

The Reinach variations

Variations in visits to a museum

He sees her climb the staircase and cross the deserted rooms and she controls everything like any perfect house keeper, passing her hand over the shelves of cabinets and displays cases, running her fingers between the photo frame details, smoothing out the corners of the carpets with her feet and turning to ensure everything is in order before leaving each room, her expression cold and scowling, the opposite of her emotions of great regret and deep melancholy.

Each room reminds her of an event that occurred in the irrecoverable past because she knows that she has little time. She would have liked to spend all night remembering times gone by or perhaps she would have liked more time, maybe an entire night for each room, an entire night per object, for each memory, for every image and yet she has to rush it in all into just a few minutes, this last tour that seems more and more rushed because she is abandoning her house as if she has committed a crime even if this is not the case and because of this she is severe and strict because her father's will is running out with a profound pain that grips her heart.

In her memories she sees her children running up and down the gallery, rushing down the grand staircase, laughing as they play in the garden and the hushed and at times shy and in others vulgar voices of the Help return while a mechanical noise reminds her of the reassuring whirring of the Dumbwaiter that brought the dishes to the dining room and the unnatural voice of her father, that Asian accent of his and its very high exaggerated tone that was often imperceptible, as if he did not know how to modify his voice and then she remembers a few moments of intimacy with her husband linked to the early stages of their marriage and she is shocked that it is those memories and not others that she remembers, like the long and never-ending evenings when she, Léon and her father would talk in the living room alternating long pauses of silence and she remembers her husband's piano playing, those skeletal, intelligent but romantic melodies, that were slightly forced as they were lost in that house too big and too empty because her memories and images are too distant and she knows that she will not be able to keep them alive much longer as she is faced by a future that is like a foggy and indeterminable landscape.

Béatrice's figure disappears into the back of the gallery and it is now the writer who hears the voices of the children who are speaking in French, as it had happened at least thirty years before in a sad and almost deserted station on one of the lines of the Rome metropolitan that was leaving for the roman countryside and was making its last stop before reaching the Flaminio plaza.

He was waiting for the train and waiting with him there was just a child, only just adolescent, and her younger brother, who were talking loudly and the deserted station amplified even more the sound of those French words, distorting them and now in his memory he could not repeat even one of the words because too much time has passed and the language is so distant even if in certain verses it seemed very close.

He remembered that the two young people were joking and he had asked himself *where do these voices come from* then the train had arrived and the sound of the motors covered every other sound and before stepping into the carriage he thought *how long must I wait before they came back to see*

me before the circle is completed now perhaps the circle was completing itself and the perfect circumference found its origin.

His mind often experiences these jumps in time and now he is perplexed because the image has disappeared and the voices are distant and he finds himself walking through the rooms, distracted and frustrated by all the luxury and displeased by the sensation's fugacity and, if it were not for another adolescent catching his curiosity, he would have already left because for a long time museums had bored him: he thought them funereal, cemetery-like places.

Now he follows the little Italian boy of ten, maybe eleven, with his gaze. The boy is running forwards and backwards between the library and *salon bleu* and he tries to understand what he is saying to his father because they were joking as if they were at home and he asks himself what they have to joke about in a museum and why they are making so much noise and are talking about so loudly, ignorant of the annoyance they are causing the other visitors even if you catch onto the game and understand that they are pretending to be the owners of the building: they are dreaming of living there, they transform the museum into a house, they give it a soul, he thinks.

They say that, before all this became crystallised and cold, for someone this place had been a home and *monsieur le comte de Camondo* probably had put on parties and grand *soirees* there for the elite of Paris or maybe they witnessed the moments of silence and solitude during the instants of estrangement and so see the apparently cold yet overjoyed Béatrice who browses the halls even though the vision lasts for a moment.

The house was a living thing. He had visited the kitchen on the ground floor with its big servants table in the middle of the pantry and he thinks that it is the kitchen that brings houses to life while now the dining room is cold and empty and even the library is ghostly, lifeless like a library can be where the red leather-bound *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* is no longer being browsed but is sat on the shelf ready to be picked up and consulted, even if he has the clear impression that no one reads it anymore.

