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The Aesthetic Politics of an Exhausted World:
Aberrant Temporalities in Marcel Proust, Samuel Beckett, and Chantal Akerman

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Abstract:

This project elaborates an aesthetic politics that treats the possible as the site of a transformative exhaustion. It examines the aberrant temporal movements that are produced by exhaustive procedures, arguing that by disrupting the habitual structure of time, what I refer to as stereoscopic time, they render the present susceptible to the dynamic emergence of the new. Referencing Samuel Beckett's exhaustive strategies, the project develops the political stakes of this dynamic temporality through a reading of the often misread character of Proust's Albertine Simonet, and her subsequent incarnation as Ariane/Jeanne in the films of Belgian director Chantal Akerman.

In line with Jacques Rancière's recent work, what follows considers aesthetics and politics together based on their shared capacity to affect the order by which bodies and words are differentiated and distributed, rather than according to art's ability to bridge (or not) the separation between fiction and reality. Engaging in a critical departure from Rancière, however, it dwells on the temporal specificity of art's transformative process. Specifically, my intervention in contemporary debates surrounding art's political efficacy consists of the development of a concept of the "meanwhile" that transcends the opposition between a present and a future politics, reframing the effects of art as an immanent redrawing of the landscape of the possible.

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INTRODUCTION

An Aesthetic Politics in the Meanwhile

"Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What are we waiting for? What awaits us? …How richly people have always dreamed of this, dreamed of the better life that might be possible." –The Principle of Hope, Ernst Bloch[1]

"Lazily considered in anticipation and in the haze of our smug will to life, of our pernicious and incurable optimism, [the future] seems exempt from the bitterness of fatality: in store for us, not in store in us…"–Proust, Samuel Beckett[2]

An old alliance ties the realm of the arts to "the better life that might be possible," a connection arising in part from art's ability to be somewhere other than the here and now. Art's capacity to prompt an excursion into the purely possible—think of its great utopias—has also made it susceptible to attack—as merely possible, not true or real. At times, a great sense of urgency has made art appear too distant, too ambivalent, too powerless or slow to take effect. At others it has been redeemed from mere possibility, through commitment, didacticism, or critique. But the refrain that couples and uncouples the destiny of art to the politics of a better life repeatedly sets the category of the possible, as the far away or yet to come, against the robust reality of the here and now.

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[1] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 3.

[2] Samuel Beckett, *Proust* (New York: Grove Press, 1999), 5.

In what follows, I argue instead for an aesthetic politics that treats the possible not as the category of the not yet real, but as the site of the dynamic emergence of the new. This aesthetic politics is characterized neither by the immediacy of artistic engagement, nor by the utopic deferral of a world yet to come, but by the time of what, drawing on Proust, I call the "meanwhile." This temporality is not characterized by the questions "What we are waiting for?," which makes of waiting a passive endeavor, or "What awaits us?," as though we are approaching a future that, like some distant land, patiently awaits our arrival. Unlike Ernst Bloch's hopeful formulation from the epigraph above, the meanwhile is a temporality that is defined, not by destinations, but by possible trajectories. It does not operate under the signs of hope, but the categories of exhaustion and creation. It is not the time of dreaming, but of possiblizing.

In line with Beckett's rejection of an untarnished future "in store *for* us," in favor of the future "in store *in* us," the project asks: What is the future that will emerge out of the existing landscape of the possible—the one in store in us—and what are the strategies by which we might transform it?[3] What potentialities are in store in us that might be actualized otherwise? And how might they change our world? By engaging in the seemingly paradoxical procedures of the exhaustion and creation of the possible, works of art can, I argue, begin to escape and transform the existing coordinates of perceptibility and intelligibility. The new possibilities of life do not offer the image of an alternative to the existing configuration of the world, but give expression to a potentiality that could be realized otherwise. A consideration of the temporal structure of the meanwhile, which allows for the coexistence of these two procedures, reveals a properly aesthetic politics.

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[3] Beckett, *Proust*, 5; emphasis added.

The project moves from an elaboration of the meanwhile, in reference to Proust's theatrical and cinematic languages, to the fugitive strategies by which Albertine Simonet exploits this temporality in order to escape the future in store in her, to the combative tactics of Akerman's Ariane and Jeanne Dielman, who model two conflicting responses to the release of potentiality from the existing coordinates that restrict and define it. The project ends with a brief consideration of Beckett's joy, the astonishing result of exhaustion. This Beckettian joy, which has so little to do with hope or dreams, describes the affective register proper to the aesthetic politics elaborated by this project.

In what follows I will briefly situate the project within the relevant theoretical field to which it responds, providing an overview of the concepts that structure it: the possible, the meanwhile, escape, and exhaustion, all of which will be elaborated in more concrete terms through the readings of Marcel Proust, Chantal Akerman and Samuel Beckett that follow. What gradually takes shape is an aesthetic politics that defies both the distancing of utopian futurity and the exigency of the here and now.

This is Not Utopia: Rancièrian Inclusions and Deleuzian Escapes

When, with our fictional guides, we voyage to another world, planet, or mythical city, to the future or to the past, or when, instead, we receive a visitor from another time or place, who gazes in wonder at our own world, now become strange, we see otherwise through juxtaposition. Another world challenges the limited possibilities of this one, constructing a striking contrast through which we gain critical distance from our own reality. These utopic elsewheres cry out to

us across the temporal or spatial divides that they rely on to construct their otherness: *another world is possible.*[4]

What is the status of the possible in such instances? It is the possible as alternative. It is a form of the possible that suffers from the exclusions and attenuations of realization, a reservoir that precedes the real, without itself being real. Many such utopian formulations invoke a turning point that precluded or impossiblized our world, preventing—or saving—this other world from becoming like our own. By appealing to this form of the possible, they suggest through juxtaposition that if only the right realizations were undertaken our world too could be otherwise. This account of the possible as what precedes the real, awaiting only the addition of existence in order to become reality, is critiqued by Deleuze, via Bergson. It is, he argues, merely of a retroactive projection of what must have been possible that derives directly from what is. This form of utopian experiment, therefore, suffers from two limitations. The first is that it limits itself to being merely possible, a comparison that is not itself a source of transformation. The second is a limitation of the imagination to truly go beyond what already is. Because such utopian imaginings do not invent strategies to extricate themselves from the world as it is, the juxtapositions that they produce through this retroactive assertion of the possible are made clumsy by the unanticipated ballast of, as Jameson puts it, "bits and pieces of the here and now."[5]

The project's point of departure is the tension between two ways of problematizing art's potential for political transformation, both of which reject this utopian model of the possible. The

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[4] Much that has be written about Utopia that rescues it from this project of a "good" or "better" place, insisting instead on its meaning as 'no' place, but, for the sake of comparison, I will limit my use to the former here.

[5] Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (New York: Verso, 2005), xiii.

first stems from the work of Jacques Rancière, which formulates the connection between aesthetics and politics around a fundamental problem of inclusion. Rancière asks, who can be seen and heard within a particular milieu, and how can those relegated to the margins reconfigure the coordinates of the sensible in order to seize visibility and audibility for themselves? Works of art have their own particular means of intervening in the fabric of sensible experience, but his consideration of both art and politics relies on an underlying tenet of equality that grounds the possibility of an entrance into perceptibility and intelligibility on the part of those who are excluded from it. "The arts," Rancière writes, "only ever lend to projects of domination or emancipation what they are able to lend to them, that is to say, quite simply, what they have in common with them: bodily positions and movements, functions of speech, the parceling out of the visible and the invisible. Furthermore, the autonomy they can enjoy or the subversion they can claim credit for rest on the same foundation."[6] It is this shared capacity that eliminates the necessity for art to prove its political relevance as something separate from itself.

The second, I argue, drawing on the work of Gilles Deleuze, insists on a problem of escape. Instead of inclusion it considers the possibility for extrication from the limitations of the existing social order. This second approach recalls the old tale of Robinson Crusoe alone on his desert island, in that it asks whether a new world can be made to genuinely diverge, or whether it will merely reduplicate the old. It does so, however, without recourse to the spatial separation of the desert island, refusing the mechanism of a clean slate upon which to start creating the world anew. In order to better understand this departure, it is necessary to detour briefly through Deleuze's account of Michel Tournier's rewriting of Robinson Crusoe, *Vendredi (Friday)*.

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[6] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics,* trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 19.

Defoe's Robinson, Deleuze explains, already functioned as an "'instrument of research'—a research which starts out from the desert island and aspires to reconstitute the origins and the rigorous order of works and conquests which happen with time." The research is falsified, according to Deleuze, because it poses its question of a new world in terms of origins and not ends, and so unfailingly reduplicates the world that was left behind. The landscape of the *actual* is completely different on this uninhabited island, but the *possible* remains the same. What Robinson can actualize in Defoe's novel is only bits and pieces of the world that he has left behind. Tournier's novel, according to Deleuze, tests a very different hypothesis, oriented instead towards ends, in order that the world thus produced would inherently "differ and diverge" from the one left behind.[7] His Robinson will challenge the possible itself, through the long and arduous process of extricating himself from the existing coordinates of perceptibility, intelligibility, and sexuality.

Tournier's reliance on the desert island as his instrument of research, however, still poses the problem of overcoming the resulting separation from the world. Implicit in Deleuze's statement that "by raising the problem in terms of ends, and not in terms of origin, Tournier makes it impossible for him to allow Robinson to leave the island," is the fact that Robinson's great experiment does not carry the world with him.[8] Alone in his transformation, Robinson leaves the world beyond his island exactly the same. He has to depart from the world in order to transform himself, and to return becomes impossible. While the desert island allows for the

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[7] Gilles Deleuze, *Essays critical and clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 303.

[8] Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense,* trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia UP, 1990), 303.

emergence of a world that diverges from this one, it forecloses belief in this world, in the possibility of its being otherwise.

Tournier's novel succumbs to a problem that all such utopias face. Even if we come to believe in its other world, it does not help us to believe in our own. What we need, as Deleuze will phrase it elsewhere, is to forge "belief in this world."[9] The problem therefore becomes one of discovering a way of escaping the existing state of things, the chains of habit, the constrictive sense of the possible, without having recourse to such a departure. It is Beckett, so often accused of bleakness and destruction, who, in this very particular sense, saves the world. His solution is exhaustion. Doing without the instrument of the desert island, Beckett invents strategies for exhausting the possible, which gives rise to transformations that not only remain embedded within the world that is exhausted, but carry it with them.

It is Proust's work that begins to map the contours of the temporality particular to these procedures of escape and exhaustion. Time and memory have been extensively treated in relation to Proust's oeuvre, whereas the turn to other questions, such as his politics, is a more recent development. What has yet to receive adequate attention is the political import of singular temporality invented by his work. If we distinguish *tales of time* from *tales about time,* it is insofar as the *recherche* is a *tale of time* that it is of interest here.[10] It is less his treatment of time

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[9] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 171.

[10] Paul Ricoeur, T*ime and Narrative,* trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). Mark Currie is critical of this distinction in his recent book *About Time,* because "this boundary between the 'of' and the 'about' will be difficult to establish." But here I use it in order to stress that in this "cooperative and incontrovertible example [of a tale *about* time] …Proust's *In Search of Lost time*" it is the *of* time that is nonetheless of particular interest (*About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007], 2).

in the content of his work that will be taken up, and rather how the temporal structures that he invents over its course give rise to the transformative temporality of the meanwhile.

Proust's "Meanwhile":

In a well-known passage of the second volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Proust describes the redistribution of visibilities that occurs as darkness falls and the new electric lighting transforms the dining room of the Grand Hotel in Balbec into an immense human aquarium. The city's working class inhabitants cluster at the windows, mesmerized by what they see within, while the hotel's occupants remain sublimely oblivious to their audience:

> Et le soir …les sources électriques faisant sourdre à flots la lumière dans la grande salle à manger, celle-ci devenait comme un immense et merveilleux aquarium devant la paroi de verre duquel la population ouvrière de Balbec, le pêcheurs et aussi les familles de petits bourgeois, invisibles dans l'ombre s'écrasaient au vitrage pour apercevoir, lentement balancée dans des remous d'or, la vie luxueuse de ces gens, aussi extraordinaire pour les pauvres que celle de poissons et de mollusques étranges . . .[11]

The image of this illuminated interior, developing out of the darkness each night, offers a momentary insight into a world that both solicits and excludes. The scene diagrams a field of

[11] Marcel Proust, *À L'ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 540-41. "And at night…hidden springs of electricity flooding the great dining-room with light, it became as it were an immense and wonderful aquarium against whose glass wall the working population of Balbec, the fishermen and also the tradesmen's families, clustering invisibly in the outer darkness, pressed their faces to watch the luxurious life of its occupants gently floating upon the golden eddies within, a thing as extraordinary to the poor as the life of strange fishes or molluscs." (*Within a Budding Grove,* trans. C.K Scott Moncrieff [New York: Modern Library, 1998], 353-54).

relations that might initially be read as anticipating Rancière's account of the *"*partage du sensible," or "distribution of the sensible," in that the glass window of the dining room represents the separation of those within—who partake in the benefits of society—from those without—who look on enviously, neither seen nor heard. Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible refers to the "system of self-evident facts of sense perception" that determine the visible/invisible and the audible/inaudible within a given social field.[12] Proust's description makes explicit the boundary that governs the distribution of the visible/invisible, audible/inaudible, endowing it with architectural solidity in the form of the glass window.

The bracketed aside that immediately follows could then be read as preparing for what Rancière calls a redistribution: "(une grande question sociale, de savoir si la paroi de verre protégera toujours le festin des bêtes merveilleuses et si les gens obscurs qui regardent avidement dans la nuit ne viendront pas les cueillir dans leur aquarium et les manger)."[13] When those who are invisible and inaudible name themselves, demand a place for themselves, and step onto the stage of visibility, the seamless correspondence between bodies and words that characterizes a particular distribution of the sensible is pulled asunder. The foundation of any given distribution, according to Rancière, rests on a claim that is impossible to legitimate and is therefore always open to litigious intervention. Proust's glass wall makes palpable the susceptibility of the reigning order to transformation—glass can always be broken. The excluded may one day thrust themselves into this exclusive space and claim their right to share in its benefits. The

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[12] Jacques Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics,* 12.

[13] Proust, *À L'ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*; "an important social question, this: whether the glass wall will always protect the banquets of these weird and wonderful creatures, or whether the obscure folk who watch them hungrily out of the night will not break in some day to gather them from their aquarium and devour them" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 354).

transformation inherent in such a "redistribution" of the sensible is the very substance of politics for Rancière.

This particular parenthetical digression has garnered significant attention over the years. Andre Benhaïm has called it the "most socialist" passage of the *recherche*, while Edward Hughes remains critical, arguing, "the threat could be read as being symbolically held through the typographical use of parentheses...by opting for natural history instead of historical materialism... Proust's narrator prefers to mythologize and so to displace talk of violent, class-based contestation."[14] Whether laudatory or critical, such readings focus on the explicit political content of the passage and its implications for a reconstruction of the author's politics. This is an unenviable task as, despite Benhaim's claim that it is the *most* socialist passage, there are few others that could be said to compete. Proust's work is, after all, infamously apolitical. But, as Rancière so rightly declares: "the politics of literature is not the same thing as the politics of writers. It does not concern the personal engagements of writers in the social or political struggles of their times. Neither does it concern the way writers represent social structures, political movements or various identities in their books."[15] The politics of this episode does not lie in its political claims, but in the transformation of the sensory fabric of experience that it makes possible.

Reading this aside as a self-contained political statement, such critics misconceive the implications of its bracketing. What has passed relatively unnoticed is the emergent aesthetic politics of the writer who studies both worlds from a perspective inaccessible to either group.

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[14] André Benhaïm, *Panim: visages de Proust* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq, Presses Univ. Septentrion 2006), 178. Edward Hughes, Edward Hughes, *Marcel Proust: A Study in the Quality of Awareness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 167.

[15] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Literature,* trans. Julie Rose (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press), 5.

Rather than insisting that this phrase stands alone, I argue, the parentheses allow it to inflect the original description with political significance, rubbing shoulders, so to speak, with what precedes and follows it. The passage continues:

> *En attendant*, peut-être parmi la foule arrêtée et confondue dans la nuit y avait-il quelque écrivain, quelque amateur d'ichtyologie humaine, qui, regardant les mâchoires de vieux monstres féminins se refermer sur un morceau de nourriture engloutie, se complaisait à classer ceux-ci par race, par caractères innés et aussi par ces caractères acquis... [16] [my emphasis]

The time of revolutionary interruption, of breaking the glass, gives way to another time—the time of the writer. The *en attendant* that this reflection opens with does not offer the interruptive force of a revolution. It also is not a passive acquiescence to the existing order, neither wasting time, nor passive waiting. The writer engages the transformative possibility that persists between a distribution of the sensible, and its redistribution. In seeing both worlds simultaneously, it is the writer who is in a position to leverage the possibilities of one against the other as means of escape.

This meanwhile is a particular kind of waiting. It is not the passive waiting of anticipation, that looks forward to a future that will resemble the present. It is an active expectation that is not reliant on recognition. In his recent book *About Time*, Mark Currie explains that "Narrative is understood as retrospection more readily than it is understood as

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[16] Proust, *À L'ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*, 541; emphasis added; "*meanwhile*, perhaps, amid the dumbfounded stationary crowd out there in the dark, there may have been some writer, some student of human ichthyology, who, as he watched the jaws of old feminine monstrosities close over a mouthful of submerged food, was amusing himself by classifying them by race, by innate characteristics, as well as by...acquired characteristics..."[16] (*Within a Budding Grove*, 354; emphasis added).

anticipation, but it cannot really be one without also being the other."[17] His major contribution to the analysis of literature in terms of its relation to time is to point out this elision of anticipation. But anticipation, as he points out, treats the "present as a future memory," and this reification in advance of the present is precisely what Proust's meanwhile upsets. Anticipation is a structure that recognizes the future in advance of its arrival. The expectation of the meanwhile is instead fraught with the sense that the emergence of new possibilities will make the future unrecognizable. In this sense the French *attendre*, also used for expecting a child, comes closer than the English to the kind of waiting implied here. Expectation precludes recognition, as the life that comes after will not be recognizable according to the terms of the life one lived before.

"Meanwhile" is only one possible translation of *en attendant*, but it is particularly apt in this instance because it is also used to translate "entre-temps." The meanwhile is both an *en attendant* and an *entre-temps.* As Deleuze and Guattari write in *What is Philosophy*: "it is the event that is a meanwhile [*un entre-temps*]: the meanwhile is not part of the eternal, but neither is it part of time—it belongs to becoming." The interval of this in-between time is the time in which potentiality is released from its moorings in a particular actualization. It disrupts stable identities and relations, initiating transformations that make the past unrecognizable. The meanwhile is therefore a time of waiting as expectation, and a time of becoming. It disrupts both anticipation and recognition, capturing a state of flux, no matter how fleeting.

It is through this concept of the meanwhile that this project instigates a critical departure from the work of Rancière. Rancière tends to detemporalize the shift between distributions such that the interruption of the existing order immediately results in a reification into a new

[17] Currie, *About Time,* 5.

distribution. Rancière's concept of redistribution relies on a spatial logic that juxtaposes actualized distributions, rather than accounting for the genesis of new distributions, or possible mixtures and metamorphoses in time. The difference, for example, between the princely declamations of the heroes of the representative regime of art, and the democratized desire of, say, an Emma Bovary, is described by Rancière in order to show that a fundamental shift in perceptibility and intelligibility *had* taken place. The process of transforming the possible that is necessary in order for a farmer's daughter to register as worthy of her own story is largely elided. The redistribution itself does not seem to have a substantial duration. There is a certain regime of visibility and audibility and then, with a sudden torsion of the sensible, there is another.[18] Proust's meanwhile allows us to think the time of art's politics as something irreducible to a break between two orders. Conceiving of it instead in terms of the exhaustion of the possible that the meanwhile allows for.

It would be an unfair caricature of Rancière's work to say that he sees aesthetic politics as the mere re-arrangement of fixed pieces; it is after all the particular task of art to undo the unities that the existing distribution of the sensible relies on. But his interpretive posture is attuned to the register of the actual, rather than considering their potentiality. This orientation away from processes of transformation, of indistinct mixtures, and changes that have yet to take effect is particularly evident in his account of the possible:

> Quand je parle de possibles, ce sont toujours des possibles qui ont été effectuées, qui ont été actualisés, et la question est au fond le statut de cette actualité. En ce sens 'possible' 's'oppose à 'nécessaire.' Mais tous deux sont des modalitiés du

[18] Rancière, *Politics of Literature,* 11-15.

> réel, des manières de le conceptualiser. Le nécessaire est le réel qui ne pourrait pas ne pas être. 'Possible' est ce qui pourrait ne pas être, ce qui n'est pas la conséquence d'un enchaînement des circonstance qui le précédaient et qui le prédéterminaient. C'est du même coup ce qui maintient ouvert l'espace d'un autre type de connexions que celles du nécessaire."[19]

He insists on the possible as the means by which to seize on the lack of necessity in the organization and identities of the actual. In this sense, he both saves art from becoming the merely possible depiction of an alternative world, insisting that the effects of its suggested worlds can produce palpable transformations of experience succumbs nonetheless to the spatial logic of the possible, as the site for the construction of a different actuality, rather than a site of exhaustion and the dynamic genesis of the new.

