



Villa triste

Patrick Modiano

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

Villa triste

Patrick Modiano

Villa triste Patrick Modiano
Brand NEW. We ship worldwide

Villa triste Details

Date : Published October 1st 1998 by Gallimard Education (first published September 4th 1975)

ISBN : 9782070369539

Author : Patrick Modiano

Format : Paperback 208 pages

Genre : Fiction, Cultural, France, European Literature, French Literature, Literature, 20th Century

 [Download Villa triste ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Villa triste ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Villa triste Patrick Modiano

ἦνα ἀπὸ τὰ χειρῶτερα βιβλῶα ποὺ διῶβασα ποτὸ μου. Πῶρα πῶρα πολὺ βαρετῶ, ἀν καὶ μικρῶ ἦταν ἀνυπῶφορο.

Marita says

4th January, 2019.

"A Chinese lantern cast complicated shadows, making patterns like lace or tracery, and it was as though Yvonne's and Meinthe's faces were suddenly covered with veils."

A young man walks down streets where everything has changed. He spots an old acquaintance, Meinthe, and memories come flooding back. Memories of twelve years previously when Meinthe and Yvonne had appeared in his life, a time when an insecure eighteen-year-old youth had lived as if he were dreaming. Now twelve years older he remembers.

But what exactly does he remember, because it was all so fleeting, and upon reflection seems a mere chimera. Who was Meinthe really, who was Yvonne? Despite a passionate relationship with Yvonne ("*...in her indefinable accent, which I thought might be Hungarian, English or Savoyard*") the young man never really got a grip on who they were. But then, was he forthcoming about himself? Was this stateless young man who longed for a place where he could belong really Count Victor Chmara? What was he doing at that lakeside resort, and why? Who were the mysterious people in Meinthe's life - the baron who died mysteriously, and the disembodied voice on the phone who announced himself as Kustiker? Why was the Villa Triste called triste (sad) in the first place? "*Upon crossing the villa's threshold, you were pervaded by a limpid melancholy.*" Melancholy and wistfulness pervade the book, and even Yvonne's Great Dane dog belongs to a rare species of melancholic dogs. And instead of reassuringly chiming at the appropriate times, the clock has a life of its own and crazily chimes whether it should or not.

And just as suddenly as they appear, they all disappear until now...

###

There is a theme of transience; of loss of love, and loss of a way of life.

This was my first encounter with Patrick Modiano's work, and I certainly hope it won't be my last. I'm blown away!

###

"If there still existed some nice, reassuring idiots who wore white outfits and whacked balls over a net, then that meant the world was continuing to turn and we had a few hours' respite."

"All my efforts to pass unnoticed and hide in a safe place had been reduced to futility in a few seconds."

"And I was dreaming. I therefore avoided making overly abrupt movements and asking overly precise questions so that I wouldn't have to wake up."

"He was floating. Everything around us was floating."

"I've never again known moments so full and so slow as those. Opium, it's said, can provide them. I doubt

it."

Zuberino says

Summer of 1962. A small French resort on the shores of a lake, not far from the Swiss border. A quiet little place, forgotten by all except its inhabitants and the smattering of guests it receives during the holidays. An 18-year-old young man arrives in town, with a fake name and a made-up past. What transpires over the next few months is the subject of this strange little novel, which somehow put me in mind of the two Alains - Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes* (the book) as well as Alain Robbe-Grillet's *L'Immortelle* (the movie).

If what the press says of Patrick Modiano's work is true - memories, mostly, of the Nazi occupation of Paris - then this book is probably atypical. Certainly the plot, such as it is, is far removed from the capital, unfolding entirely within the bounds of this nameless town which apparently was modelled on the real-life resort of Annecy where Modiano spent a few years of his youth. But back to the story.

The young man stays at first in a hotel inhabited mainly by middle-aged summertime regulars, but soon he falls in with a mysterious pair - the beautiful Yvonne and the fastidious, slightly menacing Meinthe. He introduces himself as Count Victor Chmara, of exiled Russian aristocratic stock, which he freely admits to the reader is a lie. Rather, there are a handful of hints sprinkled here and there that conceal as much as they reveal: a father who had business in Brazzaville; hiding from the Germans during the occupation; a fleeting mention of Nansen passports. "Victor", it seems, was raised by his grandmother in a quiet Parisian neighbourhood. The reason he's fled to this borderland is because something about the situation in Paris makes him very nervous, very fearful. The Algerian war is raging in the background. Does he want to avoid conscription? Or has he been the victim of anti-Semitism?