The little Italian boy follows him and looks distractedly out of the window that looks out onto the gardens, he however stops in a room that was once a dressing room and that now has become the antiques and memorabilia room and he admires Isaac de Camondo's musical scores that are displayed on the wall and then yellowed papers in the other display cases, ancient pieces, very elegant dinner invitations and other things, rather pieces of a time gone by.

It's funny, he thinks now, he is more interested in these things than in the antique furniture and he thinks back to when he was at the Nissim de Camondo museum many years before when he still appreciated embellished *commodes*, *ormolou* décor, labelled furniture, *moulures*: basically old stuff, and returning to that Sunday in March had a way of signally time past, changes in lifestyle, the unforeseen variations that had changed him so considerably that nothing he saw then seemed to attract him and nothing of that afternoon will end up captivating him during his long distance visit because now he likes stopping more than anywhere else in the room of memories between the old postcards, documents, memorandum.

He leans on the table but the reflections in the glass are annoying and for a moment his large and dark image takes the place of that of the little rectangles of card with the rounded edges that are the

slightly wrinkled photographs of Fanny and Bertrand, the niece and nephew of Moïse, Béatrice's children, sat, on the *bergère*, slightly uncomfortably as suits adolescents of thirteen and ten years, and under the image there is a caption with their birth and death dates:

[image]

and he asks himself why two descendants of a wealthy Jewish family from Paris died so young perhaps it was a time of war, he says to himself and while asking himself this question also the Italian boy, more and more irritating, entered the dressing room and stopped at his side to admire the display case so that his face was also reflected by the glass and together they inspected the gold brooch that Fanny used in order to fasten the silk *chachecol* when she went horse riding and together they saw another photograph of Fanny in the saddle at Florino and other family images.

At least a couple of months after that day the archivist of the museum would explain to him that that display case was to be removed periodically and that it was by chance that there were those photographs and it was also by chance that there was that boy, he would come to think, that gave his life in the place of a dead person, the life that he should have lived in those rooms and who it would be nice to find again.

He would like to stay just in that building and would like silence all around him because he knows that when there is silence he is capable of hearing the faraway voices yet on a March afternoon in an open museum how can he find those messages from other times: it will not be an easy thing he says to himself, it will not be now and won't be easy to repeat, even if he had the time, even if he dedicates his time to this history, perhaps he manages to hear those voices but now on this Sunday of late March there is only an Italian boy who amuses himself by pretending he is the master of those rooms and runs through them with the thoughtlessness and glory of adolescence similar to how Fanny and Bertrand would certainly have done in their time.

Once finished the tour he passes again in front of the ticket office and stops to consult the books and catalogues on show on the desk and in a publication that he takes to flick through the images of Fanny and Bertrand appear once more while at his side there is again the reappearance of the little Italian boy and with him his father approaches, flicks through the catalogues and books, because also he has been left curious by those two photos of the well-dressed and smiling children who probably have more or less the same age of his son, and so holds on to for a long time the volume where the images are published and he turns it over, looks at the price that appears to him to be exaggerated, too expensive and talks about it to his wife, turns towards his son who now appears distracted because the game has finished, all out of attention and then his father buys a couple of volumes and they leave and he hears them say they are heading towards the Eiffel tower like many Sunday tourists often do, and so he follows them while they cross the courtyard, pass through the big entrance door, distracted, passing in front of the commemorative plaques remembering Nissim de Camondo who died for France in 1917 and Léon Reinach, his wife Beatrice de Camondo and their children Fanny and Bertrand, killed during deportation.

[image]

The surname Reinach makes another appearance. The surname has, for him, the hint of a familial memory, of books at home and he sees again in the half-light of the study his father get up from his

desk and walk towards the bookcase and scroll over the backs of the books with his index finger and stopping on the Reinach *répertoire*, or maybe it is he who gets up, who walks towards the bookcase and extracts the volume and brings it to his father who is sitting at his desk?

