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The process of anticipation and retrospection.

I've spent a while referring to my extremely short attention span as an apology for my lack of ability to maintain interest in movies, books, etc. Then I figured this was silly, because I love Russian novels, and generally speaking if something is going to lose your attention, it would be one of those, and not a two hour gunfire sequence. In the end, I concluded that my attention span issues were really just me either not caring at all, or knowing what was going to happen next (esp in character development) and hence not caring at all. Take War and Peace, which I will defend against all marks. Every page has witty and insightful comments on the human condition, reminding me of things I had forgotten I'd known, and twisting the characters through their own stories. I sometimes am concerned that a few pages of this will make me forgive a truly terribly next chapter, but whatever.

To make a comparison a bit more clear:

The Princess Bride is one of the coolest books ever. You expect action, adventure, wit, etc. You cry, and I didn't expect that, though that was only the first time... And then you finish and look back and hey, he's left you with a world and characters and it's cool.

Then take the Matrix. I expected a decent movie. The first time through it was cool, twisting the narrative enough to make it unexpected. Then I thought back a few weeks later, after seeing similarly-themed movies, and had the distinct impression that the world it had created was somehow flat, rather than full.

Etc.