Exhausting the Possible:

The hypothetical writer evoked by the passage cited above focuses his gaze on the occupants of the aquarium, rather than considering those who are excluded from it. This might initially appear to further privilege the beneficiaries of the existing order, but it is not an anodyne gaze that is fixed upon them. In focusing on the occupants of the aquarium, the writer does not merely replicate and reinforce their inherent claims to visibility and audibility, granting them preference over the excluded. He turns that visibility against them. The privileged who bask in their visibility become: "Comme le poisson qui croit que l'eau où il nage s'étend au-delà du

[19] Jacques Rancière, *La Méthode d'Égalité : Entretien avec Laurent Jeanpierre et Dork Zabunyan* (Paris : Bayard, 2012), 256-57.

verre de son aquarium qui lui en présente le reflet, tandis qu'il ne voit pas à côté de lui, dans l'ombre, le promeneur amusé qui suit ses ébats …"[20]

The structure of viewership in this episode makes manifest a perspective belonging to the excluded that is inaccessible to the beneficiaries of the social order. The right to *be* seen and heard may be denied those excluded from the commons, but the capacity to properly *see* and study is proper to those who are without. The writer, unlike the character 'Marcel,'[21] looks in from outside, and while those who are excluded remain in shadowed obscurity, the aquarium lays bare its occupants, exposing them and the logic that constitutes their world to his percipient gaze. Because Marcel and the narrator are strangely one and not one, it is ultimately a dual perspective, both from within and without, that is affirmed in the anomalous person of the writer described by this passage. It is the different capacities that become activated in the movement between worlds, rather than the ability to force entry into the aquarium that takes on importance.

In his article "Between Rancière and Deleuze: Aesthetic Politics in Two Films of Jean Renoir," Scott Durham articulates the key difference between Rancière's model of the redistributive forces, which disrupt the correspondence between bodies and words, and Deleuze's understanding of potentiality. He writes:

> But if there is an excess of affects and percepts in Deleuze and Guattari, it is conceived quite differently: not as an excess of bodies in relationship to a meaning attributed from outside the place they occupy, but as an excess of virtual

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[20] Proust, *ALRTP*, *Sodome et Gomorrhe,* 1544; "like the fish which thinks that the water in which it is swimming extends beyond the glass wall of its aquarium which mirrors it, while it does not see close beside it in the shadow the human visitor who is amusing himself by watching its movements…" (*Sodom and Gomorrah,* trans. C.K Scott Moncrieff [New York: Modern Library, 1992], 606).

[21] I will refer to the character as "Marcel," throughout, despite his only ever being tentatively named as such.

> powers immanent in bodies themselves relative to what they actualize at any given time. Such an excess is expressed aesthetically, not primarily in spatial terms, as the redistribution of bodies among places and speakers within social space, but temporally, as an event sensuously embodied in the duration through which a landscape, character or figure passes between heterogeneous qualities, roles and worlds.[22]

There are certain passages between "roles and worlds" that are permitted within a given social order and there those that are forbidden, or must be invented or reactivated, and which recreate the worlds through which they pass. It is the possible, according to Deleuze that assures that "around each object that I perceive or each idea that I think there is the organization of a marginal world, a mantle or background, where other objects and ideas may come forth in accordance with laws of transition which regulate the passage from one to another."[23] To challenge these passages, and laws is not a question of a preference, therefore, between playing this role or that, it is not a choice "among the ensemble of realizable acts," as Zourabichvili phrases it.[24] The possible itself is at stake, the potential to transform the very assemblage of life that structures, apportions, and circumscribes the alternatives available within a particular society. The possible, according to Deleuze and Guattari, consists of the virtual given sensuous body, and is therefore made vulnerable to the strategies at the very heart of this project: creation and exhaustion.

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[22] Scott Durham, "Between Rancière and Deleuze: Aesthetic Politics in Two Films of Jean Renoir," forthcoming.

[23] Deleuze, *Logic of Sense,* 305.

[24] François Zourabichvili, *Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event,* trans. Kieran Aarons, ed. Gregg Lambert, Daniel W. Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 156.

The possible for Deleuze appears variously as the apriori Other structure, the virtual made sensible, another possible world, a possibility of life.[25] However, as Ronald Bogue writes: "clearly, two basic senses of the possible are at work…one restrictive, in which the possible denotes the foreseeable, practicable, plausible or conceivable; the other nonrestrictive, in which the possible denotes an opening toward something new, beyond orthodox notions and expectations."[26] The first version of the possible is what is subjected to processes of exhaustion, while the second is the site of a break with recognition, in favor of the emergence of the new.

In focusing on the category of the possible this project addresses the strategies necessary in order to extricate oneself from restrictive forms of the possible and the habits of thought, perceptibility, and experience that determine in advance the ways in which powers are permitted to be actualized. The "landscapes, characters and figures" that Durham refers to as passing "between heterogeneous qualities, roles and worlds," become fugitive. The project emphasizes the ways in which this passage is an escape that transforms the worlds through which they pass, and the roles available to play. The obscure twilight outside of the dining room in Balbec to which the excluded are relegated becomes a privileged site from which not only to expose the logic of the existing order, but to exhaust its alternatives, as Albertine does when she forges out of its very limitations and exclusions a motor of escape.

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[25] While Deleuze's concept of the virtual as the differential source of the actual, has been regularly remarked upon, what is less frequently addressed is his rehabilitation of the possible through considerations of various of works of art, most prominently Samuel Beckett, Marcel Proust, and Michel Tournier. Although François Zourabichvili's "Deleuze and the Possible: on Involuntarism in Politics," (trans. Kieran Aarons and Caitlyn Doyle, *Theory and Event* 20, no. 1 [2017]: 151-171), Ronald Bogue's "The Art of the Possible," (*Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 2, no. 241 [2007]: 273-286) and Audrey Wasser's "A Relentless Spinozism: Deleuze's Encounter with Beckett" (*SubStance* 41, no. 1[2012]: 124-136) treat the political, artistic, and philosophical significance of this category, each focuses on a particular facet of the Deleuzian possible, leaving the inherent aesthetic politics that unites his disparate treatments of it relatively untreated. Zourabichvili points to the two seemingly contradictory threads that animate Deleuze's reformulation of the possible—creation and exhaustion—but does not elaborate the aesthetic component of these procedures (Zourabichvili "Deleuze and the Possible," 151).

[26] Bogue, "Art of the Possible," 277.

The combination of the character Marcel—who dines within the aquarium— the writer—who observes from without—and the narrator—who is simultaneously both character and writer, without unifying them—already suggests the exhaustive posture that will be developed over the course of the novel. To exhaust the possible is to simultaneously affirm, without preference, every alternative ("I put on shoes to go out and slippers to stay in."[27])available within a given situation; what Deleuze describes as an exhaustive combinatorial or inclusive synthesis, in his essay on Beckett, '*l'Épuisé.*' In the manner of the permutation of "sucking stones" in Molloy, as Deleuze points out, every alternative is affirmed.[28] The point of view constructed by Proust's aquarium episode engages in such an inclusive disjunction, both inside and outside, both the present of the character and the past of the narrator who recalls it. These ramifying points of view do not offer the reader a more complete image of the whole, but rather refract elements of incommensurable possible worlds.

Exhaustion does not choose between alternatives, nor does it synthesize them, erasing their differences. It tests out each combination from a position of experimentation, rather than a perspective of mastery that would grasp the situation in its entirety in advance. As Audrey Wasser explains: "One does not proceed on the basis of a pre-given image of the real, but rather constructs a set of possibilities by systematically exercising them."[29] This is why the "perhaps" (*En attendant*, peut-être…) of the aquarium episode is significant. It is the posture of exploration that characterizes the meanwhile, trying out different configurations of visibility and points of

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[27] Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical,* 152.

[28] 153.

[29] Wasser, "Relentless Spinozism," 126.

view without preference and without anticipating what will be discovered. To begin with an image of the real would be to establish a shared horizon of preference from the outset, whereas in exhaustion preference is abandoned. In order to proceed in this manner, therefore, one must deny what others recognize and refuse to know what everyone else takes as given.[30]

It is not only a logical question of the combinatorial that is at stake in exhaustion, it is also a question of evaluation. Perception involves a fundamentally evaluative process. As Zourabichvili claims, it is "a singular manner of evaluating or apportioning the good and the bad, the distribution of affects."[31] Not only do the points of view diagramed by the aquarium episode emerge from different worlds, they are expressive of different evaluative principles. The episode will reappear repeatedly throughout the *recherche*, each time exploring a different system of evaluation, that is to say a different possibility of life, as when, for example, instead of the character/writer/narrator/author assemblage, Albertine and her lovers are added to the diagram of visibilities mapped by this nighttime aquarium. In this sense the past never stays put and is capable of transforming the present upon which it works.

Finally, to exhaust the possible is also to be exhausted and hence to change shape. In transformations as profound, if less immediately startling, as the aristocrats that are turned into fish in the aquarium episode, or the air filled with "golden eddies" that becomes saturated and takes on the consistency of water, the exhausted figures of the *recherche* are entered into new combinations of speed and rest, which inevitably transform them. Exhaustion is, therefore, at once active and passive. "Exhaustion describes the positive moment of a liminal state," explains Wasser, "at once a maximal passivity and the origin of action, a depletion and an extenuation, a

[30] Zourabichvili, "Deleuze and the Possible," 163.

[31] 156.

point of saturation and the passage to a change of state."[32] There is a strange convergence between the voluntary and the involuntary in the concept of exhaustion. It is impossible to merely leave the world, carrying nothing of it with you. It is equally improbable that one could simply transform oneself within the world, voluntarily deciding to actualize one's potential otherwise. In the act of exhausting the possible, however, one is made the passive recipient of an involuntary exhaustion. As Wasser describes it, "the body and thought are carried beyond the maximum that they can withstand without changing shape." Exhausting the possible is therefore always a movement toward a limit point where an encounter with the outside of a situation becomes inevitable.

The discovery of this limit belongs to the meanwhile because it requires the dual temporality of waiting and the interval. There is a patience and diligence required for exhaustion, to which Beckett's stooped and plodding characters attest. Furthermore, there is a simultaneity to exhaustion that upsets temporal chains of cause and effect. The meanwhile is the right kind of waiting, because it is not a time characterized by what happens and how. As Deleuze explains "Beckett's characters play with the possible without realizing it; they are too involved in a possibility that is ever more restricted in its kind to care about what is still happening."[33] The limit can also be attained through the interval, its "hiatuses, holes, or tears," in the form of an image "provided it is freed from the chains in which it was bound."[34] This image is created by extracting pure possibility from its ties to a particular situation. Such an image cannot endure but, like the aquarium developing momentarily out of the night, it presents a point of view

[32] Wasser, "Relentless Spinozism, 133.

[33] Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical,* 153.

[34] 158.

unobtainable within the coordinates of the situation. While this is currently quite an abstract account, it will begin to take shape in the subsequent examination of the works of literature and film under consideration.

From the Meanwhile, to the Fugitive, to Combat:

The argument of this project develops in three stages. The first treats the ways in which Proust's work destabilizes temporal linearity, such that the category of the possible no longer consists of preexisting alternatives, but the dynamic emergence of the new. The second takes up the figure of the fugitive, in the character of Albertine who turns exhaustion into a means of escape. And the third, turning to the work of Chantal Akerman, considers the capacity for such a flight to become combative.

In the first chapter, "Proust's Temporal Stereoscope," I examine the optic that Proust elaborates according to which habitual perception is governed by the overlay of a static image of the past and an anticipatory image of the future. This, I argue, is the temporal framework that governs habitual life and gives rise to a stable, unified reality. It describes the temporal structure of Rancière's distribution of the sensible, only scantily addressed in his own work. Proust's novel not only describes the nature of this stereoscopic visibility in time, he works to uncover its various flaws, which make it vulnerable to transformations that do not take the form of an actual redistribution. The spatial understanding of the present as a stage for the appearance and performance of shared experiences is challenged as the temporal stereoscope necessary to reassure its contours and visibilities breaks down.

The second chapter, "Creating the Meanwhile: From Stereoscopic to Cinematic Time," examines a competing logic of cinematic time that, I argue, gives expression to the meanwhile, which destroys the stereoscopic recognitions discussed in the first chapter. Proust's novel instigates aberrant temporal movements that upset this mechanism for producing a stable, inhabitable image of the present, as the site of convergence between past and future. Here the past that once reassured a recognizable present becomes inconsistent and irrupts within the present, upsetting its identities and stable categories. The identities that once assured the possibility of a convergence between desire and possession begin to unravel, and points of view no longer anchor one in a secure world, but carry one out of it. These are the strategies, I argue, by which Proust gives rise to the meanwhile that is evoked in the aquarium episode discussed above.

The third chapter considers the character of Albertine as someone who exploits her exclusion from the hegemonic configuration of the present, in order to harness the potential of the meanwhile for the creation of illicit forms of collective life. To Rancière's insistence on the politics of the excluded gaining entrance into the space of appearance, Albertine opposes a fugitive politics of escape. She leverages her exclusion in order to better flee, rather than appeal to, the reigning coordinates of intelligibility. She exploits the meanwhile as a temporality of flight, allowing her to achieve greater heights of inconsistency over time. Her refusal to covet visibility or the goods privileged by her lover's social milieu, free her from the necessity of conforming to the judgment of the existing social organization. Rejecting the fundamental relationships necessary to the proper functioning of the temporal stereoscope, she begins, with her lovers and allies, to construct an alternative evaluative system, capable of giving rise to a

transformed world. The character of Albertine exposes the extent to which stereoscopic visibility is not just a privileged form of secure perceptibility, but a mechanism of capture.

Finally, turning to the films of Belgian director Chantal Akerman, I take up the combative element that she introduces into this aesthetic politics. Akerman takes up the thematic of this fugitive figure of Albertine and invents a cinematic language to describe and abet her in her flight. These strategies necessarily differ from Proust's, which send his novel escaping into the cinematic. Using the corporeality of bodies on the screen, the great allusive capacity of film (its images, soundtracks and words), and the potential for disjunctions between visual and audio tracks, Akerman invents her own properly cinematic techniques for troubling the stereoscopic clarity of the present. In doing so, she discovers a means of escape inaccessible to Proust. Appealing to Deleuze's opposition between a "combat-against," which seeks to repel and destroy, and a "combat-between," which recombines with other forces, seizing upon them and making them its own, I analyze Akerman's Ariane and Jeanne Dielman as models of two different combative postures vis-à-vis the present and its restricted possibilities.

My argument regarding this particular aesthetic politics of art does not derive from a claim as to either the intended or depicted politics of these works. Nor does it claim to produce a necessary political outcome or, as Deleuze says, "the world would have changed long ago." Instead I seek to uncover a political potential persisting in such works of art that can be productively revisited in relation to a contemporary landscape governed disbelief in the world's possibilities.

The turning away involved in the fugitive strategies that this project outlines does not mark a return to the utopian project of eventually giving rise to a corrected world. Rather, it

describes a series of provisional experiments that, in the meanwhile, begin mapping different trajectories for collective life. Whether they are drawn from the modernist cannon and typically understood to be apolitical, or explicit political commitments have overshadowed this other dimension of their political potential, the texts that form the interpretive core of the project are governed by the aesthetic politics of this meanwhile.

CHAPTER 1

Proust's Temporal Stereoscope

"Il languit dans…l'attente d'un avenir que la volonté construit avec des fragments du présent et du passé auxquels elle retire encore de leur réalité en ne conservant d'eux que ce qui convient à la fin utilitaire, étroitement humaine, qu'elle leur assigne..."[35]

"…quand ils jouent une des scènes vulgaires de la vie"[36]

Early in the novel, the young Marcel dreams of attending the theatre, but his unversed imagination cannot grasp the nature of such a collective experience: "je n'étais pas éloigné de croire que chaque spectateur regardait comme dans un stéréoscope un décor qui n'était que pour lui, quoique semblable au millier d'autres que regardait, chacun pour soi, le reste des spectateurs."[37] The humor of the image lies not only in the incongruity of the child's mistaken vision of a crowd of elegant theatregoers peering seriously into their respective machines, but in the gradual reversal of this mockery because the image is far more accurate than it first appears.

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[35]Proust, *Le Temps Retrouvé,* 2267; "It languishes…in the anticipation of a future which the will constructs with fragments of the present and the past, fragments whose reality it still further reduces by preserving of them only what is suitable for the utilitarian, narrowly human purpose for which it intends them" (*Time Regained,* trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin [New York: Modern Library, 1993], 264).

[36] Proust, *ALRTP, Du Côté de chez Swann,* 128; "when they are obliged to play a part upon the vulgar stage of life" (Swann's Way, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin [New York: Modern Library, 1998], 217).

[37]66; "I almost believed that each of the spectators looked, as through a stereoscope, at a scene that existed for himself alone, though similar to the thousand other scenes presented to the rest of the audience the audience individually" (100).

Despite the use of the past tense that places this observation under the sign of an eventual rejection, the diagram of visibility that it outlines will prove to be of enduring importance.

The stereoscope, a mechanism that combines two slightly different images in order to produce the appearance of three-dimensionality, becomes a structuring metaphor for a particular kind of habitual vision. Roger Shattuck points out the integral importance of the stereoscope in his study *Proust's Binoculars,* but he reads it as a mechanism of visibility aligned with the "moments bienheureux," producing revelatory juxtapositions across an intervening stretch of time. "Like our eyes," writes Shattuck, "our memories must see double; those two images then converge in our minds into a single heightened reality."[38] While one can easily grasp the sense in which Shattuck understands this convergence to be stereoscopic in nature, a closer examination of the instances where Proust explicitly mobilizes the image of the stereoscope lend themselves more meaningfully to a reading of habitual, rather than exceptional, vision.

Proust stresses the artificiality of the "single" reality achieved by the stereoscope, rather than its ability to produce a "heightened reality." The stereoscope is understood as a mechanism in the service of fabricating uniformity and reproducibility. In the case of Marcel's belief in the stereoscopic nature of theatrical spectatorship, for example, each individual in the imagined audience obtains the impression of a shared world only by restricting their vision to the lens of their own device. While this image of seeing the same, while seeing apart, is not in fact an accurate representation of a theater audience, it nonetheless expresses the seriality that troubles the ostensible commonality of their shared sensorium. More importantly, however, the evocation

[38] Shattuck, Roger, *Proust's Binocular's: A study of Memory, Time, and Recognition in 'A la recherche du temps perdu,'* (New York: Random House, 1963), 47.

of the stereoscope proves an apt model for a particular temporal mechanism, a way of relating past and future, which ensures the static durability of a shared, mutually habitable present.

The present is produced through a stereoscopic overlay of retrospective images, culled from a past made static, and anticipatory images, drawn from a future made predictable. The stable image of the present that is thus created facilitates the identifications and reciprocal recognitions of habitual sensory experience. These anticipatory and retrospective images are the clichés of Zourabichvili's *déjà-vu, déjà-entendu*, which reduce both past and future to already familiar images, and restrict the possible to a pre-existing reservoir of familiar alternatives. The retroactive forcing of the past to conform to a single stable account of it is combined with an expectation that the future will resemble what one has already seen and already heard. The overlay of these clichés produces the illusion of a three-dimensional lived present, that will itself pass in its turn into a retrospective cliché.[39] The narrator will later assert that we live "dans l'attente d'un avenir que la volonté construit avec des fragments du présent et du passé," but over the course of the novel it becomes clear that, while we do indeed wait for a future constructed out of pieces of the past, the present is less a source of material for the construction of the future, than the vacant site of this utilitarian convergence between past and future.[40] The result is a present stabilized by its own elision.

It is this form of the present that can be shared by a group whose members are beholden to a common set of habitual clichés. Proust's stereoscopic metaphor, therefore, offers a

[39] "All that we see, say, live, even imagine and feel, is always already recognizable, it bears in advance the mark of recognition, the form of an already-seen [déjà-vu] or already-heard [déjà-entendu]. An ironic distance separates us from ourselves, and we no longer believe in what befalls us, because it seems as though nothing could ever happen: from the outset, everything takes the form of the already-there [déja-là], the already-done [tout fait], of preexistence" (Zourabichvili, "Deleuze and the Possible," 164).

[40] Proust, *Le Temps Retrouvé,* 2267; "in anticipation of a future which the will constructs with fragments of the present and the past" (*Time Regained,* 264).

compelling account of the temporal structure of Rancière's distribution of the sensible that is absent, for the most part, from Rancière's own work. More concerned with the exclusionary apparatus functioning within any given distribution of the sensible, Rancière spends very little time on the generative principles that bring a particular distribution into being. The filtering of manifold sights, sounds, and subjects into a single shared and hierarchized reality relies on the restrictive relation between past and future that Proust outlines. This mechanism assures that the landscape of the possible is fully charted in advance and is not subject to unfamiliar eruptions of the new.