He leaves the museum a few minutes later, after also having bought a couple of volumes and strolls in that sunny Sunday afternoon in March towards the Plaine Monceau, seeing himself projected in other years, other times but what mattered was the time, he says to himself while he walks in front of the gilded gate of the Monceau park where there are luxurious cars parked and beautiful elegant woman smoke, distracted and silent.

He enters the park and walks on until he comes face to face with the hôtel de Camondo so he can look at the garden and recognises the windows of the library and to the left those of the *salon bleu* and he thinks he can make out the unmoving figure of a man behind the glass or perhaps it is a woman or a child however in this uncertainty he is only able to distinguish the shadow that seems to wave at him and nod his head at him even if it is very likely a visitor, very probably just a visitor, nevertheless a very narrow margin of error exists because the figure is not moving, dressed in black, face whiter than white, glacial even, frightening and only the hand nearest the window seems to wave slowly and maybe even the lips could be whispering a few words even if he knows that such an image that although he has clearly seen does not exist and he does not need to turn back to see the window is now empty, as it was a few moments before the apparition, because he knows that no one is facing him asking for help and, besides, he knows that once everything begins again in Paris, another will and another will again.

A variation in a recurring dream

He has a recurring dream.

His father a few weeks after his death comes back to life and he does it in the most natural way, as it happens to those who were taken prematurely: punching his fists against the lid of his coffin and he does it so much that the gravedigger of the cemetery realises and runs immediately to call him: "your father wants to get out", he shouts anxiously, "He wants you to know he is not dead". "How is this possible?" the author writes.

"It happens, sometimes" the gravedigger replies.

And so the gravedigger accompanies him and eventually they find the tomb, because the author has never visited that place and when finally between the thousands of tombs they find that of his family he notices that the marble slab is lifted up and at the back of the crypt the shiny coffin seems to have been imperceptibly shaken and the author turns to the gravedigger and asks why he had not opened it straight away. "I was waiting for your permission" he says while they continue to hear the bangs from inside the coffin and the suffocated cries.

"Is it your father's voice?" the gravedigger asks.

"It's his" answers the author because truly he recognises it while he is gripped by a shudder of horror.

"Well then I will go and open it up" says the gravedigger and he rushes straight inside the crypt as the dream breaks up.

He often tells this story, whatever his first book it will start like this: with a dead man who wants to come back to life; with the past that besieges him and that pretends to be heard, says the writer and he often talks about it with a friend and one day, talking about it with more intensity than usual while entering a *brasserie* on Malesherbes boulevard, they sit at a little table and order from the waiter *hareng et pommes à l'huile pour deux et un pichet de Muscadet* and he continues to talk to the friend and tells him about this masculine or perhaps feminine figure that had looked out at him from the window of the Camondo library and that had called out to him. The friend who by nature is a sceptic tells him that if he dreamt that figure:

"Really dreamed, a day dream" and he refrains from answering because the waiter arrives to set out the glasses and cutlery and he does not want the waiter to hear what he had to say to his friend on the topic of ghosts, so he continues to speak only when the waiter has moved away and only then says to his friend that he believes that the ghosts have returned and clarifies:

"As if a slow and far away approach home after many years, Paris has become for them a point of meeting, the halfway point; and here they have waited patiently" he says and thinks to himself, but how could they wait if not patiently for their paths to eventually cross, that of the ghosts and his, he who sees ghosts and they recognise him.

Variations of memories of a lonely father

In the garden of the Camondo Hotel, seen or photographed by his daughter Béatrice, with a little bit of sweet regret old Moïse returns on a spring afternoon of perhaps 1916, not long before sunset, sat on a wicker armchair while talking with his son Nissim, wearing aviator attire, and awaiting a servant to bring him a refreshing beverage even if more than conversing it looks like, from what can be seen in the photograph, the count Moïse de Camondo is thinking of other things, perhaps childhood memories of November 1870, for example the journey from Constantinople to Paris, that is a journey from East to West, from the past to the future and it is this journey that he has taken to remember in his garden sat on one of the wicker chairs waiting for a cup of mint tea and the words of his son seem lost in the space that separates them while they are seen or photographed by Béatrice.

