

Certain plants remain invariable; others seem as ephemeral as my regard. Suddenly I feel myself ageing as I lift my eyelids. I should certainly make a poor hour-glass.

How I could have blundered about in time; I still wonder at this. I had accepted with real pleasure an invitation to go to Normandy and stay at the villa of a friend, Celeste P... married recently. Paris was thinning out, and the thought of spending a few days by the sea-shore where the air was so pure and refreshing with the nip of salt, was by no means unpleasant to me. It had been a superb day. The sun brimmed over in the fields. The dust invaded the railroad coaches, but nearing the sea we scented its delicious tang and it went right to our hearts. Getting off the train, I looked about me and saw that the sky was sky-blue. Celeste advanced toward me with her hand outstretched. Suddenly a fit of abstraction seized me, I thought of other things: once you have thought of other things, you are done for. Impossible to get back to the point of departure, and following the thread I reached some desert region at some indetermined epoch of the universe. At first I did not understand what was happening to me. I said to myself: "This cannot last". Now I do not even know whether it does last.

I have come to believe that in the temporal impasse into which I have strayed there is no soul that lives. Only a companion in misfortune could help me to regain life. Together we could reconstitute time. Simply a matter of comparison. Alone, I lose grip on myself in wrestling with my identity: if I remained the same from one minute to another how could I experience the transformation announced by this movement of the clock-hand? I end by losing all track of the continuity of my thought. For in the most general sense all is logical to me in solitude, and, writing as I am for chance salvagers, for blind savages, or for the deaf tides that carry my bottle, I can scarcely trust that the language I use will ever be understood by any man other than myself. Why, it is impossible for me to read it over: I am only intelligible to myself in flashes. My sheet of paper all at once becomes perfectly blank