The temporal mechanism of the stereoscope is repeatedly shown to be incredibly resilient. Recall, for example, the young character's expectations regarding Berma's greatness, and his retrospective adjustment of his impressions in order to force his experience to conform to them. As he listens for the lines written by Racine that he has diligently memorized, in order to enhance his experience, he is disappointed by their failure to conform to the anticipated image of his pleasure. Marcel has prepared in advance so that he will be capable of recognizing in the moment what he worries will otherwise be too foreign for him to take in as it happens. Berma's performance, however, escapes the image that he has prepared for it and his attempt to capture his pleasure in accordance with his carefully crafted preconceptions fails miserably. Rather than allowing the experience to overpower his expectations, presenting him with something new, he strives to retroactively apply the clichés of greatness to it—hence his gratitude to Norpois whose favorable opinion of Berma's performance, despite never having seen her as Phèdre, helps Marcel to stabilize his own experience.[41]

[41] Norpois's statement: "Je n'ai pas vu Mme Berma dans *Phèdre*, mais j'ai entendu dire qu'elle y était admirable. Et vous avez été ravi, naturellement ?" reaffirms the expectation that experience will invariably coincide with

It is not by chance that this stereoscopic metaphor is introduced in relation to the stage. The stages that pervade the *recherche* (actual stages, memories of stages, images of stages metaphors of the stage) variously diagram structures of exclusion, class disparity, and thwarted desire, contributing to an ongoing problematization of the stereoscopic form of the present described above. In Balbec the occupants of the hotel live "comme si la vie du spectateur se déroulait au milieu des somptuosités de la scène."[42] When Albertine is cloistered in Marcel's apartment he reflects: "cette actrice si convoitée n'était-ce pas elle qui, retirée par moi de la scène, enfermée chez moi, était à l'abri des désirs de tous...?"[43] Swann declares that the Verdurins "sont sublimes de bourgeoisisme, ils ne doivent pas exister réellement, ils doivent sortir du théâtre de Labiche!"[44] And, among the many examples scattered throughout the text, there is also the hotel/aquarium, discussed at length previously, that stage of opulence that entrances the fishermen and common folk of Balbec.

J.G. Linn has meticulously traced the references to the theatre that appear and reappear throughout the novel, arguing that when the theatrical in Proust spills off the stage it is most

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expectation, hearsay, and general opinion (Proust, *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 366); "I have never seen Mme Berma in Phedre, but I have always hear that she is excellent in the part. You were charmed with her, of course?" (*Within a Budding Grove* 37). Marcel out of his desperate desire to understand the greatness of this actress screws up his courage in order to admit that he did not in fact enjoy it, but eventually Norpois' general pronouncements as to her genius allow him to retroactively reassert the familiar categories he wished to experience.

[42] *Sodome et Gomorrhe,* 1340; "as though the life of the spectator were going on amid the sumptuousities of the stage," (*Sodom and Gomorrah,* 234).

[43] Marcel Proust, *ALRTP, La Prisonnière,* 1653; "this so greatly coveted actress the same who, withdrawn by me from the stage, shut up in my house, was now here shielded from the desires of all those who might henceforth seek for her in vain…" (*The Captive and the Fugitive,* trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin [New York: Modern Library, 1993], 82).

[44] *Du Côté de Chez Swann,* 232; "sublime in their bourgeois mediocrity, they can't be real, they must all have come out of a Labiche comedy!" (*Swann's Way*, 406). For a further discussion of the class dynamic implicit in this exclamation see Edward Hughes's *Proust, Class, and Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 99-104.

often in the form of a criticism of either a character or social milieu. But Linn does not account for the political implications of the exploration of and resistance to habitual forms of shared sensory experience that these theatrical metaphors develop.[45] The novel itself is understood as fundamentally theatrical by critics such as Nell de Hullu-van Doeselaar, Peggy Schaller and Marie Gil.[46] These scholars share a tendency, however, common to many critical works that treat the relation between Proust and the theatre, to present an account of theatricality in the novel that is inflected by the author's well-known love of it. The complexity of their arguments lies in the ways in which they understand the novel's creative appropriations of the theatre, rather than the potential challenge that it poses, not to the theatre itself, but to the forms of visibility that such references map. Over the course of the novel, or what Deleuze describes as the young hero's "apprenticeship," his naive way of relating to the theatre is gradually corrected, but the forms of perception and community that this initial description diagrams remain central to the aesthetic politics that Proust's novel elaborates.

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[45] J. G. Linn, *The Theatre in the Fiction of Marcel Proust:* "In A la recherche, Proust includes hundreds of metaphors drawn from theater, some brief, others extended. The metaphors are found in conjunction with a rather astonishing amount of non-metaphorical theater material. Independent of portions of the plot connected with the theater, close to seventy-five allusions to attending the theater are made meeting at the theater, seeing friends in the audience, chatting in the lobby. A score and more characters from drama are mentioned, in comparisons, criticisms, and passing reference. Twenty-five or more actors and actresses, including what appears to be the whole of the Comédie Française troupe, are spoken of or appear in the action. Nearly fifty plays, classical and contemporary, are mentioned; half a dozen plays are quoted from, Athalie, Esther, and Phèdre more than a score of times. Close to thirty dramatists, from classical times to Proust's contemporaries, some of whom are asserted to be associates of the fictional characters, are alluded to or appear in the novel (Linn, *Theatre in Proust* [Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1966], 4).

[46] This is perhaps in part because they are responding to the "critical neglect of the theater in Proustian studies" that Peggy Schaller points to (Peggy Schaller, "Theater in Proust- the Fourth Art," in *Marcel Proust Aujourd'hui* 4*,* ed. Romana Goedendorp et al [Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006]: 52-70, 53). The initial need to valorize the theater, as equally worth critical attention as literature, music, and visual arts in the *recherche,* dominates many such studies. My own argument takes up instead the moments at which the theater strays into life and becomes a means of problematizing habitual forms of perception.

The theater fascinates, not only in terms of its productions, its enthralling actresses, its spectacles, but more fundamentally, in terms of the organizations of appearance, time, and experience that it models. Proust's theatrical metaphors reveal the extent to which life, like the theatre, is ordered according to a particular distribution of roles and capacities, of visibility and audibility, with habit as its weary and disenchanted director. What is at stake in the theatrical metaphors of the *recherche* is precisely a particular form of making visible and audible.[47] The novel's metaphors of the stage are deployed in exploration of something very much like Rancière's distribution of the sensible, and a similar theatrical language is operative in many of his own accounts. "Politics," Rancière writes, "is primarily conflict over the existence of a common stage and over the existence and status of those present on it."[48] The stage is a structuring metaphor for a particular form of visibility and audibility in his work, modeling the separation between an illuminated space of action and the obscurity and passivity to which those who are excluded from it are relegated. It also suggests the invisible barrier that deters these unacknowledged audience members from making an entrance onto the living scene of the political. One need only recall Rancière's *Staging the People* (compiled from articles he published in *Les Révoltes logiques*) to grasp the relevance of the theatrical to his understanding of the space of politics.[49] For Rancière, the act of creating a space in which to appear, to stage one's equality is the fundamental gesture of the political.

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[47] "Le théâtre est présent dans *la Recherche* comme 'fonction' là où les entrées en scène, les coups de théâtre, les apartés, les grand dialogues et les principaux monologues tentent de visualiser les protagonistes et de faire entendre leurs voix" (Romana Goedendorp et al., ed., *Proust et le théâtre,* 7-8).

[48] Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 26-27.

[49] In this work, Rancière delves into archives in order to prove that emancipatory stagings on the part of workers often precede, rather than follow from, instruction, as to the nature of their oppression. Focusing on the moments at

Proust's references to the stage, on the other hand, are emphatically temporal in nature. He is less attentive to the space of the stage than the forms of time that characterizes its distributions. Rancière describes "art as a way of *occupying a place* where relations between bodies, images, spaces and *times* are redistributed" [emphasis added].[50] The nature of the place occupied is far more important, for him, than the temporal restructurings that are merely one set of redistributed relations among others. Proust's mapping of the temporal mechanism by which such a space comes to appear, therefore, contributes another dimension to the discussion of the transformation of shared sensoria.[51] The temporal stereoscope, which renders the present recognizable, stable, and inhabitable, must be disrupted in order that a new way of occupying space and time, a new assemblage, might emerge.

At times, the mechanism of the temporal stereoscope will be subjected to the disruptions of aberrant temporal movements that are often introduced, as will be seen in the following chapter, by a competing cinematic language. Such interventions within the novel do not alter the actual conditions of society, they go to work on the possible, prying apart the overlap between anticipatory and retrospective clichés, in order to give rise to the "meanwhile" that opens the present up to the emergence of the new. Before turning to a consideration of the aberrant temporal movements, however, the mechanism of the temporal stereoscope itself needs to be understood in greater depth as well as the failures that it is subject to. These failures expose the ways in which the artifice required for the staging of a common world of appearances can falter

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which workers have invented new ways of occupying various sites, from factories, to theaters, to the street, Rancière insists on the disruption of the normal functioning of these spaces through enacting 'scenes' that effectively transform them into stages of political intervention (Jacques Rancière, *Staging the People: The Proletarian and his Double,* trans. David Fernbach [London: Verso, 2011]).

[50] Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents,* 22.

[51] Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 12.

or wear thin, without necessarily resulting in an actual transformation. In these instances, the meanwhile appears as a dynamic temporality that the stereoscopic mechanism must actively quell.

To return briefly to Marcel's first visit to the theatre, the time of the meanwhile characterizes the moment at which his ability to recognize is suspended. While Proust will emphasize his character's subsequent efforts to restore consistency to his experience, during the performance itself Marcel is fundamentally unsure as to whether what he sees is even real.

> Je dis à ma grand-mère que je ne voyais pas bien, elle me passa sa lorgnette. Seulement, quand on croit à la réalité des choses, user d'un moyen artificiel pour se les faire montrer n'équivaut pas tout à fait à se sentir près d'elles. Je pensais que ce n'était plus la Berma que je voyais, mais son image dans le verre grossissant. Je reposai la lorgnette ; mais peut-être l'image que recevait mon œil, diminuée par l'éloignement, n'était pas plus exacte ; laquelle des deux Berma était la vraie ?[52]

The character mistakes his inability to recognize, as an inability to see. His sense that he is missing what it really before him is not actually a product of distance, but of the momentary suspension of the structures of perceptibility that are familiar to him. He sees double and, mistaking the temporal misalignment, between his past experience and his anticipated pleasure,

[52] Proust, *À L'ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 361; "I told my grandmother that I could not see very well, and she handed me her glasses. But, when one believes in the reality of things, making them visible by artificial means is not quite the same as feeling that they are close at hand. I thought that it was no longer Berma but her image that I was seeing in the magnifying lenses. I put the glasses down. But perhaps the image that my eyes received of her, diminished by distance, was no more exact; which of the two Bermas was the real one?" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 27).

for a spatial problem, he tries to correct his vision by peering through his grandmother's opera glasses.

Berma becomes unreal precisely because he does not immediately recognize what he is seeing. The temporality of recognition relies on a continuous reproduction of what has been seen before and when this fails, the present recedes into a confusion of the categories through which one makes sense of the "real." Not only can he not see her properly, he also struggles to hear her. Pedro Kadivar explains, "Il ne l'entend pas, car en l'écoutant il retrouve le silence de la lecture, les sons qui parviennent à lui vont à un rythme beaucoup trop rapide pour qu'il puisse les saisir, et il ne la voit pas non plus… dans son désir de l'immobiliser pour contempler la scène comme un 'tableau'…"[53] The present as a scene of audibility and visibility relies on the predictability assured by the temporal stereoscope. When Berma's performance puts Racine's famous lines into motion, allowing them to become something other than the clichés of Marcel's diligent memorization, he cannot hear them. He craves an immobilization of the present, so that he can contemplate it at his leisure, without being carried away. Marcel's retroactive reconstruction of his pleasure will reassert these familiar categories, occluding the appearance of the new. The temporal artifice constituted by this leaping ahead of anticipation, which forces the future to become recognizable in advance, and the retrospective assertion of clichés, which stabilize the past, is threatened by the unrecognizable that inserts itself between these stable images. When

[53] Pedro Kadivar, "Voir la Berma" in *Marcel Proust Aujourd'hui, 4: Proust et le théâtre*, ed. Romana Goedendorp et al., 11-27, 15. ; Kadivar argues that theatrical perception is complicated by competing visual and audible impressions that challenge Marcel's accustomed practices of reading or examining paintings. This interference between the visible and audible becomes even more pronounced in the cinematic passages of the work, as will be discussed in chapter 2. Chantal Akerman also exploits this tension in her adaptation of Proust's work. In line with Proust's account of the theater, she uses the disjunction between the visual and audio tracks of her films in order to break the habitual pairing of what is seen and what is heard. Endowing each track with a different temporality she unhinges the stereoscopic overlay of past and future that assures the alignment of visibility and audibility (see chapter 4).

time ceases to behave, a gap opens up within this temporality of recognition, the stereoscope fails, and other connections become possible.

A Broken Stereoscope:

Proust's novel dwells on and delights in the moments at which this instrument of habitual perception breaks down and the illusion of a supposedly shared sensorium is challenged. These are points at which stereoscopic temporality and the resulting stability of appearance falter, often giving rise to comical failures to coincide with the available categories and identities that undergird the shared arena of perceptibility. "His style is comedy," as Walter Benjamin points out, "not humor; his laughter does not toss the world up but flings it down—at the risk that it will be smashed to pieces, which will then make him burst into tears."[54] In testing the limits of stereoscopic time, Proust endangers the very cohesion of the world. He uncovers its susceptibilities, without yet inventing the strategies for transforming it, hence the threat of tears.

These points of vulnerability can be exploited in order to shift existing social organizations in either emancipatory or oppressive directions, but, while Proust often gestures toward such eventualities, he rarely pursues any extended commentary regarding their development. While various critics, from Georges Bataille to Edward Hughes, seek to clarify the political commitments at stake in Proust's work, the novel perpetually returns its readers to an aesthetic politics of the possible, rather than offering opinions regarding actual political events. Proust's infamous contradictions are not accidental inconsistencies, but rather strategies for

[54] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, 1968), 207.

returning the world of the *recherche* to experimentations with unpredictable trajectories that are subsequently abandoned for new directions, rather than offering a coherent critique or prescribing a particular end.

The novel challenges the formation, not only of particular groups, but of the possible itself, in the sense that Deleuze gives it as the "a priori Other Structure," which precedes any given subject or group. As Deleuze explains, "this structure may be actualized by real characters, by variable subjects – me for you and you for me – [but this] does not prevent its preexistence, as the condition of organization in general."[55] The world is ordered according to the reassuring presence and points of view of others. Not only does the stereoscope align the past and future in order to produce a stable image of the present, it presents it as a shared image that holds no surprises because it is disclosed in its entirety—if not for me from this vantage point, at least for you from another. The possible, understood in this manner, allows for the lavish cast of characters that make up the *recherche* to seemingly move upon a shared stage and look out upon a shared world. But, as stereoscopic temporality begins to breakdown, it becomes clear that the world that each looks out on is not "semblable au millier d'autres que regardait, chacun pour soi, le reste des spectateurs."[56] As the possible is challenged the world loses the reliability of its stereoscopic depth and consistency.

"Within this skewed world," Shattuck writes, "Marcel erects and clings to three structures that offer temporary habitation to the questing mind. There is the refuge of habit, which allows us to adjust to new surroundings and people by becoming blind to all but the parts

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[55] Deleuze, *Logic of Sense,* 307.

[56]Proust, *Du Côté de chez Swann,* 66; "the thousand other scenes presented to the rest of the audience the audience individually" (*Swann's Way,* 100).

we can put to our own personal use; the refuge of laws, which define and explain the mystery of human behaviour without penetrating it; and the refuge of the comic, which perceives the ridiculousness and enjoys it without surpassing it."[57] It is this last category that is particularly linked to the moments when laws and habits breakdown, but are not yet transformed. As Shattuck points out, these comedic breakdowns make visible the "ridiculousness…without surpassing it." The seamless unifications of stereoscopic vision are nonetheless troubled by distortions that are more profound than the mere "optical errors" for which Shattuck believes art serves as a potential corrective.[58] They reveal flaws in the stereoscopic mechanism that props up recognition, threatening the apparent necessity of the existing order and beginning to pry the present moment open, exposing it to more dynamic temporalities.

Where for Rancière a redistribution of the sensible involves an emancipatory intervention on the part of the excluded that transforms the existing organizations of intelligibility and perceptibility, in Proust the existing order's susceptibility to transformation can be exploited in other registers as well. The affective isolation, petty resentments, boredom, and frustration with the endless repetition of the same, which characterize the illusionary space of the stereoscopic present, make even its beneficiaries vulnerable to the temptation of others forms of connection.

Self-interest, Seriality, and Fusion:

[57] Shattuck, *Proust's Binoculars,* 18.

[58] Shattuck claims, "art itself is an optic, but a superior optic which will finally transform error into truth for our mortal eyes" (18).

Upon at last being permitted to attend the theatre, Marcel corrects his earlier image of it, realizing that there is in fact only one stage that is common to all, who witness it collectively. In a double feint, not uncommon to this narrator, however, the description that follow his supposed realization of the falsity of his early impression serves to obliquely confirm it. His experience of the theatre will ultimately affirm precisely the serial quality of spectatorship and the investments of individual interest that characterized his initial vision of all audience members in possession of their own stereoscope.

> Je fus heureux aussi dans la salle même ; depuis que je savais que – contrairement à ce que m'avaient si longtemps représenté mes imaginations enfantines – il n'y avait qu'un scène pour tout le monde, je pensais qu'on devait être empêché de bien voir par les autres spectateurs comme on l'est au milieu d'une foule ; or je me rendis compte qu'au contraire, grâce à une disposition qui est comme le symbole de toute perception, chacun se sent le centre du théâtre…[59]

This arrangement unfolds the thickness of the crowd into a series of individually central points of view. The shared space of perception is troubled by the perceptual editing carried out by individuals who are fully absorbed by their own interests. A shared space of perceptibility emerges insofar as it aligns with the overarching interests of a particular group of people and Rancière is quite right to emphasize the apparent neutrality of a given distribution of the sensible

[59] Proust*, À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 358-59. "I was happy, too, in the theatre itself; since I had made the discovery that – contrary to the notion so long entertained by my childish imagination – there was but one stage for everybody, I had supposed that I should be prevented from seeing it properly by the presence of the other spectators, as one is when in the thick of a crowd; now I registered the fact that, on the contrary, thanks to an arrangement which is, as it were, symbolical of all spectatorship, everyone feels himself to be the center of the theatre…" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 23).

to its members, but even within such a group the collective is further carved up by personal investments.

For example, an elderly lady, an actress herself, plays out a personal drama of envy and resentment, invisibly addressed to Berma. Believing that the signs of derision that she enacts are intelligible within a common sphere, she fails to understand the futility of her mimed disclosures, which are ultimately indecipherable to those around her. The Doctor, on the other hand, furtively attempts to determine what he ought to be sharing-in during the theatrical experience. Upon being offered a falsely modest apology by Mme Verdurin for the quality of the acting and their position in the theatre, Cottard mistakes her meaning and generously resigns himself to what he now believes to be a mundane experience. Despite the ensuing comedic effects, the interests and individualizing passions that anchor each person in a conflicting perspective do not ultimately threaten the cohesion of the sensorium. The resulting serial structure, does however, impede a genuine sense of collective experience.

It is within this space that the distinction between a sensible, intelligible commons and an affective one begins to take shape. Notwithstanding the shared sensorium of the theatre, within an affective register the audience members are profoundly disconnected and even antagonistic; they feel differently, interpret differently, understand differently and relate differently to what they are meant to share. These spectators actively write their own stories, but in readily available clichés, which are nonetheless quite impenetrable to those around them.[60] Thus, even amongst the beneficiaries of a given distribution, the common is only apparently shared.

[60] See Jacques Rancière, *Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009).

There is, however, a momentary unification of the audience, as the applause for Berma fuses them together in a surge of collective fervor. Without serving a redistributive function, the immediacy of this enthusiasm produces a momentary respite from the audience members' affective alienation in the present. What is disquieting, however, is that, just as the intelligible commons did not necessitate an accompanying affective bonding, this affective fusing is unaccompanied by a common form of intelligibility. While the "vin grossier de cet enthousiasme populaire" produces a camaraderie that overrides habitual identities and individual interests, allowing the audience members to lose themselves in a moment of collective feeling, it is only temporary and perilously senseless. [61] The narrator reflects:

> Il semble que certaines réalités transcendantes émettent autour d'elles des rayons auxquels la foule est sensible. C'est ainsi que, par exemple, quand un événement se produit, quand à la frontière une armée est en danger, out battue, ou victorieuse, les nouvelles assez obscures qu'on reçoit et d'où l'homme cultivé ne sait pas tirer grand-chose, excitent dans la foule une émotion qui le surprend et dans laquelle, une fois que les experts l'ont mis au courant de la véritable situation militaire, il reconnaît la perception par le peuple de cette 'aura' qui entoure les grands événements et qui peut être visible à des centaines de kilomètres.[62]

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[61] Proust, *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 362; "rough wine of this popular enthusiasm" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 29).