Memories previously set aside and forgotten images come back to him, as well as whispered conversations he heard coming from his parents' room, probably discussions and discontentment or perplexities and worries that, before abandoning with his mother the house in Constantinople that had seen him born, Moïse perhaps gathered something from his parents' discussions who tackled the subject talking in hushed tones, though nods of the head, in metaphors in the same way that parents tend to use when talking about grief or misfortune in the presence of their children, so much that when finally the day arrives to leave, parting assumes similarity to a funeral procession made up of mounting baggage, and the preparations cease to be chaotic and turn into definitive gestures.

The arrival in Paris coincides with the disaster of the Commune but in just a handful of years the Camondo bank becomes one of the most important credit institutes in Paris and Moïse often visits the office and recognises the same smell his parents' offices had on entering them. It is the eau de cologne of his father the first thing that a son recognises and from that smell he understands that those slightly dark places, where the labourers work hastily, one day will belong to him and he surprises himself by coming across his own future and maybe he is upset by it because it seems to him that that future is approaching him too quickly while he is just still a child.

The smell of the eau de cologne returns therefore in many other important moments in life, certainly the day of his father's funeral, or even any given day when he rides his horse along a street in Fontainebleau and hears the din of the dogs barking and already he can taste the blood of the stag torn apart and that smell comes back to visit him unexpectedly even that late afternoon in his garden while he converses with his son.

And so, as Nissim speaks and Béatrice takes the photograph, Moïse has these confused thoughts and he remembers the long road that brought him from Constantinople to the garden of his *hôtel* on the rue de Monceau and equally he who is writing this book meditates upon the time spent and on the reason why he for almost ten years has used the Austrian eau de cologne that reminds him of old slightly dusty images, perhaps the smell of his grandfather or that of his grandfather's office that he used to visit as a child almost on tiptoes, almost speechless from shyness and wonder.

Variations on some of Béatrice's childhood photographs

So twenty years after his arrival in Paris, having become one of the richest men in France, an intelligent, witty, incredibly able but also broken-winded thirty year old, monocle with the right side of his face ruined by a cartridge explosion during a hunting session, Moïse goes to marry on the 14th October 1891 Irène Cahen d'Anvers, the gracious nineteen-year-old daughter of Louis, an important banker also himself, and Louise de Morpurgo, a woman from Trieste of Jewish origins who has certain standing in the cultural world of Paris.

The Cahen d'Anvers live at number 6 on rue de Bassano on the corner of place des États-Unis in a majestic *hôtel particulier* where Louise has a frequently visited salon and as a result her high society often appears in the correspondence of Proust and obviously talks about the frivolous apparitions such as *Madame Cahen in reality is not in Saint-Moritz, but be sure that she does not have any relationship of the sort with the Weisweiller, more than anything Picherec cannot have any problem with madame de Pourtalès, despite both being protestants* as he writes to Robert de Billy shortly after the middle of August 1892, or on other occasions when Proust speaks of letters that she sends him from Montevideo or of apparitions on board glittering eight-stroke cars, in short, hot air.

The wedding party took place at the *hôtel* on rue de Bassano that during the Nazi occupation will be transformed into a small work camp specialising in the creation of military uniforms, but all this is still long away and unimaginable especially in the happy years of the end of the century that see Moïse and Irene apparently happily married living at 11 Léna Avenue, a short distance from Étoile, also an extremely elegant recently built building and the writer realises that following these figures he is retracing a great Parisian topographical texture where places have a certain importance

because by passing often he hears far-off but perceivable presences and of this topography the centre is place de l'Étoile and the extreme borders are the *hôtel* on rue de Monceau to the east, Neuilly-sur-Seine to the west and it is right on the avenue d'Iéna, close to the geographic centre of the spiders web, that in 1892 Nissim known as Nini and two years later, on the 9th July 1894, Louise Béatrice are born.

In this house in a period of seven, eight years, there has been a period of strong pain, for this maybe between the fragments of Béatrice's infancy another salon appears in another street close to Étoile and it is a salon at *hôtel particulier* at 19 rue Hamelin, where the family moves to around the start of the century.

