same testimony; which I, too, cannot interpret, though I hope at least to be able to call upon the tea for it again and to find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final enlightenment. I put down my cup and examine my own mind. It is for it to discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of

uncertainty whenever the mind feels that some part of it has strayed beyond its own borders; when it, the seeker, is at once the dark region through which it must go seeking, where all its equipment will avail it nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not so far 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 of its existence, but only the sense that it was a happy, that it was a real state 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 find again the same state, illumined by no fresh light. I compel my mind to make one further effort, to follow and recapture once again the fleeting sensation. And that nothing may interrupt it in its course I shut out every obstacle, every extraneous idea, I stop my ears and inhibit all attention to the sounds which come from the next room. And then, feeling that my mind is growing fatigued without having any success to report, I compel it for a change to enjoy that distraction which I have just denied it, to think of other things 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, has tried to follow it into my conscious mind. But its struggles are too far off, too much confused; scarcely can I perceive the colorless reflection in which are blended

the uncapturable whirling medley of radiant hues, and I cannot distinguish its form, cannot invite it, as the one possible interpreter, to translate to me the evidence of its contemporary, its inseparable paramour, the taste of cake soaked in tea; cannot ask it to inform me what special circumstance is in question, of 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 that I feel nothing, it has stopped, has perhaps gone down again into its darkness, from which who can say whether it will ever rise? Ten times over I must essay the task, must lean down over the abyss. And each time the natural laziness which deters us from every difficult enterprise, every work of importance, has urged me to leave the thing alone, to drink my tea and to think merely of the worries of to-day and of my hopes for to-morrow, which let themselves be pondered over without effort or distress of mind.

And suddenly the memory returns. The taste was that of the little crumb of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before church-time), when I went to say good day to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of real or of lime-flower tea. 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 interval, 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 forms 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 longdistant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

And once I had recognized the taste of the crumb of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-flowers 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 the scenery of a theatre to attach itself to the little pavilion, opening on to the garden, which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated panel 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 was sent before luncheon, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. And just as the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little crumbs of paper which until then are without

character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch themselves and bend, take on color and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, permanent and recognizable, 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 of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, all from my cup of tea.

Proust, Marcel, C K. Scott-Moncrieff, and Terence Kilmartin. *Swann's Way: Book One of Remembrance of Things Past*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984. Print.

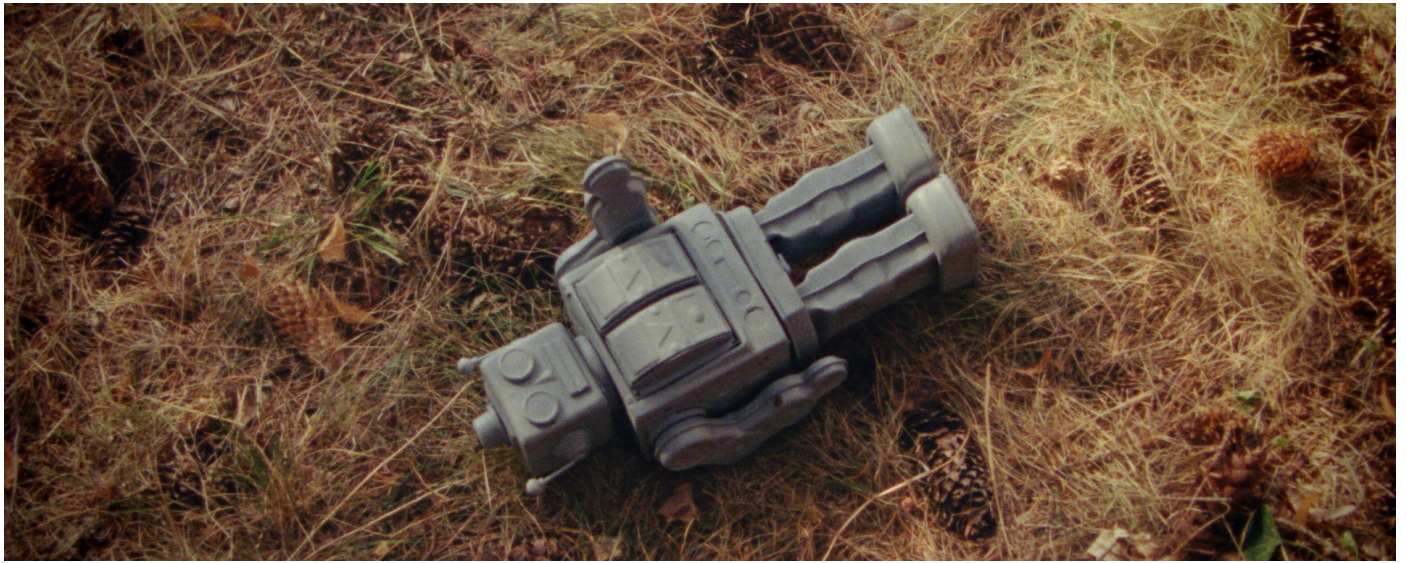
IMAGES

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