[62] 361; "It would appear that certain transcendent realities emit all around them a sort of radiance to which the crowd is sensitive. Thus it is that when any great event occurs, when on a distant frontier an army is in jeopardy, or defeated, or victorious, the vague and conflicting reports which we receive, from which an educated man can derive little enlightenment, stimulate in the crowd an emotion which surprises him, and in which, once the experts have informed him of the actual military situation, he recognizes the popular perception of that 'aura' which surrounds momentous happenings, and which may be visible hundreds of miles away" (28).

This "perception par le peuple" is distinct from the sensory organization obtaining within the shared social milieu. It describes an affective regime, a kind of perception tied to that which is far away and otherwise invisible, redrawing the lines of inclusion based on affective bonding, rather than seemingly neutral sense data. It is in this sense that Rancière's distribution of the sensible is susceptible to reconfigurations that cannot be adequately accounted for by the registers of visibility, audibility, and intelligibility that he relies on. While the consensual nature of the distribution of what can be seen and said within a particular sphere aptly describes a common intelligible and sensible world, capable of attaining a certain level of consistency over time, it cannot cope with the transient collective enthusiasms that depend on an unintelligible fusion. A different kind of consensus, which sweeps aside the accepted facts of the existing order, can suddenly take shape without necessitating an accompanying shift in the register of intelligibility. What is known to be true or false, valued or not, becomes irrelevant in the face of the collective emotion of the crowd.

It is intoxication, rather than a new form of intelligibility and perceptibility, that challenges the existing organization of the social stage. The rigid control over the present achieved by the mechanism of the temporal stereoscope, gives way to the drunken immediacy of the present. This could potentially be as freeing as the intoxication that the narrator experiences in Rivebelle, momentarily released from the anxieties that envelop his habitual world, but it is instead the "extraordinary hardening of the present" that Deleuze describes in his discussion of alcoholism.[63] It is a present that petrifies potentiality, so as not to be disturbed by it. This form of collective fervor, in other words, does not give rise to a meanwhile. It structures time in a

[63] Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 179.

different manner from the stereoscopic knitting of past to future, but not such that it allows for the emergence of the new.

The crowd behaves as a passive developer, giving expression to novel impressions, whether produced by the theatre or by war, which are not immediately translatable into any existing form of intelligibility. "L'homme cultivé" can learn from and even eventually account for these expressions, but he does so after the fact, in a retrospective assessment of what has taken him completely by surprise. He deciphers, through the reactions of the crowd, what is not visible to his own reason. The spontaneous affective response that characterizes this popular perception does not describe a political commons in the sense that Rancière would demand because it involves precisely the emission of unarticulated expressions of pain and pleasure that are the basis, in his account, for exclusion, rather than inclusion. In this case the beneficiaries of the existing social order (take for example Marcel in the theater) are momentarily relieved of the obligation to make sense and take pleasure in giving vent to the cries of pain and pleasure they long to experience.

The feeble ability of "l'homme cultivé" to predict or makes sense of such enthusiasm as it occurs is something that Hughes overlooks when he points to Swann's vitriolic condemnation of the Verdurin clan's bad taste as an example of a moment when the split between character and narrator reveals a contested political stance. "Whether we stress Swann's paternalistic will to exert cultural influence on his inferiors or the reader's sense that the Narrator wishes to deflate the pomposity of Swann's claims," he writes, "the story of an unhappy love in *Un Amour de Swann* is simultaneously conveyed as the record of a culture war."[64] Swann as "l'homme

[64] Hughes, *Proust, Class and Nation,* 102.

cultivé" *par excellence* resents the popular perception that he sees embodied in the Verdurin clan, whereas the narrator expresses a more ambivalent position regarding their expressed tastes.[65] What Hughes does not dwell on is that the aristocrats are as susceptible to such tasteless collective enthusiasms in the *recherche* as the bourgeois class and that the judgments attached to such enthusiasms by either group are by turns insightful and idiotic. The novel is more concerned with the tensions between intelligible and affective organizations, which traverse and disrupt worlds, than in formulating a final judgment regarding the tastes of any particular class.

The ability for such affective enthusiasms to produce formidable effects within the social whole becomes particularly evident in Proust's treatment of the Dreyfus affair, discussed below, in which aristocrats and bourgeois social climbers mix in previously forbidden configurations due to their shared enthusiasm for or against Dreyfus. The kind of affective bonding described here represents the susceptibility of a commons to dangerous fusing, demonstrating that it is never only the ability to speak and be seen that is at stake in the political. The seriality of the commons, that leaves each member isolated, frustrated, and even angry, makes it susceptible to this kind of affective connection, which can as easily be formed around previously unexpressed rage and resentments, as around fellow-feelings of joy (as in the theater).

This kind of enthusiastic commons can be deeply problematic, not only because it splits affective force from the capacities of interpretation, but also because it is the result of reflex, and as a result frequently misplaced: "Mais cette connaissance immédiate de la foule étant mêlée à

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[65] Elsewhere Hughes comments on Marcel's willingness to be overpowered by the popular enjoyment at the theater: "we see the narrator happy to share the instinctual popular approval, and abandon any more difficult, conceptual appraisal of her art." He also refers to Marcel's indulgence in the "primitive thought-processes in non-intellectuals." (Edward Hughes, *Marcel Proust: A Study in the Quality of Awareness* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 69). But the novel does not reserve these mocking descriptions for 'non-intellectuals,' rather a certain kind of group formation attracts this unthinking form of bonding.

cent autres toutes erronées, les applaudissements tombaient le plus souvent à faux, sans compter qu'ils étaient mécaniquement soulevés par la force des applaudissements antérieurs..."[66] The present is opened up to an impression that exceeds either retrospective or anticipatory clichés, but without either achieving a genuine redistribution of the sensible or transforming the landscape of the possible. Nothing new appears. The repetition of applause, mechanically produced from the applause that came before relies on an affective reproducibility that does not give shape to a new form of collective life.

Kaleidoscopic visibilities:

A more persistent break in the consistency of habitual sensibility is produced when social transformation turns the stereoscope into a kaleidoscope. In these periods of social upheaval, a mixed sensorium intervenes between the past and the future. The present does not coalesce in an image that seamlessly joins past and future, as it has yet to cohere in a recognizable form. Appearance, in such moments, becomes troubled by partial visibilities.

The treatment of the Dreyfus affair in the *recherche* complicates any strict opposition between visibility and invisibility, audibility and inaudibility within the social sphere. The transformation of the sensible in this case is not the result of political action by a group that gains entry into the commons. It describes the inverse operation, in which a group falls out of social visibility and is no longer seen or heard in the same way. As the narrator explains: "pareille aux

[66] Proust, *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 362; "but the immediate recognition by the crowd was mingled with a hundred others, all quite erroneous; the applause came, most often, at wrong moments, apart from the fact that it was mechanically produced by the effect of the applause that had gone before…" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 363).

kaléidoscopes qui tournent de temps en temps, la société place successivement de façon différente des éléments qu'on avait crus immuables et compose une autre figure…L'affaire Dreyfus en amena un nouveau…et le kaléidoscope renversa une fois de plus ses petits losanges colorées. Tout ce qui était juif passa en bas, fût-ce la dame élégante, et des nationalistes obscurs montèrent prendre sa place."[67] The apparent immovability of the existing societal distribution is challenged and relations that were once possible become impossible. Between one distribution and the next there is a moment of suspended relationality and quasi-visibility. The images of past and future are too different to produce a consistent three-dimensional image of the present.

The metaphor of the kaleidoscope captures the point of confused suspension between one pattern and the next. It also captures the inexorability of change once it is initiated, but it de-emphasizes the aggression involved in such a shift. The anti-Semitic sentiment that works to actively push individuals such as Swann out of visibility and into unintelligibility is downplayed in the image of a rotating kaleidoscope. If successful, the invisibility and unintelligibility of the Jewish members of society would become accepted commons sense, ceasing to register as aggressive rejection. This is the inverse function of what Rancière articulates as the staging of a people. It is a violent forced exit from the social stage. But such a shift does not happen immediately; it has its own duration giving rise to unfamiliar mixtures and identities.

Embodied in the figure of Swann, for example, is a complex cross-section of visibilities and invisibilities that shift and overlap. A previously accepted member of the Paris elite, Swann becomes partially rejected because he is at once Jewish and a Dreyfusard. As Hannah Arendt

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[67] Proust, *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 412; "like a kaleidoscope which is every now and then given a turn, society arranges successively in different orders elements which one would have supposed immutable, and composes a new pattern…The Dreyfus case brought about another…and the kaleidoscope once more reversed its coloured lozenges. Everything Jewish, even the smart lady herself, went down…" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 122).

demonstrates, his original belonging was similarly fraught with conflicting tensions between "the complicated game of exposure and concealment, of half-confessions and lying distortions, of exaggerated humility and exaggerated arrogance, all of which were consequences of the fact that only one's Jewishness (or homosexuality) had opened the doors of the exclusive salons, while at the same time they made one's position extremely insecure."[68] Visibility and acceptance are deeply invested in an often conflictual economy of unacknowledged desires. Even after what is seen as his betrayal of the social group that accepted him despite of and, as Arendt argues, simultaneously because of his Jewishness, Swann remains in a state of quasi-visibility.

His appearance and interactions at the *princesse de Guermantes'* party are inevitably misinterpreted because they are seen through different lenses that cannot give rise to a single image. The image of Swann from the past ceases to align with his anticipated image in the future and so he loses consistency, appearing "comme un décor inconsistant auquel une illusion d'optique peut seule ajouter l'apparence de l'épaisseur."[69] Swann's visibility is altered in this way, not only by illness, but also by the fact that his presence is no longer filled-out by the "optical illusion" of belonging that previously supplemented it within this particular social milieu. Elsewhere the narrator refers to the internal stereoscope through which one endows people and, through them, oneself with consistency in time: "Je venais de glisser dans le stéréoscope intérieur à travers lequel, dès que nous ne somme plus nous-mêmes, dès que doués d'une âme mondaine, nous ne voulons plus recevoir notre vie que des autres, nous donnons du

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[68] Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt, 1966), 82.

[69] Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe,* 1277; "like a flimsy piece of scenery to which only an optical illusion can add the appearance of solidity" (121).

relief à ce qu'ils ont dit, à ce qu'ils on fait."[70] In becoming irreconcilable with his past self, Swann disrupts the functioning of this internal stereoscope and his friends become incapable of properly filling-out his identity, statements, and actions within the social sphere.

The reader becomes aware of the sympathetic view of Dreyfus secretly held by the Prince and Princess through the account given to Marcel by Swann. In the passage consisting of the narrator's reflections on Swann's disclosures regarding the Prince's Dreyfusism, Genette identifies "fifteen narrative sections, distributed among nine temporal positions."[71] The temporal combinatorial enacted by this passage brings the past, present and future into varying relations, revealing the many conflicting grids of sensibility and intelligibility simultaneously structuring the roles played by Swann, Bloch, the Prince, and Princess. The *recherche* diverges in time in order to arrive at a present in which the alternatives offered in advance by the existing situation are invalidated.[72]

None of this produces a redistribution of the sensible, but rather results in mixtures of simultaneous visibility and invisibility, audibility and inaudibility, antipathy and attraction. A shifting and contradictory affective, as well as a sensory assemblage, is described. The perceptual regime that clearly groups the royal hosts with aristocratic Paris, cannot account for their alignment in a secondary affective assemblage that joins them with Swann and Dreyfus; a

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[70] Marcel Proust, *ALRTP, Le Côté Guermantes,*1166; "I had slipped them into the frame of the internal stereoscope through the lenses of which, once we are no longer ourselves, once, endowed with the spirit of society, we no longer wish to receive our life save from other people, we cast into relief what they have said and done." (*The Guermantes Way,* trans. C.K Moncreiff and Terence Kilmartin [New York: Modern Library, 1993], 751).

[71] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 43.

[72] Proust*, Sodome et Gomorrhe,* 1292-93.

grouping which does not however, render Swann properly visible again. To return once again to Arendt's analysis, the theatrical model upon which Rancière's commons is based makes demands of performed unity that such conflicting associations, if acknowledged, could not sustain:

> Each society demands of its members a certain amount of acting, the ability to present, represent, and act what one actually is. When society disintegrates into cliques such demands are no longer made of the individual but of members of cliques. Behavior then is controlled by silent demands and not by individual capacities, exactly as an actor's performance must fit into the ensemble of all other roles in the play.[73]

Playing a role that coheres with the roles of those around you in order to produce the semblance of a single coherent production requires the suppression of the mixtures that writhe beneath. Proust's novel persistently uncovers such mixtures. As André Benhaïm insists Proust's theatrical model is a means of denouncing the mascaraed of identity: "De l'homosexualité à la judéité, dans une théâtralité violente et hyperbolique, comique et tragique, Proust dénonce l'excessive mascarade de l'identité,"[74] but it also traces the lines of susceptibility to transformation that traverse this social stage, troubling the mascaraed of identity before the formulation of any denunciation takes shape.

Jacqueline Rose's compelling analysis of Proust's depiction of the Dreyfus affair in her book *Proust Among the Nations,* develops the argument that the arbitrary and self-inflicted

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[73] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism,* 84-5.

[74] André Benhaïm, "Visages D'Étoiles Scènes Masques et Coups de Théâtre de marcel Proust," in *Marcel Proust Aujourd'hui 4,* ed. Romana Goedendorp et al, 29-50, 29.

boundaries demarcating any given unity generate exaggerated fears of both incursion and of foreign bodies being discovered within. What Proust's account stresses, in addition to the resulting hyper-policing of boundaries, is the fact that these artificial boundaries are drawn precisely because there is no real commons that would naturally define itself. The reason that these boundaries are so strictly enforced is not in order to protect, but to create a commons.

The Dreyfus affair forces the Duchess to interact with individuals who she would not otherwise have known. The affective fusing of anti-Semitic sentiment overpowers the shared intelligibility of aristocratic Paris that held sway previously. A real commons does not exist and so through their mutual anti-Semitism groups seek reactively to produce one. Rose shares with Rancière the tendency to focus on those who are excluded and the politics of this exclusion. This indeed seems to be where the ethical imperative lies. But the study of those within the commons serves a related end–exhausting and disrupting the logics that justify its existence and its exclusions. As in the description of Swann, once the optical tricks of identity are exhausted, this form of commons is disclosed as flimsy scenery.

In Rose's account Proust advocates for thoroughly permeable boundaries and involuntary cross pollinations at both the individual and societal level, but one must ask where such a critique would lead if embedded within it there were not also a belief in the impossibility of its realization. If this position were not implicitly envisioned as being merely the perpetual hope of unsettling the organizations of strict boundaries, she would have to imagine what would follow: the complete disintegration of any form of common life. Proust does not operate in this register of critique. The permeable boundaries and cross-pollinations that he formulates are, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, a part of his construction of a different temporality and form of

visibility. While the habitual world makes everything that we experience already familiar and safe only by capturing potentiality in all too familiar reifications, an actual suspension of all divisions and identities would be untenable. It is only in the realm of the possible that the novel can experiment with an escape that does not fall into either of these alternatives. As will be examined in later chapters, the momentary production of an image of pure potentiality that is exhausted in its very production breaks free of what Zourabichvili calls the "intolerable compromise," which aligns the security of one's best interest with the policing of boundaries and the production of the present as a pale repetition of the past and a tedious anticipation of the future.[75]

Presence Out of Sync:

Another form of distortion appears at a more intimate interpersonal level, when something occurs that renders both past and future unrecognizable. When, for example, the narrator's grandmother knows that she is dying, but he is not yet aware of her illness and is dismissive of her desire to be photographed as a result. Living in a time that is inflected by her impending death, the grandmother attempts to secure an image of herself to serve as a prop of artificial presence once her real presence is no longer available. At the time, however, Marcel, living in the habitual security of a present that anticipates a future that will inevitably resemble

[75] "Our ordinary relations with the world are revealed to be arbitrary conventions, that shelter us from the world and render it tolerable: this is the intolerable compromise, a compromise with powers that maintain and propagate poverty of every kind. Our best interests always tend toward the side of subservience" (Zourabichvili, "Deleuze and the Possible," 162).

the past, misinterprets her motivations. Her attempt to provide a memory for a future that will not resemble their shared past appears to him to be merely an expression of vanity.

When his grandmother does die, it immediately produces a break for his mother between what preceded her mother's death and what follows it. The present and the future are suddenly unfamiliar to her. This effectively separates her from her son, who has yet to register the loss. When he attempts to join in his mother's grief, he becomes aware of the extent to which he must play a role, pretending to have long felt what his newly kindled grief has only just revealed. He describes himself as: "comme un récitant qui devrait connaître son rôle et être à sa place depuis bien longtemps mais qui est arrivé seulement à la dernière seconde et n'ayant lu qu'une fois ce qu'il a à dire, sait dissimuler assez habilement quand vient le moment où il doit donner la réplique, pour que personne ne puisse s'apercevoir de son retard, mon chagrin tout nouveau me permit quand ma mère arriva, de lui parler comme s'il avait toujours été le même."[76] The narrator finds himself out of rhythm with his mother and attempts to stabilize their shared present by faking it as best he can.

As Bowie explains "An unintelligible rhythm runs through the life of subjectivity, and although the death of a loved person provokes this rhythm in an aggravated form it does not belong to the grieving mind alone…Mourning raises to a new level of intractability a conflict that any intermeshing of subjectivities will already have produced."[77] The temporal stereoscope suppresses rhythm in order to stabilize an image of the present. The resulting failure to achieve

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[76] Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe,* 1336*;* "like an actor who ought to have learned his part and to have been in his place long beforehand but, having arrived only at the last moment and having read over once only what he has to say, manages to improvise so skillfully when his cue comes that nobody notices his unpunctuality, my new-found grief enabled me, when my mother came, to talk to her as though it had existed always" (227).

[77] Malcolm Bowie, *Proust Among the Stars* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), 290.

any genuine intermeshing of subjectivities is one of temporal misalignment, which pulls the present out of focus as a result. It is precisely this fundamental problem of rhythm in the *recherche* that Beckett reads as expressive of a logic of non-correspondence between individuals, a problem that he will constantly return to throughout his own career. "When it is the case of human intercourse," he writes, "we are faced by the problem of an object whose mobility is not merely a function of the subject's, but independent and personal: two separate and immanent dynamisms related by no system of synchronization."[78] At its most extreme, this absence of synchronization between characters evacuates the apriori Other structure of its reassuring depth and dependability.[79]

The often-analyzed scene of the goodnight kiss also evokes this kind of rhythmic incompatibility. Time is out of step between Marcel's world and his mother's, preventing an encounter in the shared space of the present. When two individuals are out of sync the image of the present does not cohere as a shared stage of visibility and audibility. Marcel's world, in his bedroom, the prison of his anguished solitude, fails to align with the world that his mother occupies during Swann's visit. He requires her goodnight kiss in order to assure his habitual world, but for his mother, on the other hand, this particular request instead troubles the social

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[78] Beckett, *Proust,* 6-7.

[79] It is in relation to such failed synchronizations that an exhaustive posture in relation to the possible begins to take shape. Beckett's television drama, *Quad,* is a particularly poignant example of his distillation of precisely this logic. Four cloaked figures shuffle in complete silence, tracing the four sides and two diagonals of an illuminated square. At the point where contact becomes possible an invisible repulsion spirals them away from each other, as they circle the center. Each figure walks to a different rhythm, giving embodied expression to the non-synchronization of human intercourse (the dancers each wear headphones under their hoods in order to achieve this complex poly-synchronicity). *Quad* might be read as clarified retelling of the *recherche* that takes seriously Proust's description of the writer as "un géomètre qui dépouillant les choses de leurs qualités sensibles ne voit que leur substratum linéaire" (*ALRTP, Le Temps Retrouvé*, 2147). What are the problems of Swann, Charlus, Marcel, and St. Loup, if not emblematic of the failed encounters of a center whose gravitational pull keeps characters in its shuffling orbit, but whose repulsion forces them away from a genuine encounter in the last instance?

world that she shares with Swann and her husband. The two worlds cannot be aligned in the time of his anticipation.