Not a lot happens over the course of the next hundred pages. Victor and Yvonne become lovers, he moves into her suite at the Hermitage hotel. They go for the usual whirl: long walks and drives, boat rides, dinners, parties. They lounge around endlessly in the hotel room. There is an extended description of a fashion contest for couples called the Houligant Cup, which is won by Yvonne and Meinthe. This is the world of the European haute-bourgeoisie at play - a world of shimmering sunshine, elegant dresses, brittle laughter. If you don't have to look up what a shantung suit is, or a cheval-glass, or a haircut *en brosse*, you are probably at home in this world.

Later however we get a glimpse of the other side. Yvonne and Meinthe grew up in this town, both burning with a desire to escape its narrow confines. Her background is provincial-proletarian; her uncle who now runs the family's garage business invites Yvonne and Victor over for dinner, an evening far removed from the fancy goings-on at the Hermitage or the Alhambra.

The affair won't last, of course. But what will happen to the protagonists? Twelve years later, Victor will look back at that long-ago summer and his lost friends. Yvonne is a world-famous actress now; the homosexual Meinthe who may have been involved with the clandestine services in relation to the Algerian war, commits suicide one day by turning on the gas in his house.

*

An extended act of remembrance - that's how I thought of Modiano's novel. The pace is unhurried, meditative; more than telling a story, he is evoking a *milieu*, a certain ambience. Refracted through the thick glass of memory. There is that languid air of unknowing, so redolent of French literature and cinema of that era. Part mystery, part tedium. And yet by the end of the book, I was completely in its grip, its perverse slowness, the fate of its characters. I wonder if he wrote a sequel...

Kaloyana says

התאבדותו של קלויאנה, כמו התאבדותו של רוסו, היא תוצאה של התנגדותו לנורמות החברתיות. הוא מתאבד כדי להשיג את האוטונומיה שלו, וזוהי תגובה טיפוסית של אנשים המאבקים עם אמונות או ערכים המנוגדים לאלו של החברה.

התאבדותו של קלויאנה היא תוצאה של התנגדותו לנורמות החברתיות. הוא מתאבד כדי להשיג את האוטונומיה שלו, וזוהי תגובה טיפוסית של אנשים המאבקים עם אמונות או ערכים המנוגדים לאלו של החברה. "התאבדות" היא תגובה טיפוסית של אנשים המאבקים עם אמונות או ערכים המנוגדים לאלו של החברה. התאבדותו של קלויאנה היא תוצאה של התנגדותו לנורמות החברתיות. הוא מתאבד כדי להשיג את האוטונומיה שלו, וזוהי תגובה טיפוסית של אנשים המאבקים עם אמונות או ערכים המנוגדים לאלו של החברה.

התאבדותו של קלויאנה היא תוצאה של התנגדותו לנורמות החברתיות. הוא מתאבד כדי להשיג את האוטונומיה שלו, וזוהי תגובה טיפוסית של אנשים המאבקים עם אמונות או ערכים המנוגדים לאלו של החברה.

התאבדותו של קלויאנה היא תוצאה של התנגדותו לנורמות החברתיות. הוא מתאבד כדי להשיג את האוטונומיה שלו, וזוהי תגובה טיפוסית של אנשים המאבקים עם אמונות או ערכים המנוגדים לאלו של החברה.

התאבדותו של קלויאנה היא תוצאה של התנגדותו לנורמות החברתיות. הוא מתאבד כדי להשיג את האוטונומיה שלו, וזוהי תגובה טיפוסית של אנשים המאבקים עם אמונות או ערכים המנוגדים לאלו של החברה.

התאבדותו של קלויאנה היא תוצאה של התנגדותו לנורמות החברתיות. הוא מתאבד כדי להשיג את האוטונומיה שלו, וזוהי תגובה טיפוסית של אנשים המאבקים עם אמונות או ערכים המנוגדים לאלו של החברה.

התאבדותו של קלויאנה היא תוצאה של התנגדותו לנורמות החברתיות. הוא מתאבד כדי להשיג את האוטונומיה שלו, וזוהי תגובה טיפוסית של אנשים המאבקים עם אמונות או ערכים המנוגדים לאלו של החברה.

