Suggested Readings

Lecture 2

The Lady in Pink and Laura Hayman

One of the most delightful books that I have read about Proust’s era, the Belle Époque, and his social milieu, ranging from the aristocratic eccentrics, such as Count Robert de Montesquiou and the salons he and Proust frequented, to the courtesans such as Cléo de Mérode and Liane de Pougy, is Cornelia Skinner’s *Elegant Wits and Grand Horizontals*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962.


Last time I recommended Roger Shattuck’s *Marcel Proust* as an excellent introduction to Proust’s novel. You will also find his *Proust’s Binoculars in Proust’s Way: A Field Guide to In Search of Lost Time*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2000. Proust makes the most of optical imagery throughout his novel and, in Combray 2, there is a hint of the unity of vision that he seeks to create. The Curé is speaking to Aunt Léonie and Eulalie about Illiers and the surrounding countryside and expresses his wish to be able to behold in the same field of vision all of the topographical elements.

“But what is unquestionably the most remarkable thing about our church is the view from the belfry, which is full of grandeur. [...] Each time I have been to Jouy I’ve seen a bit of a canal in one place, and then I’ve turned a corner and seen another, but when I saw the second I could no longer see the first. I tried to put them together in my mind’s eye; it was no good. But from the top of Saint-Hilaire it’s quite another matter—[you can see] a regular network in which the place is enclosed. Only you can’t see any water; it’s as though there were great clefts slicing up the town so neatly that it looks like a loaf of bread which still holds together after it has been cut up. To get it all quite perfect you would have to be in both places at once; up at the top of Saint-Hilaire and down there at Jouy-le-Vicomte.” —*Swann’s Way* 1: 146-47

Marcel will not attain this unity of vision, literally and figuratively, until the final volume: *Time Regained.*