Marcel senses the impenetrability of the invisible boundary that divides him from his mother. "Mon effroi," the narrator recounts, "était que Françoise…refusât de porter mon mot. Je me doutais que pour elle, faire une commission à ma mère quand il y avait du monde lui paraîtrait aussi impossible que pour le portier d'un théâtre de remettre une lettre à un acteur pendant qu'il est en scène."[80] His mother momentarily occupies a stage that is inaccessible to him and while he cannot appear on it, he tries nonetheless to overcome its boundaries. The child feels a momentary relief when he convinces Françoise to nonetheless deliver his note: "puisque mon petit mot allait…me faire du moins entrer invisible et ravi dans la même pièce qu'elle, allait lui parler de moi à l'oreille…Maintenant je n'étais plus séparé d'elle ; les barrières étaient tombées, un fil délicieux nous réunissait."[81] The joy of this moment arises from the fleeting sense that he can connect, even invisibly, with the present that she occupies. As Bersani reflects: "It is the idea of his mother's attention that relieves Marcel; *he* is now downstairs too, an image of himself has penetrated into the forbidden atmosphere."[82] The power of an image to detach itself and venture into a forbidden space appeals to a nascent cinematic sensibility that will be

[80] Proust, *Du Côté de Chez Swann,* 32; "My fear, was that Françoise…might refuse to take my note. I had a suspicion that, in her eyes, to carry a message to my mother when there was a stranger in the room would appear flatly inconceivable, just as it would be for the door-keeper of a theatre to hand a letter to an actor upon the stage" (37).

[81] 33; "my little note…would at least admit me, invisible and enraptured, into the same room as herself, would whisper about me into her ear…Now I was no longer separated from her; the barriers were down; an exquisite thread united us…." (39).

[82] Leo Bersani, *Fictions of Life and of Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 43.

examined in the following chapter, but for now the encounter that he thus imagines is denied him because the note fails to achieve the desired effect.

As a result, the possible (as apriori Other structure) that would ensure the contours and transitions of his world collapses. He is overwhelmed by the sense that, without his mother's gaze to assure it, the world has become "a groundless abyss, rebellious and devouring."[83] While the structure of the possible limits and excludes in order to make the future foreseeable, plausible and conceivable, it is also what protects. Its organizations hold chaos at bay. The possible enforces the limitations of habit, resemblance, and permanence, but it also offers the guarantee that the world that we wake up to tomorrow will be the same as the one we go to sleep in tonight. Without his mother looking upon and occupying the same landscape of the possible that he does, Marcel is struck by the impermanence and lack of necessity that haunt the present moment. His crisis therefore expresses more than the needs of a nervous little boy; it relates to the question posed by Deleuze, "What happens when Others are missing from the structure of the world?" And the young Marcel senses the terror that lies in the answer, "a harsh and black world, without potentialities or virtualities: the category of the possible has collapsed."[84] The threat of tears that Benjamin evokes in Proust's flinging down the world resonates with this fear. The temporal stereoscope is limiting, the possible is restrictive, but the solution cannot be to simply break the mechanism. Another strategy of escape must be invented.

Such an escape is necessary because no supplement will suffice to make the possible capable of sustaining a real encounter. His mother's failure to come to him annihilates the present moment, transforming it into empty waiting. He is forced to mentally repeat a scene that

[83] Deleuze, *Logic of Sense,* 306.

[84] 306.

he had rehearsed as a dialogue, without interlocutor or audience. But when she does eventually arrive, and his father grants the staggering concession of allowing her to stay with him, the sadness in her eyes destroys the possibility of his enjoying the moment. As sweet as her presence may be, he reads in her expression a reconciled disappointment in his future. Her concern for his future orients the present moment away from the consistency with the past that he wishes to assure. The image of the present that they share becomes fraught with the realization that, while the apriori Other structure does reassure him that he lives in a shared and predictable world, the intermeshing of subjectivities that it seems to promise is unobtainable. He is forced to consider a future in which this ritual would no longer exist, and a present in which it exists not as a victory but as a defeat.

The hero's various attempts to achieve intimate encounters with his lovers are similarly plagued by repeatedly falling out of rhythm. In the case of Marcel's loves (for Gilberte, Mme. Guermantes, and, above all, Albertine), the intermittent progressions of passion, jealously and forgetfulness cause them to continually fall out of step, foreclosing the possibility of two lovers ever fully coinciding with one another. The stability of identity that should assure a common space in the present, repeatedly fails and the women who appear in the present never align with either the past image of his initial impressions of them or the anticipated image that he has constructed of who they will become for him when he "possesses" them. At the very moment that Marcel believes that he is about to achieve an intimate encounter, the woman opposite him becomes an all too imperfect substitute for the one whose appearance he anticipates. As the narrator reflects, "La jeune femme qu'on désire est-elle comme un emploi de théâtre où par la

défaillance des créatrices du rôle on est oblige de le confier à de nouvelles étoiles?"[85] Gilberte, Mme. Guermantes, and Albertine are, in the last instance, the wrong actresses to play themselves.

The failures of habit that signal a major change that will make the future unfamiliar, a future, for example, in which his mother would not kiss him each night, are complicated by another, less drastic, form of distortion. Events or encounters that weaken the fabric of habitual identities and perceptibility, without destroying them test the coordinates of visibility and audibility without rupturing them. As Beckett writes, "less drastic circumstances may produce this tense and provisional lucidity in the nervous system. Habit may not be dead (or as good as dead, doomed to die) but sleeping. This second and more fugitive experience may or may not be exempt from pain. It does not inaugurate a period of transition."[86] These "more fugitive" experiences, in which habit is momentarily suspended or asleep, may not, as Beckett asserts, instigate an actual transition. They can, however, involve a transformation of the possible. Here Beckett focuses on the moments at which life necessitates that one establish a new habit of living (as when Marcel arrives in Balbec). Similarly to Rancière's emphasis on a redistribution that immediately results in a new organization, however, he elides the duration and provisional experiments involved in the process of producing a new order. The moments in which habit is suspended, rather than transformed, allow for something different—for two worlds to coexist simultaneously.

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[85] Proust, *La Prisonnière,* 1696; "is the young woman whom we desire like a character on the stage, when, through the defection of the actress who created the part, the management is obliged to entrust it to a new star? But then it is no longer the same" (*Captive* 158).

[86] Beckett, *Proust,* 10.

On the train to Balbec, Marcel sees a beautiful girl serving coffee and is transported into another life that he might have. He offers the following account of the experience:

> Il m'introduisait comme acteur dans un univers inconnu et infiniment plus intéressant ; cette belle fille que j'apercevais encore, tandis que le train accélérait sa marche, c'était comme une partie d'une vie autre que celle que je connaissais, séparée d'elle par un liséré, et où les sensation qu'éveillaient les objets n'étaient plus les mêmes, et d'où sortir maintenant eût été comme mourir à moi-même…Mais hélas! Elle serait toujours absente de l'autre vie vers laquelle je m'en allais de plus en plus vite et que je ne me résignais à accepter qu'en combinant des plan qui me permettraient un jour de reprendre ce même train…il [notre esprit] préfère l'imaginer dans l'avenir, préparer habilement les circonstances qui pourront la faire renaître, ce qui ne nous apprend rien sur son essence, mais nous évite la fatigue de la recréer en nous-même et nous permet d'espérer la recevoir de nouveau du dehors [87]

The parallel world into which he is thrust by this fleeting impression gives rise to another stage upon which he sees himself achieving happiness. The universe to which he momentarily gains access is divided from him by a boundary, on the other side of which all of his sensations are

[87] Proust, *À l'Ombre des Jeunes filles en Fleurs,* 522-23; "it introduced me as an actor upon the stage of an unknown and infinitely more interesting universe; that handsome girl whom I still could see, while the train gathered speed, was like part of a life other than the life that I knew, separated from it by a clear boundary, in which the sensations that things produced in me were no longer the same, from which to return now to my old life would be almost suicide…But alas, she must be forever absent from the other life towards which I was being borne with ever increasing swiftness, a life to the prospect of which I resigned myself only by weaving plans that would enable me to take the same train again some day… the mind prefers to imagine it in the future tense, which gives it no clue as to the real nature of the thing, saves us the trouble of recreating it in our own consciousness and allows just to hope that we may receive it afresh from without" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 320).

different. In other words, he feels for a moment the possibility of another life, of another form of collective assemblage.

In this episode, Marcel not only cannot coincide with the world suggested by the beautiful woman, he also cannot remain the self that he was before, such that it is suicide to return to his own world. Finding it impossible to become someone else in this fleeting moment, Marcel fails to seize upon the potentiality freed by the differential distribution that this image offers him a glimpse of. Habit may merely be sleeping or lulled here, but rather than letting this image irrupt between the stereoscopic overlay of past and future, seizing on its fugitive capacity in order to escape, he reduces it to one image among others within his existing horizon of possibilities, a mere preference for possessing her. He thereby extinguishes the radical potential of this momentary release from the habits that govern his identity and the connections that are permitted within his world.

The passage describes a clash between two different sensory and affective distributions, equally possible and yet each seemingly made impossible by the other. The alternative form of commons that the momentary coexistence of these two regimes of possibility suggests, founders because the hero falls back on the future tense, which dissolves the contradictory force of the impression back into the time of a future realization. He fails to seize upon the realization that is thrust upon him by this impression, that he might create an entirely different affective and sensory assemblage–a new life and a new commons–because he fixates instead on the idea of possibly possessing her. He domesticates the world that she envelops, bypassing the meanwhile by confining himself to a juxtaposition, which leaves the image of his own world in tact. This glimpse of another world, this momentary escape from the image of the present in which he

dwells nonetheless makes his current reality intolerable, even if only fleetingly. He fails to exploit the fugitive capacity of this encounter and is recaptured by his existing habits of desire.

The Dispersal of a Greek Chorus:

The Greek chorus that appears in Proust's *recherche* might be read as offering a response to these mixtures, missteps, and failures, which disrupt the smooth functioning of the temporal stereoscope. A chorus might compensate for the misalignment between intelligibility and feeling that plagues the sensory commons, for example, because it both expresses the appropriate emotional response to events as they occur and instructs the audience as to how to interpret them. The chorus would therefore be an addition that could supplement and make whole a social body threatened by potential rifts.[88] In the *recherche*, however, the chorus that appears underscores the vacuity of the social field, rather than reasserting the fantasy of an organic unity. In Balbec "les camarades du groom 'extérieur'…restaient là seulement comme des choristes qui, même quand ils ne servent à rien, demeurent en scène pour ajouter à la figuration…"[89] Rather than unifying the audience by modeling the correct responses to events, the members of the chorus serve as inert placeholders, unresponsive bodies filling the stage, without a meaningful role in constructing or integrating in the social fabric.

[88] The artistic advantages of such a function caused such choruses to persist in various guises long after the disappearance of actual choruses from the stage. As Thanh-Vân Ton-That points out in *Fragments De Comédie Italiene* even Proust makes use of an epilogue that functions as "l'équivalent d'un choeur antique" accounting for and making coherent a world that is otherwise fragmentary ["Théâtralisation et modeles dans quelques oeuvres de jeunesse de proust," *Proust Aujourd'hui, 4*, 217-230, 224].

[89] Proust, *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 559; "stood there only like a chorus who, even when there is nothing for them to do, remain upon the stage in order to strengthen the representation… between the exits and entrances of the visitors, they did fill an otherwise empty stage…" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 388).

Instead of trying to attain greater unity through the ability of such a chorus to assure a shared identity, Proust's novel chains together the most disparate figures, finding the lines of connectivity that lead farthest astray. As Bowie notes, "Proust's narrator is both chorus and soloist, a confusion of appetites and a single long-breathed desire." He weaves between the collective and the singular. Pursuing vectors out of stable identity, rather than assuring an internal cohesion, "his voice contains many voices. He is a magpie and a mimic. He veers this way and that, and takes the colouring of the company he keeps…"[90] Rather than encircling a particular group and stabilizing their common identity by inventing criteria for inclusion, the *recherche* strains toward increasing heterogeneity. Resisting the forms social cohesion that Rose critiques as requiring constant external and internal policing, and that the Greek chorus might supplement with a genuine affective and intelligible connectivity, Proust's novel follows affective and sensory connections that detach themselves from shared contexts and inclusions.

Momentarily looming up out of the anonymous crowd, these desiring, wondering figures are tied to the narrative by the recurring refrain of 'comme un…comme une…comme quelque', "comme...Ulysse…comme un spirite…comme le visiteur d'une exposition d'électricité"[91] Rather than subordinating each aside to the narrative event that precipitates it, the repetition of this 'comme…comme…' builds a rhythmic consistency within such a passage and between similar passages, loosely chaining them to one another across the intervening pages, contributing to what

[90] Bowie, *Proust Among the Stars,* xvi.

[91]Proust*, Le Temps Retrouvé*, 2322; "like Ulysses in the Odyssey…like a medium…like a visitor to an electrical exhibition (320).

Bowie calls "novel's allusive chorus," made up of dispersed figures that never actually appear in the same space together.[92]

A woman's face is framed in isolation at a window, another against a moving background of the waves; a thief believes he will not be caught, a sick woman that death may yet abandon her; a young woman vainly awaits a response from a lover, a mother news of a son lost at sea. The actual, localizable linkages that would connect these figures are deliberately tenuous. They appear, not as characters, but as an interconnecting series of affective and sensible intensities. As Ronald Bogue writes, "the artist separates sensation from its actual context; the sensation is then open to deployment within multiple possible worlds, and in its decontextualization it is revealed as a being of sensation, an entity whose mode of existence is that of the possible."[93] The Proustian chorus suppresses context. It does not assure a single world, but is deployed across many possible worlds, mapping trajectories for unpredictable interconnections. The novel is not limited to operating on a fixed and immediately present landscape of the visible, from a point of view securely situated in time or space. By defying logical or action based sequencing, the work produces interrelations that disrupt the consistency of a present secured by a unified past and predictable future. The dispersal of the chorus across multiple worlds therefore troubles the stereoscopic cohesion of the present.

These asides are not designed to illustrate and reinforce the evocative potential of the original scenario. It is the force that overrides both the individuals that they depict and the

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[92] Bowie, *Proust among the Stars,* 97. Bowie is referring in particular to the many allusions to artists and writers, in particular to Homer, that over the course of the *recherche* "[acquire] their own logic and power of summation," but the suggestive power of the anonymous figures that populate the *recherche* is pivotal in procuring the outward ramifying movement that sets this chorus apart.

[93] Bogue, "The Art of the Possible," 283.

particularity of their situations that is extracted from these understated and yet vivid asides. As Pierre Macherey explains: "l'art du romancier ne consiste pas à fabriquer, en combinant et en homogénéisant des traits communs, des images types représentative d'entités abstraites ('le' Juif, l''homosexuel'), mais à singulariser des figures fortement individuées, d'autant plus révélatrices que leur exceptionnalité les rend porteuses de tout un monde de signification susceptible d'être partagées."[94] Not only are they not representative of particular types, but theses asides explore the way in which affective linkages can produce temporary rhythmic alignments, rather than the fusions of identity that fail to overcome rhythmic incompatibilities in order to "intermesh." Stable characteristics that might identify an "us vs. them" configuration are absent from these grouping. These intensities can be decontextualized and shared across worlds, without being reified into an actual commons. But, while their surprising couplings suggest that a different set of relations could govern the social field, they do not construct a temporality that would endow them with the duration necessary to transform the possible.

The minor breakdowns and disturbances of stereoscopic temporality described by this chapter send tendrils of chaos into the stable image of the present, making it susceptible to transformation, but while the apriori Other structure is disrupted, it is not yet exhausted or challenged by another temporality. Proust has yet to enact a genuine escape. While his novel trials various strategies for repairing the present, from the Greek chorus, to the cycles of love affairs, it ultimately demonstrates that none are sufficient for compensating for the inevitable vacuity produced by the seamless overlay of past and future.

The theatrical failings involved in the "scènes vulgaires de la vie," described by Proust,

[94] Pierre Macherey, *Proust Entre Littérature et Philosophie* (Paris: Editions Amsterdam, 2013), 111.

exemplify a crucial difference between the stages of daily life and the true art of the theatre. Exposing a shortcoming in Rancière's mobilization of theatrical language in the descriptions of political action, Proust's novel explores the ways in the theatrical loses precisely the fugitive capacity that is the source of its greatness as an art, when it is deployed in the scenes of life. The narrator eventually comes to realize that "ces tableaux successifs, c'était le résultat fugitif, le but momentané, le mobile chef-d'œuvre que l'art théâtral se proposait et que détruirait en voulant le fixer l'attention d'un auditeur trop épris."[95] The problematic impetus to "fix" the image in an extended present is identified, but not overcome; the meanwhile has yet to be created. Proust's work must therefore go beyond revealing the flaws that characterize the stereoscopic and theatrical structure of the present, introducing genuinely transformative movements. It is through a cinematic language, which intensifies the fugitive movement of images across worlds, that I argue the *recherche* gives rise to an alternative temporal structure, which will not merely undermine the static unity of the present, and make laughable the self-serious stagings of social life that it permits, but will open it up to the emergence of the new.

[95] Proust, *Le Côté Guermantes,* 786; "the successive tableaux were the fleeting result, the momentary object, the mobile masterpiece which the art of the theatre intended and which a too-enraptured listener would destroy by trying to arrest" (60-61).

CHAPTER 2

Creating the Meanwhile:

From Stereoscopic to Cinematic Time

"…une vision douteuse et à chaque minute anéantie par l'oubli, la réalité précédente s'évanouissant devant celle qui lui succède, comme une projection de lanterne magique devant la suivante quand on a changé le verre."[96]

"Mais toujours l'image-temps directe nous fait accéder à cette dimension proustienne d'après laquelle les personnes et les choses occupent dans le temps une place incommensurable à celle qu'ils tiennent dans l'espace. Proust parle alors en termes de cinéma, le Temps montant sur les corps sa lanterne magique et faisant coexister les plans en profondeur " [97]

On a train wending its way to Balbec, the narrator struggles to grasp the shifting landscape framed by his window as "un tableau continu."[98] The train's passage puts the landscape into motion and the ongoing reframings produced by its windows subject the outside world to cuts and reconnections that impede his ability to grasp the scene: "le ciel devint d'un incarnat que je tâchais, en collant mes yeux à la vitre, de mieux voir...mais la ligne du chemin de

[96] Proust, *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 645;"a dubious vision, extinguished anew every moment by oblivion, the former reality fading before that which follows it as one projection of a magic lantern fades before the next as we change the slide" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 545).

[97] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 2: L'Image Temps* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1985), 56; "But the direct time-image always gives us access to that Proustian dimension where people and things occupy a place in time which is incommensurable with the one they have in space. Proust indeed speaks in terms of cinema, time mounting its magic lantern on bodies and making the shots coexist in depth" (Gilles Deleuze, Cinema II: The Time-Image, trans. Hugh Tomlison, Robert Galeta [Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989], 39).

[98] Proust, *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*, 521; "a single canvas." (*Within a Budding Grove,* 317).

fer ayant changé de direction, le train tourna, la scène matinale fut remplacée dans le cadre de la fenêtre par un village nocturne aux toits bleus de clair de lune, avec un lavoir encrassé de nacre opaline de la nuit. "[99] He begins to run from window to window attempting to knit together the nighttime and morning scenery. The train's body intervenes between night and day, creating an interval that allows for a continuous reordering of their temporal sequencing, as the emerging dawn is plunged back into the receding night.

As Sarah Danius writes, "scenery follows upon scenery, as in a montage-cut film . . . the train has become a vehicle of perception."[100] It is a vehicle of perception that troubles the habitual ordering of appearance. Marcel cannot see clearly because the movement of the image destabilizes the stereoscopic consistency of the present. He runs from window to window "pour rentoiler les fragments intermittents et opposites." But the movement of the train cannot be overcome by his own compensatory efforts. The world is divided and ramified into two series of intermittent moving images. Thus, it is not only insofar as the mechanisms of habitual appearance occasionally break down that the stitching together of past and future is troubled by the novel, the language of cinematic projection models a different temporal structure, which more profoundly upsets the recognitions of habitual life.

The train brings two irreconcilable perspectives into contact, momentarily suspending the subject between two possible worlds. While, as Zourabichvili explains, "two dimensions cannot be actualized at the same time 'in' the same subject," the power of art is that they can

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[99] 520-21; "the sky turned to a crimson which I strove, gluing my eyes to the window, to see more clearly. . . but, the course of the line altering, the train turned, the morning scene gave place in the frame of the window to a nocturnal village, its roofs still blue with moonlight, its pond encrusted with the opalescent nacre of night" (317).

[100] Sara Danius, "Proust and the Modernist Rhetoric of Speed," *Modernism/modernity* 8, no.1 (2001): 99-126, 105.

most certainly be *possiblized* for the same subject simultaneously.[101] If "actualization transports the subject from one to the other, causing him to change or become, passing irreversibly from one period to another," possiblization produces a meanwhile in which the two are given sensory consistency and affective force, without yet being actualized, and so do not complete the transport of the subject into the other dimension. The simultaneity of the two worlds causes Marcel to see double in time.

The effects of such cinematic possiblizations are even more dramatic when it is the distant past that is brought into contact with the present. The present as the overlay of a stable past and an anticipated future, gives way to a meanwhile, which is both an *entre-temps* (irrupting between past and future) and an *en attendant* (a transformative waiting). Rather than eliding the present, the meanwhile sustains multiple possible worlds in the interval between what has been and what will become. This meanwhile is not characterized by a perspective of plenitude, which would understand this simultaneity of worlds as a reservoir of possible alternatives, but by a procedure of exhaustion, through which the coordinates of past and future become suspended, inhibiting the coalescence of a single actuality. There is a fugitive element to this suspension as the "irreversible" passage between actualizations becomes reversible, and the subject eludes capture by either order. Granted access to multiple perspectives the subject does not achieve a superior perspective of mastery, but a doubling of vision that is accompanied by a plurality of affective and subjective configurations that are exhaustively trialed by the novel without being actualized.