התאבדותו של קלויאנה

התאבדותו של קלויאנה היא תוצאה של התנגדותו לנורמות החברתיות. הוא מתאבד כדי להשיג את האוטונומיה שלו, וזוהי תגובה טיפוסית של אנשים המאבקים עם אמונות או ערכים המנוגדים לאלו של החברה.

you prefer) were topically striking but did not fully foreshadow the future Nobel laureate's greatness. But with *Villa Triste*, his fourth novel, Patrick Modiano emerges as the *Patrick Modiano* of his more mature fiction. While *Villa Triste* does not display the perfection of *In the Café of Lost Youth* or the near-perfection of *Sundays in August*, it showcases the themes, the emotions, and the mysteries of both.

As typical of later Modiano novels, *Villa Triste* centers on a mysterious young man's nostalgia for a bygone time, a bygone love, and a bygone city. In *Villa Triste*, the nostalgia is that of Victor Chmara reminiscing about his love and life almost thirteen years earlier, in about 1962, when he was eighteen. Modiano provides few clues of Chmara's past. Where did Chmara grow up: Alexandria, Lisbon, Paris, Brussels, Constantinople, or Berlin, all mentioned by Modiano as possibilities? Chmara is apparently stateless, perhaps living in some danger and perhaps fleeing an only partially revealed past: "*What was there for me to fear? The noise of war, the din of the world would have had to pass through a wall of cotton wall to reach this holiday oasis. And who would have ever thought of coming to look for me among these distinguished summer vacationers?*" Does Chmara worry about discovery because he's avoiding military service?: "*The young men, well behaved and romantic, would be sent to Algeria. Not me.*" Is Chmara a Russian count? No, not possible. Modiano, a cineaste even in this early novel, reveals that Bella Darvi and Victor are cousins. Victor, Jewish as is Darvi, imagines himself as Arthur Miller and imagines a future "*as a Jewish writer and wear[ing] thick horn rimmed spectacles*".

Also typical of Modiano's later novels, Yvonne Pacquet, Chmara's lost love in *Villa Triste*, has an only partially revealed past. Yvonne is an aspiring film actress, remembered by Victor "*as attractive as Marilyn Monroe*". And again typical of later Modiano novels, the romance and the sex between Victor and Yvonne exist only as delicate hints. As in *Sundays in August*, Modiano provides a shady, older consort for the couple, with a large, showy automobile. For Modiano, the role of the consort—the third wheel—is especially important. Here's Victor talking about Doctor René Meinthe, the consort in *Villa Triste*: "*There are some mysterious persons—always the same ones—who stand like sentinels at every crossroads in your life.*"

Villa Triste was published in 1975, when Modiano was thirty. Even at thirty, he had already honed his ability to engage readers through memories and mysteries. The memories in *Villa Triste*, as in Modiano's later novels, are partial and often unclear, inviting the reader to reminisce along with the reminiscing characters. Chmara tells us, for example, that Yvonne's "*family name has just come back to me*". The mysteries—the incomplete backgrounds of characters, the partial explanations of past events, and the hints of what's occurred between the remembered time and the present—transform Modiano novels into interactive experiences for the reader: we remember along with Modiano's characters and we involve ourselves in trying solve the mysteries of their pasts and futures that Modiano only partially reveals.

Richard says

Another fine instalment in Modiano's accretional, Proustian literary project. The issues of time, memory, identity and survival at the fringes (both moral and topographical) of society are explored against the backdrop of Algerian War of Independence. As usual there is a pervasive atmosphere of mystery, and the action and dialogue are unsettling, imbued with the contours and textures of a bad dream. The remarkable thing about Modiano is that his novels are all fundamentally similar, yet he always manages to create new and compelling variations upon his chosen themes. This LARB article puts it very well:

<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/n...>

"It has been claimed that Modiano's range of work is narrow and repetitive. He himself has said that for over

45 years he has always been writing the same novel (on fait toujours le même roman). But if his works deal with a narrow range of themes and are repetitive, they are so in the way that Ravel's Boléro is repetitive: a simple melody with insistent, intricate, increasing orchestration that holds our attention from beginning to spectacular end."

Solistas says

"Υπάρχουν μυστηριώδη πλίσματα -τα ίδια πάντοτε- που στέκονται φρουροί σε κάθε σταυροδρόμι της ζωής μας"

Να τ'τοιο σταυροδρόμι προσπάθη να θυμηθεί ο αφηγητής καθώς περπατάει σε μια λουτρόπολη της Γαλλίας, κοντά στα ελβετικά σύνορα, κτυπιέται έναν μεγάλο ρωτό που ζήτησε στις αρχές των 60s (από ένα αναφοράρι φάίνεται ότι προκειται για το 1962). Είναι το πιο παλιό του βιβλίο από ένα χω διαβεί κ το καλύτερο μετ τις Κυριακές του Αυγούστου που είναι με διαφορά το αγαπημένο μου από τα τ'σσερα που έχω διαβεί μέχρι στιγμής.

