Characters:

Albertine

Albertine took a far keener interest in all these pretty things than the Duchess, because, like every obstacle in the way of possession (in my own case the ill health which made travel so difficult and so desirable), poverty, more generous than opulence, gives to women far more than the clothes that they cannot afford to buy: the desire for those clothes which goes hand in hand with a genuine, detailed, thorough knowledge of them. —*The Captive* 5: 75

She was not, moreover, frivolous, read a great deal when she was alone, and read aloud to me when we were together. She had become extremely intelligent. She would say, quite falsely in fact: “I’m appalled when I think that but for you I should still be quite ignorant. Don’t contradict. You have opened up a world of ideas to me which I never suspected, and whatever I may have become I owe entirely to you.” —*The Captive* 5: 77

Themes:

Adam and Eve

Before Albertine obeyed and took off her shoes. I would open her chemise. Her two little uplifted breasts were so round that they seemed not so much to be an integral part of her body as to have ripened there like fruit; and her belly (concealing the place where a man’s is disfigured as though by an iron clamp left sticking in a statue that has been taken down from its niche) was closed, at the junction of her thighs, by two valves with a curve as languid, as reposeful, as cloistral as that of the horizon after the sun has set. She would take off her shoes, and lie down by my side.
O mighty attitudes of Man and Woman, in which there seeks to be united, in the innocence of the world’s first days and with the humility of clay, what the Creation made separate, in which Eve is astonished and submissive before Man by whose side she awakens, as he himself, alone still, before God who has fashioned him! —The Captive 5: 97

**Atavism**

For, little by little, I was beginning to resemble all my relations: my father who—in a very different fashion from myself, no doubt—for if things repeat themselves, it’s with great variations—took so keen an interest in the weather; and not my father only, but, more and more my aunt Léonie. —The Captive 5: 95

**The Unknowable Other**

After giving examples of the difficulty of knowing another, Marcel says this: And so Jupien’s niece had been no more able to arrive at a definite judgment of what, each in himself, the violinist and his protector really were, than I was able to form of Andrée, whom nevertheless I saw every day, or of Albertine who was living with me. —The Captive 5: 80