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[101] François Zourabichvili, *Deleuze, a Philosophy of the Event,* trans. Kieran Aarons, eds. Gregg Lambert and Dan Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 100-101.

The conflictual interweaving of this proto-cinematic language with the theatrical language, discussed in the preceding chapter, is particularly fraught in that it does not align with the author's own critique of the cinema. Proust's love of the theatre and his deep-seated mistrust of the cinema are well known, which has led many critics to read the former in a positive light and the latter mistrustfully, despite the contradictory indications of how each functions within the novel itself. Shattuck's *Proust's Binoculars*, for example, reads the cinematic in Proust as approximating the failings of habitual experience. Cinema is accused of producing false continuity, what Proust disparagingly calls "cinematic progression," which develops according to a linear progression that obscures insights arising from juxtapositions across time.

According to Shattuck, "The *cinematographic principle* employs a sequence of separately insignificant differences to produce the effect of motion or animation in objects seen. It vividly conveys the sensation of flux, of a steady linear change from one moment flowing into the next… it appears to conform to the continuity of normal experience."[102] But in the *Recherche* itself cinematic language in fact dominates when segments of the past dislodge themselves from a strictly linear progression that would leave them safely in the past and come hurtling forward into the present moment, making it suddenly unrecognizable, and the future unpredictable. Shattuck, along with a majority of Proust scholars, insists on the *moments bienheureux* in his analysis of memory and disruptive temporality in the *Recherche*. There are, however, also the memories that resurface in transformative, rather than clarifying ways, radically differing from both the instance that recalls them and from what they once were in their proper temporal place.

[102] Shattuck, *Proust's Binoculars*, 49-50

According to Shattuck "The *stereoscopic principle*," by contrast, "abandons the portrayal of motion in order to establish a form of arrest which resists time. It selects a few images or impressions sufficiently different from one another not to give the effect of continuous motion, and sufficiently related to be linked in a discernible pattern. This stereoscopic principle allows our binocular (or multiocular) vision of mind to hold contradictory aspects of things in the steady perspective of recognition, of relief in time."[103] In this account, the steady perspective of recognition arrests motion in order to juxtapose two images, one drawn from the past and one from the present, in order to carefully consider their differences and the patterns that they share. But in the novel itself it is often not a stable image of the past that resurfaces in order to augment the present moment, but a block of duration that clashes in an ongoing struggle with the present. Rather than peaceably meshing into a single heightened reality, past and present falsify and destabilize one another. But between motion as the "steady linear change" of "normal experience," and the arrested abandonment of motion particular to juxtaposition, emerges the aberrant temporal movement of Proust's cinematic descriptions.

In his explicit accounts of cinema, Proust most certainly condemns it as belonging to the consensual register of perceptibility that characterizes Rancière's distribution of the sensible. He writes: "Si la réalité était cette espèce de déchet de l'expérience, à peu près identique pour chacun, parce que quand nous disons: un mauvais temps, une guerre, une station de voitures, un restaurant éclairé, un jardin en fleurs, tout le monde sait ce que nous voulons dire ; si la réalité était cela, sans doute une sorte de film cinématographique de ces choses suffirait …"[104] But the

[103] Shattuck, *Proust's Binoculars*, 51.

[104] Marcel Proust, *ALRTP, Temps Retrouvé,* 2280; "If reality were indeed a sort of waste product of experience, more or less identical for each one of us since when we speak of bad weather, a war, a taxi rank, a brightly lit

examples that he casually lists as sites of general consensus, perhaps above all the "restaurant éclairé," are precisely the sites of cinematic reconfigurations of visibility. At one point there is in fact an explicitly cinematic reference that is not in the usual condemnatory tone. The narrator recalls a group of horsemen who passed "comme cinématographiés au galop sur l'ensoleillement blanc de l'avenue."[105] The effect of the bright light that imprints the motion of the riders on his mind acknowledges a different kind of seeing, oriented less toward the present, in which he is blinded, and more toward the future, in which it will be replayed. What makes this particularly cinematic for him is temporal rather than visual effect; the ability, which he touches on shortly after, for a fleeting image (or "poetical sensation") to be captured in its singularity and replayed later. The present recedes, replaced by a memory that will be at once recognizable and unfamiliar. It is here that a hint is offered of the peculiarly cinematic capacity to unmoor a set of images from temporal linearity and cause them to travel in time.

The cinematic in the *Recherche* does not offer an objective or merely mechanical recording of the past, as "one moment flowing into the next," which would secure it and make evident that any possibilities that were not actualized at the time become safely excluded. Instead through cinematic superimpositions the past resurfaces in such a way that it reconfigures the present. Our firm grasp of reality is not only plagued by "une vision douteuse et à chaque minute anéantie par l'oubli," according to which "la réalité précédente s'évanouissant devant celle qui lui succède, comme une projection de lanterne magique devant la suivante quand on a changé le

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restaurant, a garden full of flowers, everybody knows what we mean, if reality were no more than this, no doubt a sort of cinematograph film of these things would be sufficient" (*Time Regained,* trans*. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin* [New York: Modern Library, 2003], 290).

[105] Proust*, À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 507; "who passed as though in filmed at the gallop in the blinding glare of the Avenue" (*Within a Budding Grove*, 297).

verre," it is made even more uncertain by the fact that the preceding projections refuse to remain securely in the past.[106] The successive motion of the magic lantern's projection is displaced by montage. The oblivion of forgetfulness only renders the reemergence of these past projections more shocking. Cinematic movement therefore endangers the temporal stereoscope as aberrant temporal movements allow images to traverse the "flow" of time in the wrong direction, disjointing the connection between past and future. Lived again, and often painfully, the cinematic resurgences of the past disrupt "the continuity of normal experience." The cinematic language that Proust employs will, therefore, be seen to diverge radically from his own account of the cinema, as too close to habitual forms of visibility.

When Jacques Bourgeois first raised the possibility of a positive correlation between Proust and the cinema in his article from 1946, he framed it thus: "imaginons maintenant Proust cinéaste et non plus écrivain, puisqu'il a besoin d'images au lieu d'idées générales pour s'exprimer."[107] He continues, "le cinéma est l'art du mouvement de l'image, c'est-à-dire exactement et seulement ce que nous trouvons dans l'œuvre proustienne."[108] The very fabric of the *Recherche* can be understood as cinematic. Proust's work transforms the relations between one image and another, between one scene or shot and another, between one frame and another, putting the image into movements that do not conform to habitual progressions. Despite Proust's own well-known reservations regarding the 7th art, his work develops cinematic procedures that anticipate in many ways, rather than imitate developments in film. Proust thinks and writes in

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[106] *ALRTP, À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 645; "a dubious vision, extinguished anew every moment by oblivion, the former reality fading before that which follows it as one projection of a magic lantern fades before the next as we change the slide" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 545).

[107] Jacques Bourgeois, "Le cinema à la recherche du temps perdu," *Revue du cinéma* 3, no. 1 (1946): 20.

[108] Bourgeois, "Le cinema à la recherche," 20.

moving images and in doing so develops a counterpoint to the staged presence of theatrical appearance.

Engaging the cinematic in Proust's work illuminates a dimension of it that has yet to be adequately developed in Proust scholarship. In *Proust at the Movies*, one of the few studies since Bourgeois' article to engage in a sustained analysis, not only of the adaptations of Proust's work to the cinema, but its stylistic resonances with the medium, Marine Beugnet and Marion Schmid note the striking resemblance between Bourgeois' description and Deleuze's later elaboration of a theory of cinematic movement and time images. They claim that it is the non-chronological temporality, and fragmented subjective perception explored by Proust's work that foreshadow later developments in the cinema. Similarly, Anne Henry reads Proust as having inaugurated the use of "le montage, c'est-à-dire une continuité artificielle obtenue par ajustage de séquences fabriquées indépendamment les unes des autres, relevant de domaines différents mais recevant une unité supérieure du projet général." [109]

Furthermore, Rancière has identified a fundamental cinematic quality in Flaubert's work in particular, what he calls "literary cinematographism," emphasizing the proto-cinematic quality of building "the narrative out of unequal blocks, discontinuous in space and time, as opposed to the representative model, the homogeneous chain of cause and effect, of wishes turning into events and events leading to other events."[110] So Proust is not necessarily the first to push the novel toward the filmic, but he uses the cinematic in order to construct, not just "unequal blocks," but aberrant temporal movements. The temporality of this other cinematic way of building the narrative and how it functions to disrupt the stereoscopic consistency of the present

[109] Anne Henry, *La tentation de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 200.

[110] Jacques Rancière, *Intervals of Cinema,* trans. by John Howe (London, Verso, 2014), 44.

has yet to be examined. Rancière gives his attention to the irruption of heterogeneity that contests the homogenizing effect of consensus, while the temporality specific to this shift away from the representative model is not something that he develops. By contrast with the irruptive redistribution, described by Rancière, in which the structure of the possible remains intact, Proust's work evokes a 'meanwhile' in which the procedures of exhaustion go to work on the possible itself.

It is my contention that in modeling a different temporal structure, Proust's cinematic evocations challenge the possible as a reservoir of preexisting alternatives. By putting the image itself into movement, Proust's work invents new relations, not only within a particular image or world, but across and between different images, worlds and times. It is in this sense that Proust's work disrupts the governing theatrical schemas according to which thinkers such as Rancière tend to conceive of the commons.

The Mutability of the Past:

The mechanism of the temporal stereoscope relies on the enduring stability of the past. It requires that the past remain in the past and that it be reduced to a static image that can be used to circumscribe the possibilities of the present and accurately anticipate the future. If the past becomes mutable, however, the possible can no longer be determined in advance. The possible as a set of pre-existing alternatives that are filtered and limited by what happens is thrown into disarray by a past that sweeps even the impossible into the present as a force of transformative potential. It is precisely through proto-cinematic descriptions, which transform delimited images

into moving projections, that Proust animates the past and disturbs its stasis. The meanwhile takes shape when an eruption of the past into the present occurs and instead of falling back into a reified set of events, the past plays over the present producing a superimposition of events that should never have come into contact.

When recollecting his childhood visits to Combray, the narrator of the *Recherche* invariably recalls one particular memory, a lone "pan lumineux, découpé au milieu d'indistinctes ténèbres."[111] Such an image lends itself to the proper functioning of the temporal stereoscope. Repeatedly recalled until its familiarity makes of it a comforting cliché, this lonely spotlight on his past reassures his present. It is transformed, however, when, upon tasting a madeleine, Combray is reborn, and the luminosity of the initial metaphor expands. The little *pan lumineux* becomes a floodlight. This account initially appears to substantiate fundamentally spatial readings of the *Recherche,* such as those formulated by Georges Poulet and later by Rancière. But the language of illuminated space is gradually troubled by an entirely different logic—a temporal logic of projection and superimposition. The images of spotlights, footlights, and floodlights are challenged by the appearance of reflections, projections and superimpositions. While all of the above jointly contribute to the optical vocabulary that many scholars have highlighted as ubiquitous in the *Recherche,* the difference between them is of an overlooked significance. It contributes to the tension that runs throughout the work between theatrical

[111] Marcel Proust*, Du Côté de Chez Swann,* 43; "luminous panel, sharply defined against a vague and shadowy background" (*Swann's Way,* 58).

stagings of co-presence and mutual-recognition and cinematic encounters that upset linear temporality, making the present unrecognizable.[112]

Let us return to the episode introduced above, in order to discover what effects become visible when the novel's spatial logic is disentangled from the temporal. The *pan lumineux* is drawn from a longer reflection on the limited scope of voluntary memory that appears in the first volume: "C'est ainsi que, pendant longtemps, quand, réveillé la nuit, je me ressouvenais de Combray, je n'en revis jamais que cette sorte de pan lumineux, découpé au milieu d'indistinctes ténèbres, pareil à ceux que l'embrasement d'un feu de Bengale ou quelque projection électrique éclairent et sectionnent dans un édifice dont les autres parties restent plongées dans la nuit. "[113] The rest of Combray seemingly lies just beyond the light, plunged in the darkness of forgetfulness, but present and consistent nonetheless, merely awaiting its retrieval.

As the character tastes the madeleine the language of staging initially becomes even more emphatic: "aussitôt la vieille maison grise sur la rue, où était sa chambre, vint comme un décor de théâtre s'appliquer au petit pavillon, donnant sur le jardin, qu'on avait construit pour mes parents sur ses derrières (ce pan tronqué que seul j'avais revu jusque-là). "[114] The scenery surrounding this one memory is now visible. The seamless addition of the newly recalled elements of a past world to the character's previous recollection implies a consistency of the past

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[112] Roger Shattuck, *Proust's Way: A field Guide to In Search of Lost Time* (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2000), 100. "This strand of imagery, linking not so much things seen as particular transformations or modes of vision, never slackens through three thousand pages of text."

[113] Proust, *Du Côté de Chez Swann* 43; "And so it was that, for a long time afterwards, when I lay awake at night and revived old memories of Combray, I saw no more of it than this sort of luminous panel, sharply defined against a vague and shadowy background, like the panels which the glow of a Bengal light or a searchlight beam will cut out and illuminate in a building the other parts of which remain plunged in the darkness" (*Swann's Way*, 58)

[114] 46: "immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set to attach itself to the little pavilion, opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated segment which until that moment had been all that I could see)" (64).

over time. It is as though involuntary memory allows for the past to be put back together *as it was*. But involuntary memory does not simply pull back the curtain on a theatre of the past, as the above might suggest. Instead, it participates in the recovery of what went unnoticed, producing, as Deleuze describes it in *Proust and Signs*, "a content so completely lost having never been possessed that its reconquest is a creation."[115]

Over the course of this same passage spatial contiguities and co-presences give way to temporal dislocations and connections across spaces and times. The Combray that is retrieved from oblivion is:

> peinte de couleurs si différentes de celles qui maintenant revêtent pour moi le monde, qu'en vérité elles me paraissent toutes, et l'église qui les dominait sur la Place, plus irréelles encore que les projections de la lanterne magique; et qu'à certains moments, il me semble que pouvoir encore traverser la rue Saint-Hilaire, pouvoir louer une chambre rue de l'Oiseau…serait une entrée en contact avec *l'Au-delà* plus merveilleusement surnaturelle que de faire la connaissance de Golo et de causer avec Geneviève de Brabant.[116]

The character is carried back to a Combray as fantastically other as the world of Golo and Geneviève. It is rediscovered as it smelled in an ephemeral moment and as it sounded in a long-forgotten turn of phrase, but always as it is transformed through contact with the moment of

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[115]Gilles Deleuze. *Proust and Signs,* trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 119.

[116] Proust, *Du Côté de Chez Swann*, 47; "painted in colours so different from those in which the world is decked for me today, that in fact one and all of them and the church which towered above them in the Square, seem to me now more unreal than the projections of my magic lantern; and at times I feel that to be able to cross the Rue Saint-Hilaire again, to engage a room in the Rue de l'Oiseau…would be to secure a contact with the Beyond more marvelously supernatural than it would be to make Golo's acquaintance and to chat with Geneviève de Brabant" (*Swann's Way,* 65-66).

recollection. A language of projection overtakes the language of staging. The two moments are not merely juxtaposed, nor do they blend into one augmented reality (as per Shattuck's version of stereoscopic vision). Like the magic lantern that transforms the familiar walls of his room as a child, and whose images are in turn transformed by the contours of the room, the past is allowed to play over and to reform and be reformed by the present. His world is transformed and made strange by it, just as Golo is "transvertebrated" by the handle of the door, without either assimilating it, or being assimilated by it.

The transformative potential of these temporal movements lies in the resurgence of the past as "une entrée en contact avec l'Au-delà." What lies beyond the delimitation of a particular moment, image, or memory, is no longer merely what awaits illumination just beyond the frame of visibility, having become a more radical outside, making its presence felt through the strange effects that it produces in coming into contact with the present. For Rancière, the impression produced by involuntary memory is "double not only because it is felt in two temporalities at once; it is double because it is both the shock that disorients, breaks the boundaries of the world, and brings forth primordial chaos, and, on the contrary, the sign of the god who orders, creates meaning, establishes correspondences, and determines vocations."[117] The boundaries of the world are broken, but simultaneously reordered in an instant. Rancière makes the impression into a disruptive experience of the subject *in* time, rather than the transformative effect *of* time.

The interaction between a first impression and its secondary reappearance in the *Recherche* is, however, a much more perilous affair, giving rise to irreconcilable contradictions that persist in a heterogeneous time. This is a time in which the coexistence of a series of differential affective and perceptual distributions will, as we will see in what follows, permit an

[117] Jacques Rancière, *Mute Speech,* trans. James Swenson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 157.

exhaustion of the possible. The cinematic consistency of the projected image allows for a visualization of two worlds at once that are each given sensible and affective consistency, without either one being actualized at the expense of the other. The meanwhile of this temporary co-existence is not stereoscopic because it does not coalesce into a single augmented reality, but is experienced as a dual perspective that disjoints time and the subject who experiences himself as simultaneously the product of two conflictual individuations. The structure of the possible that would ensure that only one such assemblage becomes real, while the others are ultimately excluded as a product of the irreversible transport between states, is undermined.

Time is, therefore, a force of ceaseless transformation in Proust's work, submitting even the past to an incontrovertible malleability. It is in this respect that the spatial concept of juxtaposition, central to the readings of both Poulet and Rancière, is insufficient, and the work's evocations of superimposition and projection are revelatory of the flaws of such a model. Poulet's account of Proust's novel in *L'espace proustien* offers an example of what results from the conflation of theatrical and cinematic optical logics. The atypical temporal movements that the *Recherche* initiates are suppressed:

> L'univers proustien n'est donc pas celui de la lanterne magique; ou, si l'on veut, il est celui-ci, mais à condition d'imaginer les différentes plaques de verre peint, non dans le mouvement qui les projette les unes après les autres sur une surface, mais arranges les unes *à côté* des autres dans un ordre simultané. Somme tout, les verres de la lanterne offrent une collection de *vitraux*, comme l'église de

> Combray. Mais les vitraux sont juxtaposés ; ils ne sont ni superposés, ni substitués.[118]

The various episodes of the *Recherche* are understood by Poulet to be co-present in space, side by side, without impinging on one another's frames. He offers a virtuosic mapping of the incredibly complex network of interconnections that relate the episodes to one another but, in framing this network in terms of the static simultaneity of a larger pattern, he attributes to the novel a form of stability that is strikingly foreign to the Proustian universe.

Similarly, Rancière's account of the work as a combination of the structural integrity of an architectural frame and the "decorative" additions that can be made to it is too reliant on a spatial model of visibility. In an attempt to reconcile the preconceived progress of the narrative with the interjections of impressions, he writes: "the cathedral is a building calculated by an architect and whose arches must join precisely. But it is also the profusion of the figures of the sculpted book..."[1] In both accounts a form of spatial simultaneity ensures that each piece of the book finds its proper place in relation to the whole, such that the possible is circumscribed in advance, being predetermined by the architecture of the book.

What such accounts overlook is that the windows of the cathedral in Combray, which both Poulet and Rancière evoke, do not merely frame the images depicted by their stained glass, they also serve as a filter between worlds and a passage in time. In other words, the framing of episodes in Proust's novel tend to function according to a mobile cinematic model that instigates reframings and deframings, rather than the invariability of the window frames evoked by the architectural model. The frames of each episode in the *Recherche* do not protect their contents

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[118] Georges Poulet, *L'espace proustien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 115-116.

from the forces that traverse them. The forces that cut across the borders of a frame, eliciting impossible relations, are of equal, or even greater importance to the content that is contained within a particular frame. The temporal movements that disturb and dislodge Proustian images ensure that the frames, which would allow for stable juxtapositions, whether thought of as the glass slides of the lantern or the windows of the cathedral, are never assured.

In Proust's work, therefore, spatial images of spotlights and footlights tend to add space to space through successive illuminations, emphasizing the partial illumination of a larger whole. Images of projection and superimposition, on the other hand, repeatedly generate deframings and contaminations that draw the present into a relation with an outside more radical than the out-of-field that extends beyond the edge of a particular frame or illumination. To return once more to Deleuze, "the pairing of the present moment and the past one is more like a struggle than an agreement…"[1] Cutting together and superimposing disparate times and spaces, the *Recherche* produces co-presences between spatially and temporally non-communicating worlds, which are sustained by the meanwhile that is neither the empty time of the situation, nor a revolutionary time of actual transformation, but the time of an immanent repossiblization.