It is this place where the chairs in which Giovanni Boldini captures little Béatrice in a pastel painting of large dimensions (114 x 89 cm) in which she looks like a plump child, awkwardly keeping her arms folded and sat at the armrest of a *chaise longue* and looks straight ahead towards the artist taking the picture, perhaps annoyed by a hairstyle placed too incongruously that it looked like a wig and that Boldini seems to not appreciate, maybe because the artist has little understanding of children and is much more at home with ballerinas, actresses, noble-women or with depraved, perturbed children, and Béatrice is certainly not a subject adapted to his art and neither as a woman would she be capable of making her winning card seducing and so Boldini casts himself away and contents himself on his quick and vague pastel technique and if ever there was an oil transposition it never became executed because the model is irredeemably awkward and the painter clearly so disinterested in his subject that even Moïse is displeased and maybe, he says, he did not choose well, perhaps he should have asked his cousin Isaac, a collector of splendid children and to even more splendid Degas as *L'Absinthe*, *At the races in the countryside* and an infinite series of *Ballerine* even if probably even Degas could not have known how to do better faced with a plump little girl.

The truth is that during that time Béatrice is not just plump, she is also very sad because from august 1897 her father Moïse and her mother Irène are separated, she being revealed to be a frivolous woman, madly in love with futility and especially with a penniless Italian man, who is fascinating like count Charles Sampieri who by trade is the stable manager and in charge of the training of race horses and who was even paid by the Camondos, so much so that in society, when the gossip spread by whispering mouths, becomes called *le palefrenier* and they have their first date in the hay of the stables or in some little hut in the Fontainebleau forest during a fox-hunting break.

Count Charles Sampieri eventually won Irène's heart and in early March of 1903 he married her with Catholic rites causing almost scandal and putting an impassable barrier between her and her old family because how could the Camondos and the Cahen d'Anvers accept a conversion and a catholic marriage that cancels out, although inefficiently in the eyes of God, the Jewish marriage, so much so that Irène as a result of her new religion has never been married and suddenly all that part of her life, the cheerful years of her beauty, for boring marriage, of the splendid unfaithfulness disappear from her past and hide almost as if they had never existed.

Béatrice is ten and Nissim not much younger when they read with their governess Mlle Willemsens the lovely letter that Irène writes to them on the 4th March 1903, announcing her marriage and her honeymoon in Italy:

Mes chéris,

*comme je vous l'ai dit l'autre jour, je vais m'absenter pendant
quelques semaines en Italie.
Je vous annonce une nouvelle qui ne vous étonnera pas, car vous
vous y attendiez!
Je me suis mariée l'autre jour avec M. Sampieri.*

Irène tries to understand, tries to find explanations and underlines the loneliness that awaits her and traces an image of her future that, however improbable, will coincide with the times that she will live:

...I will not have anyone around me to sustain my existence and keep me company and especially a long time from now when I am old, when Béatrice is married and Nini is grown up and supporting himself... You know that you are and will always be my children and that Signor Sampieri does not ask anything other than to be a big and good friend to you both...

One day Irène will in fact be an old woman, a penniless widow who yearns the affections and help of her children and it will be Béatrice who with pain and anguish plays the role that her mother predicted, yet now the letter is especially the letter of a mother who marries and goes on her honeymoon in the beautiful and sun-drenched Ligurian Riviera and is a burden even for a plump little girl.

Then there are other little images capturing moments such as the first horse rides or the first jumps made and the first refusals in front of other jumps that seems impassable and school homework of which remains a mathematics workbook on which she exercises with problems linked to the world of horse-racing and to fox-hunting with the noise of the dogs where *un amateur de chasse a deux gardeurs payés chacun 1200 francs, il paie annuellement aux riverains pour les dégâts causés par son gibier 5000 francs...* are still the anticipations of the time, these that appear in her notes, because the days will come in which she must do economies to guarantee the pensions of her gardeners and they days will come in which she must ask permission to distant authorities to be able to exhibit some of her possessions.

