Miscellaneous

Lecture 6

**Proust on dividing Swann’s Way**

Here is the letter in which Proust speaks about having to cut *Swann’s Way* like a tapestry to make it fit the wall for which it was intended:

J’ai dû, mon livre ayant près de 1 500 pages (et des pages sans un blanc, avec un nombre énorme de lignes), le mettre en deux volumes sous des titres différents, comme les gens qui ont une tapisserie trop grande pour leur appartement et sont obligés de la couper en deux. —To Mme de Pierrebourg, shortly before July 10, 1913. *Correspondance* 12: 226

Since my book has nearly 1,500 pages (pages without a break, with an enormous number of lines), I have had to make of it two volumes with different titles, like people who have a tapestry that is too large for their apartment and who have to cut it in two.”

**Proust’s career conflict with his parents**

We have seen the conflict between Marcel and his parents, especially his father, over the choice of a career. The father, until swayed by M. de Norpois, opposed Marcel’s becoming a writer. This struggle has autobiographical sources. Here is a letter that Proust wrote to his father, Dr. Adrien Proust, in the fall of 1893. Proust was twenty-two years old.

My dearest papa,
I have kept hoping that I would finally be able to go on with the literary and philosophical studies for which I believe myself fit. But seeing that every year only subjects me to more and more practical discipline, I prefer to choose at once one of the practical careers you have suggested. I shall start studying in earnest with a view to the examination either for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or for the École des Chartes, whichever one you prefer. —As for a law office, I should vastly prefer going to work for a stockbroker. And I assure you, I wouldn’t stick it
out for three days! I still believe that anything I do outside of literature and philosophy will be just so much time wasted.