Superimposition:

Instead of stereoscopic vision, which makes of two slightly different points of view a reconciled whole, cinematic superimposition in the *Recherche* emphasizes the disparity between two images, originating from two points of view anchored in two irreconcilable worlds. The contrasting overlay of multiple worlds that exist in tension with one another repeatedly throws

Marcel out of his habitual way of seeing. The neutral objectivity of juxtaposition is denied him. The person who gains access to the superior point of view of juxtaposition would be elevated above the points of view available within either of the individual episodes under consideration. Disentangled from their connections and capable of considering them from a distance, this viewer would no longer be at risk. In order to see both worlds simultaneously in this manner Marcel would have to no longer be embedded in either. Instead he remains embedded in both, as they pull him toward conflicting individuations and forms of visibility; he sees double in a way that is disorienting, rather than masterful.

In her article "Cinema Regained: Godard Between Proust and Benjamin,"Alessia Ricciardi points out that "the novel's well-known predilection for metaphorical expression is not only manifested through the mere choice of the appropriate, poetic image; rather, the *Recherche* develops a sort of mise-en-scène of metaphor through an insistence on the technique of superimposition. That is to say, the *Recherche* aims to capture in writing how consciousness sustains moments of optical equivocation, how the mind blends together one image with another."[119] This discussion conflates the effect of superimposition with the stereoscopic optic of blending, rather than affirming the ability for such superimpositions to sustain the tensions between the two images. Rather than optical equivocation, I would argue that Proustian superimpositions produce an optical contest between two incompatible sensible and evaluative configurations, that is to say two distinct possibilities of life.

In the Montjouvain episode the tensions between spatial and temporal logics are particularly striking. In its first iteration, Marcel encounters an illuminated window through

[119] Alessia Ricciardi, "Cinema Regained: Godard Between Proust and Benjamin," *Modernism/modernity* 8, no. 4 (2001): 643-661, 647.

which he can see Mlle Vinteuil. The window no longer figures as an isolated *pan lumineux,* but as a momentary transparency, possible only as a result of the surrounding darkness: "la fenêtre était entrouverte, la lampe était allumée, je voyais tous ses mouvements sans qu'elle me vît."[120] Rather than functioning as a limited illumination of a larger set, the window opens the set onto another world. This modeling of spectatorship enfolds two opposing possibilities. The first is a situation of mastery resulting from the safe distance of the observer from what is being observed. According to this model Marcel's gaze penetrates the women's world but is not endangered by it, denying it the force of an encounter.

As Deleuze writes in *Proust and Signs*: "to imprison is, precisely, to put oneself in a position to see without being seen, that is, without the risk of being carried away by the beloved's viewpoint that excluded us from the world as much as it included us within it."[121] Understood in this way, the character's position of invisibility circumscribes the possible world that the other enfolds, neutralizing the threat that it would otherwise pose. The observer puts himself doubly at a remove because the scene of seduction that Mlle Vinteuil stages with her friend is not only subject to the spatial separation of the window, but to the distinction that he imposes on it between reality and fiction. In reflecting that "c'est à la lumière de la rampe des théâtres du boulevard plutôt que sous la lampe d'une maison de campagne véritable qu'on peut voir une faille faire cracher une amie sur le portrait d'un père qui n'a vécu que pour elle," he assures his sense of a secure reality free of the melodrama that he identifies with her theatrics.

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[120] Proust, *Du Côté de Chez Swann* , 132; "The window was partly open; the lamp was lighted; I could watch her every movement without her being able to see me" (*Swann's Way* 224).

[121] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 141.

This protective distance and firm division of her world from his own will later be troubled, however, by its reduplication in his own life.[122]

Mlle Vinteuil stages this encounter with her friend in an ardent attempt to escape herself, to be otherwise than what her past and her habits have made her: "elle cherchait le plus loin qu'elle pouvait de sa vraie nature morale, à trouver le langage propre à la fille vicieuse qu'elle désirait d'être, mais les mots qu'elle pensait que celle-ci eût prononcés sincèrement lui paraissaient faux dans sa bouche."[123] Forces originating outside of the present moment, which she so assiduously tries to protect, repeatedly frustrate her attempt at escape. The out-of-field that the father's photograph signals is given substance through the disruptive effects that it produces, thwarting, even as it catalyzes, her staging of desire: "au moment où elle se voulait si différente de son père, ce qu'elle me rappelait c'était les façons de penser, de dire, du vieux professeur de piano."[124] Unwittingly mimicking her father, even as she attempts to transgress, Mlle Vinteuil's stuttering inability to perform this scene betrays her. She flickers between two selves, unable to fully assume the role that she has chosen to play. The scene is fraught with the difficulties of any attempt to seek a passage *out* of a particular world and its distribution, something that Rancière does not pursue in his account of political visibility.

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[122] Proust, *Du Côté de Chez Swann,* 135-36; "it is behind the footlights of a Paris theatre, and not under the homely lamp of an actual country house that one expects to see a girl encouraging a friend to spit upon the portrait of a father who has lived and died for her alone" (*Swann's Way,*230).

[123] 134;"she reached out as far as she could across the limitations of her true nature to find the language appropriate to the vicious young woman she longed to be thought, but the words which she imagined such a young woman might have uttered with sincerity sounded false on her own lips" (228).

[124] 136; "At the moment when she wished to be thought the very antithesis of her father, what she at once suggested to me were the mannerisms, in thought and speech, of the poor old piano-teacher" (231).

In setting this scene such that the reader watches the watcher, the mastery of Marcel's position as voyeur is already complicated by his being watched in turn. Benhaïm writes of this episode: "Dans une mise en abyme de voyeurisme où nous devenons spectateurs de voyeur, nous observons l'enfant caché dans les buissons du talus où il s'était endormi qui, réveillé au crépuscule, épie à travers la fenêtre entrouverte de la maison de M. Vinteuil sa fille en train de monter sa propre scène."[125] The multiple levels of optical configuration, that of the young woman, of Marcel and of the novel itself, establish a contrast between the theatrical voluntarism involved in Mlle Vinteuil's struggle to set her own stage and play a new role, and the involuntarism that is at stake in the repetition of this scene that will play out cinematically, later dislodging Marcel from the world he wishes to occupy.

Benhaïm puts this scene into relation with two others: the initial encounter between Charlus and Jupien, and Marcel's much later discovery of Charlus in Jupien's brothel. He emphasizes Marcel's position as voyeur and the theatrical revelations regarding sexuality that each of these episodes involves as the link that joins them as a connected series, but there is also a connection, in particular between the first and last of these episodes, between the difficulty that Charlus and Mlle Vinteuil experience in deliberately staging an encounter as a means of escaping themselves. The comical discussion between Charlus and Jupien, in which Charlus seeks to assure himself of the true evil of the young man who has been selected to beat him, emphasizes his anxiety that this departure from his habitual identity is, after all, only play-acting. This theatrical series of episodes that Benhaïm points to is paralleled by a cinematic series in which

[125]André Benhaïm, "Visages D'Étoiles Scènes Masques et Coups de Théâtre de marcel Proust," in *Marcel Proust Aujourd'hui 4,* ed. Romana Goedendorp et al, 29-50, 32.

the original scene that Marcel was witness to is recalled and he is caught by the involuntary transformation produced by its superimposition over his own life.

When the Montjouvain episode reappears as a superimposition, the involuntary effects of the image in time prove more formidable than the voluntary theatrics of Mlle Vinteuil. The first model of masterful spectatorship describes the forces and actions operative within the scene. The second belongs to the movement of the image, which puts it into transformative connections over time. The possible world glimpsed through the illuminated window is released from both the spatial and temporal coordinates that contained it in the initial episode. A second model of spectatorship now dominates, according to which the spectator becomes vulnerable to absorption by a foreign perspective. It is only a false sense of security that was produced by the character's distance from what he observed because the landscape of the possible that is enfolded in the other's world resurfaces later through associations that release a delayed force capable of transforming his own. It is merely a deferred potential: "on verra plus tard que pour de tout autres raisons, le souvenir de cette impression devait jouer un rôle important dans ma vie."[126] Rather than immediately pushing the character's existing world into the past, such that the 'I am' of his present situation becomes an 'I was' resulting from the encounter, this deferred encounter with a possible world unfolds in a meanwhile that permits the sustained coexistence of irreconcilable worlds.[127]

The subsequent evocations of this scene disrupt Marcel's present world in a way that he cannot control:

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[126] Proust, *Du Côté de Chez Swann,* 132; "We shall see, in due course, that for quite other reasons the memory of this impression was to play an important part in my life" (*Swann's Way*, 224).

[127] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense,* trans. Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 310.

> Elle me montra la fenêtre. Mais derrière la plage de Balbec, la mer, le lever du soleil, que maman me montrait, je voyais, avec des mouvements de désespoir qui ne lui échappaient pas, la chambre de Montjouvain où Albertine, rose, pelotonnée comme une grosse chatte, le nez mutin, avait pris la place de l'amie de Mlle Vinteuil et disait avec des éclats de son rire voluptueux : 'Hé bien ! si on nous voit, ce n'en sera que meilleur. Moi ! je n'oserais pas cracher sur ce vieux singe ?' C'est cette scène que je voyais derrière celle qui s'étendait dans la fenêtre et qui n'était morne, superposé comme un reflet. [128]

The memory is more substantial than the actual world that lies beyond the window. The initial episode has been significantly transformed, not through a corrective revision, but through an affective reconstitution of the subject positions. Marcel is no longer simply an outside observer; he now suffers his distance as an exclusion and his mother, who ceased to acknowledge Mlle Vinteuil because of her scandalous behavior, is, unbeknownst to herself, drawn into the kind of constellation of desire that she condemned the young girl for. She watches the movements of despair that animate her beloved son's face without seeing the world that elicits them, she becomes the unaware witness that was once the position of Vinteuil.

This painful overlay that upsets the integrity of the present is far from Shattuck privileging of the gap between an event and its subsequent evocation as a means of retaining its own internal integrity. "Thanks to forgetting," he writes, "the image can keep its purity, the

[128] Proust, *Sodome et Gommorrhe,* 1604; "she pointed to the window. But beyond the beach of Balbec, the sea, the sunrise, which Mamma was pointing out to me, I saw, with movements of despair which did not escape her notice, the room at Montjouvain where Albertine, rosy and round like a great cat, with her rebellious nose, had taken the place of Mlle Vinteuil's friend and was saying amid peals of her voluptuous laughter: "Well! If they do see us, it will be all the better. I? I wouldn't dare to spit upon that old monkey?" It was this scene that I saw, beyond the scene that was framed in the open window and was no more than a dim veil drawn over the other, superimposed upon it like a reflection"

singular quality it displays when set alongside the later image that evokes it."[129] But the passage from Proust that he refers to in order to illustrate his point speaks of the image in terms of "*sa force,*" and not its purity:

> ce qui nous rappelle le mieux un être, c'est justement ce que nous avions oublié (parce que c'était insignifiant, et que nous lui avons ainsi laissé toute *sa force*). C'est pourquoi la meilleure part de notre mémoire est hors de nous . . . Hors de nous ? En nous pour mieux dire, mais dérobée à nos propres regards, dans un oubli plus ou moins prolongé. C'est grâce à cet oubli seul que nous pouvons de temps à autre retrouver l'être que nous fûmes, nous placer vis-à-vis des choses comme cet être l'était, souffrir à nouveau, parce que nous ne sommes plus nous, mais lui, et qu'il aimait ce qui nous est maintenant indifférent[130] [emphasis added].

The image erupts with force because it has been allowed to pass unremarked into the past, rather than fading into the stability and security of a familiar cliché. The shock of its reemergence is all the more destabilizing as a result. Rather than protecting the purity of the past image, the gap of forgetfulness creates the conditions for it to produce a disruption within the stereoscopic alignment of the past and future. The past becomes unrecognizable and transforms that present moment as a result.

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[129] Shattuck, *Proust Binoculars*, 65.

[130] Proust, quoted in Shattuck, *Proust's Binoculars,* 64; "what a person recalls to us most vividly is precisely what we had forgotten, because it was of no importance, and had therefore left in full possession of its strength. That is why the better part of our memory exists outside ourselves. . . .. Outside ourselves, did I say; rather within ourselves, but hidden from our eyes in an oblivion more or less prolonged. It is thanks to this oblivion alone that we can from time to time recover the creature that we were, range ourselves face to face with past events as that creature had to face them, suffer afresh because we are no longer ourselves but he, and because he loved what leaves us now indifferent" (64).

The slippage between memory as external to us versus internal but invisible to us, evoked by this passage, mobilizes something very like the play between the internal and external that characterizes Deleuze's apriori Other structure. We experience the external world only via the projection of the points of view of others onto it. If we change therefore, the projection we throw onto the external world changes as well. Similarly, it is not only that we come face to face with a past self in the sudden resurrection of a forgotten memory, but the past world that it projected.

Two possibilities of life to come into direct contact; what is visible and invisible, what is lovable or leaves us indifferent, what is good or bad, who we once were and who we are now become superimposed. The image that Proust constructs of the two selves and two worlds coexisting in this moment does in a moment what Tournier's Robinson could only do over a long period of time. It releases the image from its anchoring in the situation, allowing for an extrication from the apriori Other structure. Both subject and world are momentarily carried out of the coordinates that would delimit them and submit them to the order of the possible. This play between internal and external is also the reason that in exhausting the possible at the subjective level the world is necessarily carried away as well, and vice versa. In the suspended time of the meanwhile the subject is at once himself and his past self, the world is itself and a past version of itself, and the preferences that organized each are suspended, coexisting without being actualized in either direction.

In this superimposition of episodes, it is not that one *rhymes* with the other, as in Rancière's argument, creating symmetry and balance. The repetition of episodes causes them to mutually unbalance one another and undermines the idea that there could be a privileged truth in either one. Rather than rhyming with one another across the intervening pages; they react upon

one another intensively, altering what is possible in the present because it is no longer limited by what seemed to be excluded by past actualizations. Marcel's deception does not supplant or correct his love; neither does his love win out over this deception. It is this image of superimposition that allows for the simultaneous affirmation of opposing regimes of visibility and of desire. Two landscapes of the possible coexist in an extended present that is not the disruptive time of a Rancièrian dissensus and yet challenges the coordinates of visibility and audibility that determine the situation. The superimposition of the two episodes creates an impossible point of view, similar to that of the writer in the previously discussed aquarium scene, the viewer is both within and without, both implicated and observing. Superimposition combines the two, without producing a homogenizing reconciliation between them.

Rancière's readings, both political and aesthetic, tend to emphasize the frame. He continually poses the questions of what is included within a frame, and what is excluded from it: "politics is first of all a way of framing, among sensory data, a specific sphere of experience…the politics of literature thus means that literature as literature is involved in this partition of the visible and the sayable, in this intertwining of being, doing and saying that frames a polemical common world."[131] What becomes evident through the repetition of this episode in Proust, however, is the way in which such partitions are not merely redrawn at a particular moment in time, but subjected to ongoing transformation in relation to an out-of-field that is perceptible only from a point of view extended in time. Rancière compares the actual as it is configured and reconfigured at different moments in time, whereas Proust's superimpositions disrupt the linearity of time in order to threaten the possible itself.

[131] Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus,* trans. Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum,2010), 152.

Proust's novel challenges the idea that as we move through the present a series of possibilities are eliminated by what actually happens. His superimpositions activate potentialities from the past in the present moment in ways that substantially differ from how they were actualized at the time. This is one of his particular strategies for carrying out what Deleuze would term an exhaustive procedure. The world is endlessly possiblized otherwise, testing the effects and individuations that various potentialities could produce. The stability of the present moment ceases to be secured by what has happened. In an exhaustive series repetitions are not the reproduction of identical recognitions, but rather entail the continual activation and exhaustion of different potentials. Proust's cinematic model points to a future that will not necessarily coincide with existing images of what is possible. The meanwhile is opened up between relations of resemblance. Two worlds are not held up side by side in a juxtaposition that leaves each intact, but superimposed in a cinematic clash that allows for transformative interactions between the two that are never reconciled.

Intervallic Meanwhile:

Projection and superimposition are not the only means by which the *Recherche* troubles temporal linearity cinematically. Proust's work also slows, expanding a single moment and thereby producing a disruptive interval between the past and future of stereoscopic alignment. At times this takes the form of a time-lapse or slow motion effect capturing the multitude of differences suppressed by the stereoscopic image of the present. At others, the intercutting of loosely associated images produces an unstable metamorphosis. The image of the present is

made to stutter. Similarly, there are the moments in which Proust's use of the pseudo-iterative or his layering of multiple points of view produce a decomposition of the coordinates of the situation. Rather than identities that remain consistent over time, as one moment supplants the next, an interval is opened up between moments and, no matter how small, this interval disrupts the identities that traverse it.

We know from a commonly cited passage in the first volume of the *Recherche* that the novel permits a form of visibility inaccessible to lived experience. It moves at a greater speed than life, making visible the otherwise imperceptible changes that occur over long periods of time: "[il] déchaine en nous pendant une heure tous les bonheurs et tous les malheurs possibles dont nous mettrions dans la vie des années à connaître quelques-uns, et dont les plus intenses ne nous seraient jamais révélés parce que la lenteur avec laquelle ils se produisent nous en ôte la perception."[132] Overcoming the temporal opacities produced by intervening years, the *Recherche* enmeshes the affective and perceptual transformations, not only of a lifetime, but of multiple generations. The superimpositions discussed above are the extreme distillation of this logic, not just compressing, but short-circuiting time in order to produce an impossible simultaneity between different possibilities of life.

The *Recherche* does not only sound temporal depths, bringing distant moments in time into a dangerous proximity, it also pries apart the images of a static past and anticipated future. The coordinates of habitual experience are held momentarily in abeyance, opening a transformative interstice, that is to say the meanwhile as *entre temps.* Rather than one event

[132] Proust, *Du Côté de Chez Swann,* 76 ; "he sets free within us all the joys and sorrows in the world, a few of which only we should have to spend years of our actual life in getting to know, and the most intense of which would never be revealed to us because the slow course of their development prevents us from perceiving them." (*Swann's Way,* 117).

leading to the next, in a causal chain that elides the present by pushing the cause back into the past and making of the future its inevitable effect, the *Recherche* dwells in this interval between what was and what will be. These moments are at times easy to overlook. Even in expanding the interval, as Proust does, it often remains visible only as a flicker of instability. By reading the *Recherche*, as the narrator reads Bergotte, "plus *dolce,* plus *lento,*"[133] one becomes attuned to these intervallic disruptions.

Unlike Marcel's reading of Bergotte, this slower speed is not an arbitrary byproduct of a particular reader's pace; the novel itself solicits it. The anticipation that propels the plot forward is repeatedly thwarted such that the cuts away from the dominant narrative cease to appear ancillary. When, for example, the novel might engross its reader in the question of whether the protean Albertine will ever be apprehended, the narrator baldly states that not only does she later become his lover, but that he will ultimately become indifferent to her. This disclosure diffuses the suspense that might otherwise cause the reader to succumb, in the manner of the character, to a diminished perception, governed by the highly selective interests of the present moment.[134] The reader's investment of interest in the plot, the single-minded absorption of a particular form of suspense, is suppressed, escaping the stereoscopic temporality that made time itself align with the pursuit of our interests. The world no longer arrays itself in correspondence with the limited preferences and meager selections permitted by the structure of habitual experience.

If, in tracing a path through the *Recherche,* the reader allows herself to be sidetracked, to forget the thrust of the narrative, then, rather than seeing only the sedimentation of identities over time (the woman in pink *is* Odette, who *is* the Mlle Sacripant of Elstir's painting; St. Loup's

[133] 76; "rather more dolce, rather more lento" (134).

[134] Proust's narrative repeatedly warns against reading too fast (À L'ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs, 628, 649).

mistress, Rachel *is* the prostitute Marcel once dubbed "Rachel quand du Seigneur"; Elstir *is* Tiche etc.), the vacillation of identities that falter and fragment takes on importance. The action of the story gives way to the adventure of a moment. The stuttering temporality of the interval upsets the most coherent identities preparing the way for exhaustion. If, as Deleuze states, "Cinema isn't theater [because] it makes bodies out of grains," Proust's novel is cinematic in the way that it returns fixed identities to a fundamental graininess, allowing them to break apart and be reshaped otherwise. [135]

The episode in which Marcel will kiss Albertine, for example, figures as an exhaustive combinatorial that produces a granulation of Albertine's molar identity. When Marcel is on the brink of finally obtaining the sexual favors from Albertine that he has long dreamed of, his comic failure is less important than intervallic disruption of the present, which offers a glimpse of multiple coexisting Albertines. A shift occurs from the theatrical staging of bodies in the room to the cinematic failure of action over the course of the episode. Initially, the scene is set for this intimate encounter that, long awaited, and yet unexpected, will finally permit him to realize the once ardently imagined desire to kiss Albertine. It is, Marcel considers, by enacting precisely the inverse of the scene they once played out in the hotel room in Balbec that this previously denied pleasure will become attainable. In insisting on this inverted duplication of the scene, he gives expression to an understanding of lived experience as a series of alternatives between mutually exclusive realizations of the possible—in this case, to kiss or not to kiss Albertine. According to this conventional model of the possible, not only should one of these alternatives be realized at a time, the woman that he reaches for and the one attained by his lips should remain the same.

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[135] Deleuze, *Brain is Screen*, 366.