It is perhaps while they stroll up rue Hamelin that Béatrice begins to familiarise herself with the name Reinach who are neighbours because the Camondos live at number 19 and the Reinachs at number 9 and Nissim goes to Condorcet sixth-form which is the same as the four brothers Julien, Léon, Paul, Olivier Reinach and so certainly they share games in the gardens, dusty images, sweat and shouts, sunny memories, childish fancies and afternoon at the neighbour's house and little teas sipped with slightly bored and distracted expressions.

The writer will spend a fine February morning on rue Hamelin a couple of years after the meeting with Béatrice's ghost at Camondo together with his wife and with his old Olympus takes photographs on the other side of the street were Proust lived his last years and photographs also the frontage of Moïse's hôtel at number 19 where from a window on the piano nobile a glowing lamp can be seen and where the front door is closed and the *digicode* of the intercom is shining like a mirror and he thinks that he could spend hours trying to guess the four digits and the two letters to open the door but the door would never open and so he thinks that it is always the discretion of the Camondos to oppose resistance even over a length of years and they are always closed doors, high and unreachable windows, he says to himself as he continues his walk and a few buildings down the road at number 9 he reaches the Reinach house and he goes once more to the other side of the street and manages to glimpse through his camera the two buildings in one image and after having waited for a boy in Solex came out of the door, he enters and takes photos of the very classical entrance hall the bright floor, while his wife is slightly apart even if she shyly appears in a photo, almost an elusive ghost and then he asks her to hide herself and repeats the shots, this time actually a hallway without people.

He leaves this elegant street between Étoile and Trocadéro where the fathers used to meet as they left their homes to go to reunions put on for Friends of the Louvre or to go to other mundane occasions and where the children, as nearly always happens, used to meet up in the gardens and he thinks that it requires a luminous memory and a sharp look to penetrate the memory of children's games and nostalgia that is needed to nurture her in the image of the sunny afternoon, of the dust that stings her eyes, in the sweat that drips down her temples, in her reddened cheeks and it is necessary that paragons of his memories to those of Léon and Béatrice, at the scepticism of welcoming the children of parents friends and that sense of obligation that forced one to be courteous with strange children even if you did not feel like it.

Thus Léon enters Béatrice's life, discreetly insinuating how he is by nature and their first meeting is a memory which is lost in the great number of childhood memories without any erotic passion, without love at first sight, without stable boys or groomsmen to lose one's head over and instead her days are filled with other personalities like the governess or the strict Rabbi who comes to the house and gives individual, boring and unproductive lessons on religion, because chubby Béatrice certainly has the most affection for her memories of holidays, of holiday resorts that follow one another at Saint-Moritz, Côte d'Azur, Biarritz, Dinard, La Bourboule or Pourville and the labels on the luggage are still there and the hotel names, always so similar that it is easy to confuse them: *Excelsior, des Anglais, Bellevue, International* even if on arriving there is always the curiosity to see how the room is decorated or for the view of the sea, for the resort cabins, for the dining room, the colour of the *consommés*, for those of a similar age with whom to make friends, in summary the world seen through the eyes of rich adolescents.

Or perhaps she is more taken by the holidays spent at Aumont castle that Moïse buys in 1904 and that he baptises in the name of his daughter *Villa Béatrice*, as later, for other motives, he will name the palace in Paris in the memory of his son in a sort of fair distribution of names and of buildings, where Aumont signals perhaps Beatrice's desires, those of removing herself from society and is on this level of wanting of marginalisation that Léon the silent and secluded son of their neighbours will become a probability of life.

Other memories appear, like that of the 24th April 1906 when Nissim and Beatrice, finely-dressed, brushed up and smelling sweet, accompanied by their governess, go to the premier of an opera composed by Moïse's cousin, count Isaac, with the self-deprecating title of *Clown* because Isaac, other than being a collector of ballerinas and masterpieces, subsidises theatres in order to show his otherwise feeble works, say those who are envious and malignant nevertheless, according to Mlle Willemensens, *Nissim and Beatrice were left enthralled, and they spoke with great enthusiasm of the opera to me today; they very much enjoyed the music and today Beatrice wanted to send for the score...*

Music or the absence of music is one of the main themes that he will have to research, he thinks as he sees Beatrice lift the lid of the piano and reeled off some chords, some melodic lines however no note reaches his ear because all is silent apart from the sound of the mechanics of the instrument, the hitting of the little hammers that strum the loosened and vibrating strings as if Beatrice was playing forgotten nonexistent music leaving an emptiness that he would like to fill.