Πως κ στα υπόλοιπα, ο Modiano γράφει κομψά κ λεπτεπ'λεπτα με κ'ριο θέμα τον αγώνα των ανθρώπων να διατηρήσουν τις αναμνήσεις τους όσο πιο καθαρές γίνεται. Η μοναδική σ'ως διαφορά από τις υπόλοιπες κ παρ'μοιες προσπάθειες του είναι ότι εδώ δεν προσπάθη μόνο να θυμηθεί το παρελθόν του αλλά κ να φανταστεί ένα δεν ρ'τησε τότε κ δεν κατ'φέρει να μ'θει αργότερα. Ερωτευμένος με την πανμορφή Υβ'ννη κ παρ'α με τον gay φίλο της, τον γιατρό Ρενό Μεντ περιφέρονται στα ακριβ' μαγαζιά της π'λης, κοιμούνται σε χλιδ'τα ξενοδοχεία, συμμετ'χουν σε ανο'σιους διαγωνισμούς κομψ'τητας (που κερδίζει φυσικά η Υβ'ννη) κ κυλιούνται -στην κυριολεξία- στα πατάματα της β'λας του Μεντ (ο οπο'ος την έχει ονομ'σει Β'λα Θ'ψη, πως θα πρεπε να είναι κ ο τ'τλος του βιβλίου. Αυτ'ς είναι κ οι καλύτερες σελ'δες που θα βρε'τε εδώ).

Ο συγγραφέας δεν στηρίζεται στην πλοκή, ο'τε καν στην αν'πτυξη των χαρακ'ρων, κυρ'ως γιατί δεν μπορε' κανε'ς να είναι σ'γουρος αν θυμ'ται καλά τους ανθρώπους που παίζαν κ'ποιο ρ'λο στο παρελθόν του. Ο τ'πος της ιστορίας είναι ο κ'ριος πρωταγωνιστ'ς (με ότι αυτ' σημαίνει, τα σπ'τια, τα π'ρκα, τα αυτοκ'νητα, τις ταπετσαρίες κτλ.) κ η γραφή του Modiano η κ'ρια γοητε'α του βιβλίου.

"Να από τα παρ'θυρα ήταν μισ'νοιχτο και κ'κουγα το θρ'ισμα από τα φυλλ'ματα κ'ποιου δ'ντρου που χ'ιδεαν το τζ'μι. Η σκι' τους σκ'παζε τη βιβλιοθήκη σαν να κικκ'δωμα φταγμένο από τη ν'χτα κ το φεγγ'ρι".

Π'σω από να τ'τοιο τζ'μι, θολ' κ γεμ'το σκί'ς από παλι'ς εικ'νες, γρ'φεται ολ'κληρο το βιβλίο. Από την μέχρι τ'ρα εμπειρία μου, είναι το πιο ευκολοδι'βαστο βιβλίο του κ αυτ' που θα πρ'τεινα σε κ'ποιον που θ'λει να δοκιμ'σει τον Modiano κ τον τρ'πο που γρ'φει.

"Επιπλάμε. Οι κιν'σεις μας ήταν πολ' αργ'ς κ ήταν μετακινι'μασταν, αυτ' γιν'ταν χωρ'ς βιασ'νη. ρποντας. Μια απότομη κ'νηση θα είχε καταστρ'ψει τη γοητε'α. Μίλο'σαμε χαμηλ'φωνα [...] να'ς ποδηλ'της περνο'σε κ κ'κουγα το τρ'ξιμο του ποδηλ'του για λ'γα λεπτ'. Κι εκε'νος κλλωστε προχωρο'σε αργ' αργ'. Επ'πλεε. κλα επιπλάανε γ'ρω μας. Ο'τε καν αν'βαμε το

φως ήταν πεφτε η νχτα [...] Να μη βγομε ποτ απ'αυτ τη βλα. Να μην εγκαταλεψουμε αυτ το δωμτιο. Να μενουμε ξαπλωμνοι στον καναπ? καταγς, πως κναμε λο και πιο συχν?. νιωθα κατπληξη να ανακαλπτω στην Υβννη ττοια ικαντητα για αυτοεγκατλειψη. Για μνα αυτ εχε σχση με την απχθεια που αισθανμουν για την κνηση, με την ανησυχα που μου προκαλοσε οτιδποτε κοθνιται,περνει κ αλλζει [...] Γι'αυτ? μως; Νομζω πως πολ? απλ? ταν τεμπλα. Σαν φκι".

