Questions and Topics for discussion

Lecture 9

Within a Budding Grove 2: 549-730

1. Regarding the revelation of Elstir’s former identity as Monsieur Biche: How does his evolution as an artist compare to what Marcel is going through and will go through?

2. What lessons has Marcel learned from Elstir regarding how to see?

3. Why is Marcel interested primarily in the common people and those of the upper crust?

4. How is the portrait of Miss Sacripant unusual? When was it painted? What relation does this date bear to the same time period of Mme Swann seen in the Bois de Boulogne at the end of Swann’s Way?

5. Proust was fascinated by the effects of age on people and shows this in vivid detail in his characters, especially in one of the novel’s most famous scenes, known as the masked ball in Time Regained. How has aging influenced the way Elstir sees things?

6. How does Proust use the idea of atavism to show how the evolution of the little band of girls is determined?

7. What observations regarding Mme Elstir, “la belle Gabrielle,” lead Marcel to this conclusion: “The particulars of life do not matter to the artist; they merely provide him with the opportunity to lay bare his genius”?

8. Elstir offers Marcel a sketch of The Port of Carquethuit. What does he ask for instead? Why would he not prefer The Port of Carquethuit?

9. Why does Albertine’s aunt want to get rid of her?

10. Why is Albertine is “not allowed to play with Israelites”?