Variations of three brothers

A few years before Moïse and her mother's journey from Constantinople to Paris, also the Reinachs abandoned their Frankfurt where they are esteemed bankers and they set up home outside of Paris in Saint-Germain-en-Laye where the first French generation is born. This generation is made up of three brothers; Joseph, Salomon, Théodore who according to Jewish tradition it is the generation that culturally raises the family because there is a generation that reaches economic peak, there is the

generation that reaches the cultural peak and there is a generation that squanders heritage and culture.

The name Reinach is a reminder for him of times gone by: his father pronounced it in German with the diphthong *ai* while in Paris they pronounce it as it is written, with the stress on the last syllable, *Reinâch*, and the name is connected to a few books bound in parchment: *Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine*, four volumes in three instalments edited in Paris par Ernest Leroux, éditeur, 28 rue Bonaparte and straight away his memory becomes more precise that as it materialises in his father's study in via Margutta, on the bookcase to the left next to Benezit al Comanducci and other art repertoires that probably came from the Landau-Finaly sale, like other old books from the library and that are now on the bookcase and occupy the third shelf of the bookcase on the right side of his study where he is now moving towards in order to muse through its pages with a certain commotion because he realises that at times time turns back on itself and certain gestures repeat themselves, generation after generation. The three Reinach brothers, all remembered for their power, for their culture, for their money but not always with high esteem because there is a slight pleasure in undervaluing them, believing them to be too frivolous, too knowing, too presumptuous that at Condorcet sixth-form where they went to school they come to be remembered as the *Je Sais Tout* brothers: Joseph, Salomon, Théodore where to the *Je Sais Tout* the cruellest add a footnote *Mais Je Ne Comprends Rien* because the impression is that they know too much and that in any case they want to put them to shame.

1. Joseph. The historian of the Dreyfus case receives the unconditional admiration of Proust: *If you see Reinach tell him that I very much liked his letter. He is always on the side of reason, of nobility, of justice and again When all changes for us, his wisdom remains unchanging* and then in a letter to Mme Straus on the 20th December 1904: *He does idealistic politics. In essence he is the best of everyone* in conclusion he holds in high esteem this political man who is Gambett's secretary and who has a son the archaeologist Adolphe who often travels to Egypt, among the first experts on art and Coptic culture, and who dies in the early months of the 1914 war after having married one of Dreyfus' daughters who is pregnant when Adolphe's biplane is shot down and this son who never sees his father will also die as an aviator, in the Second World War, also him in the skies of France and also he while his wife is pregnant with a child who will not see his father and so, eventually, all that remains of this family is the library that is now at Lyon University.
2. Salomon. A fetish who kissed the untouched Liane de Pougy's cups, a splendid cocotte, but a sad woman who will end her days in a convent and who meets Salomon in the Parisian salons where one day also Giovanni Comisso, a young Italian writer very curious and rich in talent, is received and meets the old Salomon, toothless and condescending, who seems the caricature of the frivolous and worldly intellectual, almost an unknowing Proustian model, decadent and ill who directs the Saint-Germain-en-Laye museum, often a pedantic vulgariser, not often considered by the modern archaeologists and also he, when he reaches the end, decides to bestow his library collection to the Saint-Germain-en-Laye museum.
3. Théodore. The French translator of Saffo, in his first marriage he marries Fanny Kann, a rich heiress, in his second betrothal marries another Fanny Kann still an heiress, cousin and namesake of the woman before her and he marries twice into the very wealthy Ephrussi family even if all these symmetrical wives and this money did not refrain him from being involved in many things because not only is he college Senator at Haute-Savoie but he has a great passion for the ancient orient and the Mediterranean.