Trish says

Modiano has a melancholic bent whose sentences vibrate (“like a spider’s web”) with a kind of menace. We are never really sure who deserves the most scrutiny amongst his characters, but everyone in this novel seems to be hiding some dark past or grim present. Even the dog, a Great Dane, was “congenitally afflicted with sadness and the ennui of life.” In Modiano's lavish description of the locale, a fashionable small French resort across a lake from Switzerland, even the trees are a mystery:

"The vegetation here is thoroughly mixed, it's hard to tell if you're in the Alps, on the shores of the Mediterranean, or somewhere in the tropics. Umbrella pines. Mimosas. Fir trees. Palms. If you take the boulevard up the hillside, you discover the panorama: the entire lake, the Aravis mountains, and across the water, the elusive country known as Switzerland."

Why “elusive”? We never learn why. “I didn’t yet know that Switzerland doesn’t exist.” Perhaps it is the notion of safety that doesn’t exist. A nineteen-year-old is not expected to know that, not then, not now. Modiano liberally salts his work with phrases that fill us with an unnameable dread. Count Victor is no more Count than you or I, but somehow we’d rather believe that than whatever it is he is running from. He is the son of Russian Jews, and the Second World War is over at least fifteen years. He is wealthy beyond imagining, but he has fear: he’s “scared to death” he tells us early on as he recounts the time he met Yvonne and Meinthe.

”When I think of her today, that’s the image that comes back to me most often. Her smile and her red hair. The black-and-white dog beside her. The beige Dodge. And Meinthe, barely visible behind the windshield. And the switched-on headlights. And the rays of the sun.”

Modiano writes like a painter paints. He weaves sound and scent along with color and emotion, light and dark.

”We returned through a part of the garden I wasn’t familiar with. The gravel paths were rectilinear, the lawns symmetrical and laid out in picturesque English style. Around each of them were flamboyant beds of begonias or geraniums. And here as well, there was the soft, reassuring whisper of the sprinklers. I thought about the Tuileries of my childhood. Meinthe proposed that we have a drink...

In the end, the three of them, The Count, Yvonne, and Meinthe make quite a hit in that town at that time. Photographs show them glamorous and solemn, walking arm-in-arm beside the dog, Meinthe taking up the rear. Meinthe and Yvonne win the coveted Houligant Cup for that year and are sought-after companions for their edgy stylishness. Gradually Meinthe and Yvonne share pieces of their shadowy background with Victor, and the glamour, he realizes, is all rhinestones and rust.

“The rooms in 'palaces' fool you at first, but pretty soon their dreary walls and furniture begin to exude the same sadness as the accommodations in shady hotels. Insipid luxury; sickly sweet

smell in the corridors, which I can't identify but must be the very odor of anxiety, of instability, of exile, of phoniness."

When "France suddenly seemed to [Victor] too narrow a territory," he proposed they ditch the local act and take to the road, somewhere where they could show their true capabilities...America.

Later, when it is all over, we think that perhaps Victor's fear stems from his youth, his aloneness, his uncertainty. He grew up that summer by the lake, and saw most of what there was to see. Later, when he ambles under the arcades on the Rue de Castiglione reading a newspaper, his education comes full circle, and the mystery begins again.

Promotional copy for *Villa Triste*, due out today in a new translation by John Cullen and published by Other Press, calls it Modiano's most accessible novel. It may well be, but all Modiano's great themes are present. This fine translation does justice to the underlying greatness of the work. A fine piece of literature that can keep you mulling events over in your head for a long time to come.

Speranza says

Deliciously dark, decadent and detached, yet desperately dull.

Jim says

Patrick Modiano's *Villa Triste* is another excellent novel by the Italian/Flemish/French author with the checkered past. In fact, the novel is about checkered pasts: All three main characters -- Count Victor Chmara, Yvonne Jacquet, and René Meinthe -- are insubstantial, almost shadowy, as a result of their lives being taken up in various types of pretense. All have attempted to hide away their pasts, even though two of them continue to live in the Haute Savoie town in which they were born.

In fact, the only really authentic, grounded person in the story is Yvonne's Uncle Roland, who runs a garage for repairing American cars -- a business he had started with Yvonne's late father.

This type of authenticity of character is a theme for Modiano, whose own father was a bit of a charlatan and whose mother was so awful that her own dog committed suicide by leaping off a balcony. (Read Modiano's autobiographical **Pedigree**.)

