Lecture 2

The Rain

The description of the beginning of the rain is a good example of how Proust renders the beginning of sensation and perception, the moments when we first become aware of something before being able to identify its origin or cause. This is similar to impressionism in that the artist is supposed to paint what he sees and not what he knows. In his writing, Proust wants to bring us as close as possible to the sensation described:

“A little tap on the window-pane, as though something had struck it, followed by a plentiful light falling sound, as of grains of sand being sprinkled from a window overhead, gradually spreading, intensifying, acquiring a regular rhythm, becoming fluid, sonorous, musical, immeasurable, universal: it was the rain.” —Swann’s Way 1: 140-41.