There is something haunting about all of Modiano's works that I have read. It is as if they were people by Pinocchios who wishes that they could be real boys.

Merry says

Three characters meet in the 60's in a small French town located on a lake across from Switzerland, and everyone seems to be living in the past. Victor, the main protagonist, and Yvonne, an actress, (although they all appear to be acting) and Dr. Menthe... we learn his father was a martyr of the French Resistance. The description of the hotels and cafes in this small town, as well as the automobiles, the way the people dress, it all appears more like the '40's when there was danger from the Occupation. Time has stood still. Danger

from war is one subject Victor refers to often. Is he safe? Using a false identity, he is not Victor, much less a Count, as he claims. Everyone just keeps living and lying - perhaps much as it was during the German Occupation in the 40's. Not much has changed, with the exception of the presence of the Occupation, there is no danger anymore, or is there? . . . so stop the pretending and get on with the present and the future! But Victor lives in the past. He holds on to mementos from the past - material or mental, he holds on. He cannot free himself and lives with anxiety and fear, yet thoroughly enjoying the company of Yvonne and the lifestyle she and Dr. Meinth have in this small town. If this review sounds a bit confusing, well that is how I found this book!

Confusing at times, but I still felt compelled to finish this true work of art, this beautifully written piece of literature. Melancholy sucked me in from the beginning with a Great Dane dog that also appears to be acting!, to each of the characters, who seem to be suspended in time, slow moving, who they are past and present, what are they doing in this small town, are all pieces of a puzzle that need to be assembled. bit by bit, Victor randomly gives information along the way, but never enough to build the complete picture for me.

Why did I bother to finish reading this book? I felt if I kept reading, it would all come together and make perfect sense. The methodic storytelling captured my curiosity, as the style of writing is dream like. Surely I would eventually comprehend the story fully, the characters purpose and connection to one another, their past, their present. But it was not meant to be. I did connect a few of the dots to this puzzle, but mostly speculation, as the author confirms very little for me. Even in the end, right up to the last sentences the author plays with my curiosity. A suitcase left behind at the train station - why? I'm curious as to what was inside and I question the symbolic meaning the author had in this action. Sadly, I need a college professor to help me decipher it all!

Confusing yet compelling, not a book for everyone - 4 stars for the compelling nature that kept me reading - 3 stars for the story line as I could not get the pieces to come together and satisfy my curiosity.

About the Author

A little research online helps me better understand this author which helps me confirm some of my thoughts about this book. Apparently all of his works are of similar themes. His novels delve into the puzzle of identity, and of trying to track evidence of existence through the traces of the past.

"Obsessed with the troubled and shameful period of the Occupation—during which his father had allegedly engaged in shady dealings—Modiano returns to this theme in all of his novels, book after book building a remarkably homogeneous work. "After each novel, I have the impression that I have cleared it all away," he says. "But I know I'll come back over and over again to tiny details, little things that are part of what I am. In the end, we are all determined by the place and the time in which we were born." He writes constantly about the city of Paris, describing the evolution of its streets, its habits and its people." - <http://www.francetoday.com/articles/2...>

My thoughts on a few lines from the book;

Page 137

Victor's identity becomes clear?

"The rooms in the "palaces" fool you at first, but pretty soon their dreary walls and furniture begin to exude the same sadness as the accommodations and shady hotels. Insignificant luxury; sickly-sweet smell in the corridors which I can't identify but must be the very odor of anxiety, of instability, of exile, of phoniness. A smell that has always accompanied me".

-My interpretation..... Victor in his youth, along with his family, were hunted by the Nazis, constantly on the run, changing identities, hiding out in different "palaces" and it haunts him for a lifetime? He reveals that he never lived in one place, he shares he has anxiety and talks of exile, feeling he does not belong anywhere, yearning to have lived in the small French town like that of Yvonne and Menthe, who seemed to have

experienced an idyllic life growing up there. Victor feels like a man, a race, without a country - I could speculate for days on just this paragraph! Early on you learn Victor is Jewish, passing himself as a Count, a fake persona, perhaps as he and his family did during the war? He is always running, has no home? The so called "palaces" were the words used by the parents/himself in describing the different hiding locations, and that exotic palace reference kept the deception/the discovery of their disguises less frightening?

These are just my interpretations of one paragraph, you will have to come to your own conclusions should you choose to read this book. I would suggest researching the author and some of his other works to help explain his thought processes prior to reading.