Instead, in the interval marked by the passage of his lips to her cheek, all of the many possible Albertines are equally affirmed and he fails to coincide with the moment of his kissing her: "dans ce court trajet de mes lèvres vers sa joue, c'est dix Albertines que je vis ; cette seule jeune fille étant comme une déesse à plusieurs tête, celle que j'avais vue en dernier, si je tentais de m'approcher d'elle, faisait pace à une autre."[136]

In a cinematic time-lapse, the duplicated Albertines are superimposed over one another failing to coincide as a single woman. This produces a strange assemblage of neither/nor, both/and, or what Deleuze calls an inclusive disjunction. To simultaneously kiss Albertine, to kiss a woman who both is and is not Albertine, to not be able to truly kiss Albertine, even as he kisses her, this series of equally affirmed permutations gives rise to an exhaustive procedure, by which the possible, conceived of as a reservoir of preexisting alternatives, is contested. Albertine herself disintegrates into disconnected parts, evocations, and associations that send Marcel's desire off in divergent trajectories, preventing her from cohering as single body that he could possess as the object of his desire.

The present moment retreats into the insensible depths of an interval: "d'un coup, mes yeux cessèrent de voir, à son tour mon nez, s'écrasant, ne perçut plus aucune odeur, et sans connaître pour cela davantage le goût du rose désiré, j'appris, à ces détestables signes, qu'enfin j'étais en train d'embrasser la joue d'Albertine."[137] The infinitesimal gap between his lips and her cheek is saturated by the affirmation of conflicting possibilities. The stereoscopic overlay of

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[136] Proust, *Le Côté Guermantes,* 1029; "in this brief journey of my lips towards her cheek, it was ten Albertines that I saw; this one girl being like a many-headed goddess, the head I had seen last, when I tried to approach it, gave way to another." (*The Guermantes Way,* 499).

[137] 1029; "suddenly my eyes ceased to see, then my nose, crushed by the collision, no longer perceived any odour, and, without thereby gaining any clearer idea of the taste of the rose of my desire, I learned, from these obnoxious signs, that at last I was in the act of kissing Albertine's cheek" (499).

a static image of the past and future is disturbed by the insertion, in the interval between them, of a whole series of contradictory images. The character begins to sense the transformative capacity lurking in the present moment, which ceases to be contained by the retroactive and anticipatory clichés that he seeks to apply to it. Only a retrospective analysis, after the fact, allows him to assert that he did in fact kiss Albertine, in an attempt to reestablish the stable categories of action and identity.

While the character will succumb to the need for such a retrospective application of the categories that ensure that the present is traversed by the artificial spanning of habit, the novel itself will continue to hold open the interval. The triple structure of narrator, character, writer, allows for a whole series of unresolved inclusive disjunctions, *I knew, I did not know, I would know, and I would never know*, or *I love, I no longer love, I never loved, I am loved, I am no longer loved.* These contradictory chains embed the present in a past that discloses itself as persistently mutable, and extend it into a future that contradicts what the present presupposes. Neither the narrator nor the writer provides a dependable corrective to the perceptions and conclusions presented elsewhere by the character. The "I" of each of these permutations remains in an unresolvable conflict with the others. The novel thereby repeatedly subjects its reader to the kind of uncertainty that Marcel experiences as he leans in to kiss Albertine.

Another strategy for restoring the intervallic quality of a meanwhile that insists between the past and future is a kind of intercutting that causes other identities to intervene within a single stable image. The aside provoked by the grandmother's stroke, for example, intercuts the invalid with the lover, and the sickness with the mistress/neighbor/stranger:

> Sans doute, *elle* n'avait pas su quand ce moment fatal viendrait, incertaine, pareille aux *amants* qu'un doute du même genre porte tour à tour à fonder des espoirs déraisonnables et des soupçons injustifiés sur la fidélité de leur maîtresse. Mais il est rare que ces grandes maladies . . . n'élisent pas pendant longtemps domicile chez *le malade* avant de le tuer, et durant cette période ne se fassent pas assez vite, comme *un voisin* ou *un locataire* 'liant', connaître de lui. . . . *La malade* fait la connaissance de *l'étranger* qu'elle entend aller et venir dans son cerveau. . . . plutôt que celui de *la maîtresse*, le médecin joue le rôle des *serviteurs* interrogés. Ils ne sont que des tiers. Celle que *nous* pressons, dont nous soupçonnons qu'elle est sur le point de *nous* trahir, c'est la vie elle-même, et malgré que *nous* ne la sentions plus la même, *nous* croyons encore en elle, *nous* demeurons en tout cas dans le doute jusqu'au jour qu'elle *nous* a enfin abandonnées. [emphasis added] [138]

At one level this episode builds a coherent image of the sick woman struggling with her malady, but without a retroactive application of identity, the flow of transforming identifiers overflows the bounds of this identity. Proust's passage seizes upon the heterogeneous forces that are usually suppressed by the bridging of stereoscopic time, which would assure the consistency of the grandmother's identity over the course of her illness. It is not only that her identity bifurcates

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[138] 991-92; "*She* had not known, naturally, when this fatal moment would come, had never been certain, any more than *those lovers* whom a similar doubt leads alternately to found unreasonable hopes and unjustified suspicions on the fidelity of their mistresses. But it is rarely that these grave maladies . . . do not take up their abode in *the sick man* for a long time before killing him, during which time they make haste, *like a 'sociable' neighbour or tenant*, to introduce themselves to him. . . . The sufferer makes the acquaintance of *the stranger* whom she hears coming and going in her brain. . . .it is not the mistress's part but that of *the servants* one interrogates that the doctor plays. They are only third parties. The person whom *we* press for an answer, whom *we* suspect of being about to play us false, is life itself, and although *we* feel her to be no longer the same *we* believe in her still or at least remain undecided until the day on which she finally abandons us" (429).

into multiple versions of her, strangers have crept in as well and it is a lover's eyes, for example, that fleetingly look out of her own.

The metamorphic capacity invented by such a passage lies in the movement, which transforms the *she,* referring to the grandmother, into an unspecified sick man, a sick woman, a stranger, and finally to the repeated we (*nous*)—the marker of a strange commoning that joins these other figures in a loose collective, without reconciling them within a single identity. The highly visual passage shifts seamlessly between genders, identities, the particular and the general, the singular and the plural, inventing a way in which to say *nous* that is not based on a shared identity, space, or experience. Even the doctor is transformed into an adored mistress and a servant. The grandmother is a flickering composite of heterogeneous forces and the inability for these images to cohere over any length of time opens an interval between any one particular actualization in the present. The force that makes her sick, could as easily be the force that makes the lover jealous. The line of intolerability that joins the sick person and the afflicted lover produces an affective constellation that releases the image from its anchoring in the causality of the situation. The respective distributions of good and bad, tolerable and intolerable, that belong to each are made to momentarily interpenetrate, suspending the fixed coordinates that would determine identity. These tenuous linkages give rise, in defiance of the failed connections that we saw in the various identity-based groupings discussed in the previous chapter, to an anonymous, unlocalizable, and intervallic collective that, without being actual, take on the force of a new possibility.

The stuttering hesitation that decomposes the link between past and future is perhaps most efficiently achieved by Proust's pseudo-iterative, made famous by Genette. The pseudo-

iterative gives rise to an interval within the present through the intensive repetition of a singular incident, which is achieved solely through the addition of a single word that indicates a recurrence (sometimes, often etc.).[139] Rather than staging a physical co-presence, the seemingly uncomplicated 'souvent' or 'parfois' that introduce such passages produce impossible co-presences in time:

> Parfois, au bord de l'eau entourée de bois, nous rencontrions une maison dite de plaisance…Une jeune femme …qui sans doute était venue, selon l'expression populaire 's'enterrer' là, goûter le plaisir amer de sentir que son nom, le nom surtout de celui dont elle n'avait pu garder le Cœur, y était inconnu, d'encadrait dans la fenêtre qui ne lui laissait pas regarder plus loin que la barque amarrée près de la porte. Elle levait distraitement les yeux en entendant derrière les arbres de la rive la voix des passants dont avant qu'elle eût aperçu leur visage, elle pouvait être certaine que jamais ils n'avaient connu, ni ne connaîtraient l'infidèle, que rien dans leur passé ne gardait sa marque, que rien dans leur avenir n'aurait l'occasion de la recevoir…Et je la regardais, revenant de quelque promenade sur un chemin où elle savait qu'il ne passerait pas, ôter de ses mains résignées de longs gants d'une grâce inutile.[140]

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[139] Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method,* trans. Jane Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983)

[140] Proust, *Du Côté de Chez Swann,* 141; "Sometimes, at the water's edge and surrounded by trees, we would come upon what is called a 'country house,'…A young woman…who had doubtless come, in the popular phrase, 'to bury herself' there, to taste the bitter sweetness of knowing that her name, and still more the name of him whose heart she had once held, but had been unable to keep, were unknown there, stood framed in a window from which she had no outlook beyond the boat that was moored beside her door. She raised her eyes listlessly on hearing, through the trees that lined the bank, the voices of passers-by of whom, before they came in sight, she might be certain that never had they known, nor ever would know, the faithless lover, that nothing in their past lives bore his imprint, and nothing in their future would have occasion to receive. One felt that in her renunciation of life she had willingly abandoned those places in which she would at least have been able to see the man she loved, for others where he had never trod.

The "parfois" that introduces this anecdote signals such an impossible repetition. What follows is far too detailed to have been occasionally repeated. While the iterative tells once what happened many times, the pseudo-iterative recounts, as though it happened many times, an event that could only have happened once. It does not merely indicate that other people have experienced a similar deception, as Genette points out, "the convention of the pseudo-iterative does not function in Proust in the intentional and purely figurative mode it takes in the classical narrative. In Proustian narrative the characteristic and very marked tendency toward inflating the iterative is intended to be taken in its impossible literalness."[141] The exhaustive thrust of the pseud-iterative lies in this impossible repetition of the singular.

The cinematic quality of this pseudo-iterative offers a contrasting symmetry to the final revelation of the *Recherche*. This final revelation emphasizes the temporal depths made perceptible by the cinematic. As Deleuze describes it: "people and things occupy a place in time which is incommensurable with the one they have in space. Proust indeed speaks in terms of cinema, time mounting its magic lantern on bodies and making the shots coexist in depth." [142] Projection and superimposition make time visible in depth, forcing a coexistence between images from different times, without reconciling them. Rather than taking on the perspective of a long duration, the pseudo-iterative produces such a coexistence in the shallow depths of an instant, in the interval between two different moments. The revelations of the final volume involve a perspective that sees deep into time, in a way that is incommensurable with repetitions

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And I watched her, as she returned from some walk along a path where she knew that he would not appear, drawing from her resigned hands long and uselessly elegant gloves" (*Swann's Way,* 240-41).

[141] Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 122.

[142] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2,* 39.

in space, making giants of men. The perspective of the pseudo-iterative, by contrast, makes subjects granular, a play of light and gesture. The singular grace of a futile gesture as a woman removes a glove repeats intensively in the *parfois* that extracts it from its anchoring in a particular situation. The image cannot sustain the effects of this impossible repetition for long, but is formulation releases the present from its moorings and momentarily carries its identities away. While in one sense the pseudo-iterative poses a challenge to the cinematic language of images,[143] as it is produced solely through the addition of a word (*parfois, souvent*), in its effects of granulation and temporal instability it nonetheless tends toward the cinematic.

It is not only the repetitions of the pseudo-iterative that are of note in this passage, but also the repeated dislodgment of perspective. The passage becomes the site of an exchange of subjective points of view, producing a perpetual reorientation of the world according to the view that discloses it. Instead of the superimpositions that layered different worlds from different moments in time, these multiple perspectives compose and recompose the same world according to conflicting logics. This passage describes one of the many windows that function as a frame within a frame in the *Recherche*. The woman is presented "encadrait dans la fenêtre qui ne lui laissait pas regarder plus loin que la barque amarrée près de la porte." The sentence twists easily from the character's perspective, looking at her framed by the window, to her own perspective, limited as it is as she looks out of this frame. Continually thrust back into a frame in which they register as objects, the mastery of the observer is repeatedly thwarted in this episode, and the shared world that would contain both of these perspectives is decomposed in the interval of the

[143] The challenge that the language of Proust's pseudo-iterative poses for cinematic representations is in fact something that Chantal Akerman will engage with in her adaptation.

exchange between them that insists on their non-relation. This exchange does not, therefore, provide the suturing of a reverse shot. It destabilizes the world, rather than reassuring it.

It is not just that the spatial suturing of a shared world is denied, the temporal suturing of past and present is pried apart, as the passage hesitates between the heterogeneous temporalities summoned by each world. The woman's perspective plunges her world back into an absent past, which is more real than her limited view of the present. Enclosure and refuge are the connections that structure the world for her, as the site of her "burial." The dual perspective of the boy/narrator, by contrast, configures it according the two "ways" Swann's and the Guermantes', that evoke two temporalities, for him, the real time of Swann as a friend of the family, and the historical, fantastic time of the Guermantes as the living representatives of a Merovingian past. One world does not supplant the other, each in its turn, and the moment of exchange belongs to the meanwhile because the recurring shift between worlds cannot sustain a homogeneous present.

The suspension of habitual perception achieved through an exhaustive venture into the syncope's of the present, which are covered over by the preexisting set of possibilities governing the habitual world, do not endure indefinitely. The temporality that the *Recherche* arrives at through the exhaustive procedures of both superimposition and an entry into an interval cannot, therefore, sustain alternative actualizations. The meanwhile is not substantial enough or stable enough, but it does open up the time for possiblizations that disrupt the homogeneity of the present, allowing for the emergence of the unrecognizable between the clichés of the past and the anticipation of an already familiar future. As Rancière points out, the politics of aesthetics does not result in the actual intervention of new subjective enunciations, but rather "aids to help create

the fabric of a common experience in which new modes of constructing common objects and new possibilities of subjective enunciations may be developed."[144] The time of the meanwhile is, I would add, the temporal component of this sensory field, which is made susceptible to transformation by the work of art. It does not in and of itself produce the changes that would actually reconfigure the world, but it does break the temporal consistency of the stereoscopic present.

It is not sufficient, therefore, to create a meanwhile. As the aberrant temporality of the meanwhile comes into focus, a different set of questions begins to take shape. Who is this time for? And what can be done with it? It is a temporality that must also be occupied in a particular way by a subject capable of exploiting its potential. Proust's work cannot perform such an intervention in the realm of actualization, but his character Albertine nonetheless suggests a direction that it could take. Marcel repeatedly fails to enter the meanwhile, to exploit it as a means of escape. He holds too firmly to a world in which he could secure for himself the objects that he desires, a world in which he could remain consistent with himself long enough to enjoy the attainment of something coveted by a previous version of himself. He attempts to resist the aberrant movements introduced by the dislocation of time. Albertine, on the other hand, Proust's *être en futile,* is the consummate fugitive, a creature of the meanwhile. While art, for Rancière, "depends on an innovative leap from the logic that ordinarily governs human situations," Albertine reveals the extent to which overcoming habitual perceptions, affections, and intelligibility it is not achieved by a mere leap, but a grueling and ongoing escape.

[144] Rancière, *Dissensus*, 150.

CHAPTER 3

Albertine and the Refusal of the Excluded

"Nous manquons de création. Nous manquons de résistance au présent."[145]

"Entre vos mains mêmes, ces êtres-là sont des êtres de fuite…il faut calculer qu'ils sont non pas immobiles, mais en mouvement, et ajouter à leur personne un signe correspondant à ce qu'en physique est le signe qui signifie vitesse."[146]

Long overlooked as a mere placeholder in elaborations of Proustian theories of love and jealousy, as "a tart plain and simple," or a pallid surrogate for Proust's real lover Alfred Agostinelli, Albertine Simonet is in fact the site of an irreconcilable tension between differential sensoria.[147] Rancière's distribution of the sensible, "the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it," is contested by Albertine, but not through a desire to enter it.[148]Albertine poses a different kind of challenge to the

[145] Deleuze and Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1991)*,* 109; "We lack creation. We lack resistance to the present," (Deleuze and Guattari*, What is Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell [New York: Columbia University Press, 1994], 108).

[146] Proust, *La Prisonnière,* 1671; "Even when you hold them in your hands, such persons are fugitives…we must recognise that they are not immobile but in motion, and add to their person a sign corresponding to that which in physics denotes speed" (*The Captive,* 113-14).

[147] George Rafael, "La Captive," Review of *La Captive*, by Chantal Akerman, *Cinéaste* (2001), 34.

[148] Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics,* 12.

stereoscopic image of the present examined above, and, in her invention of strategies of escape, she exposes the function of capture implicit in its mechanism.

Stereoscopic visibility does not merely stabilize the image of the present in relation to a fixed past and predictable future; it also permits only limited forms of subjectivation. In order to appear, one must conform to the demand for consistency over time that its possibilities and valuations rely on. To Rancière's claim that the visibility and audibility within a given distribution of the sensible allows for only certain subjects to be seen and heard, one must therefore add the imperative that, in order to remain so, they must be consistent over time. To enter upon the scene of perceptibility, requires not only the staging of a certain kind of visibility and audibility, but a temporal claim as to one's past and future. Recall Swann's "flimsy" appearance during the Dreyfus affair, which had more to do with a sudden temporal insecurity, the sense that his status tomorrow could differ greatly from today, than with a perceived loss of *logos*.

In Albertine's case, however, the refusal to remain consistent over time becomes a strategy of escape. The character of Albertine reveals the extent to which to appear, to speak, and to remain consistent over time, such that one might register within the distribution of the sensible, is also to render oneself accountable according to its logic. Instead of seeking admittance, she exploits its blind spots (both spatial and temporal), escaping capture within its system of judgment. To the bright visibility and lucid audibility of the privileged social stage, Albertine contrasts a shadow sensorium, in which the groans of the excluded are expressive, not of their failure to register as possessing *logos*, as merely "furious or suffering animals," but of an

unknown language belonging to a distinct affective and sensory configuration, with a logic entirely its own.[149]

It is precisely because of the unfamiliarity of this distinct sensorium that Albertine has been so easily misunderstood or written off. Roger Shattuck has gone so far as to recommend dispensing with the middle volumes of the *Recherche* altogether if one has limited time.[150] As Malcolm Bowie explains, the Albertine volumes are among the least analyzed, "allowing the profoundly unsettling view of human sexuality enshrined in these volumes to be held at a tranquilizing distance."[151] Bowie's *Freud, Proust and Lacan: theory as fiction* (1987) triggered a resurgence of engagements with the figure of Albertine. Nevertheless, two overarching questions continue to predominate critical treatments of this figure.

The first attempts to answer the question: what is the nature of Albertine as an object of desire? In line with the narrator's own concerns, this line of questioning seeks to account for her sexual preferences and to fix her identity in place.[152] The second asks: how can we understand the narrator and the nature of love in general, insofar as he desires this particular object and does

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[149] Rancière, *Politics of Literature,* 4.

[150] Roger Shattuck, *Marcel Proust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 27-8.

[151] Malcolm Bowie, *Freud, Proust and Lacan: theory as fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 46.

[152] Criticism in this vein has come a long way from the "transposition of the sexes theory," which simply transformed Albertine into Albert (Justin O'Brien, "Albertine the Ambiguous: Notes on Proust's Transposition of Sexes" *PMLA* 64, no. 5 [1949]: 933-952). Throughout the 1990's Eve Sedgwick (*Epistemology of the Closet* [Oakland, California University Press, 1990]), Leo Bersani ("Death and Literary Authority: Marcel Proust and Melanie Klein." *Reading Melanie Klein,* ed. Lyndsey Stonebridge and John Phillips [New York: Routledge, 1998]: 223-244), Kaja Silverman (*Male Subjectivity at the Margins,* [London, Routledge, 1992]), and Elisabeth Ladenson (*Proust's Lesbianism* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999]) developed more nuanced accounts of Albertine's sexuality as a continuum, bisexual, lesbian, unknowable etc.

so in the particular mode of jealousy?[153] The motivation for reading the Albertine storyline for what it reveals about either the object of love or the lover is undoubtedly justified. What is repeatedly undervalued, however, is the status of Albertine as a character in her own right, exceeding her role as beloved object. Jacques Dubois' *Pour Albertine: Proust et le sens du social* (1997), Nathan Guss' *Proust Outdoors* (2007), and Judith Oriol's *Femmes proustiennes* (2009) are notable exceptions, but none have seized on the potential aesthetic politics that Albertine embodies, or developed the significance of Albertine's strategic defense of her schismatic world against explication.

Jacques Dubois suggests that the critical reluctance to engage with this figure in her own right, and not as a mere object of jealous infatuation, might justifiably arise from the fact that Albertine is never *mise en scène.* She appears, he argues, almost exclusively through the narrator's view of her.[154] Dubois' sociological account reads Albertine as the representative of a certain social actuality that is never fully represented. In what follows, I argue that it is as a nexus of incompatible landscapes of the possible that she fails to register fully on the scene of visibility, and that she takes on her most disruptive force in her refusal to appear. Albertine is never *mise en scène* precisely because it is in her flight from intelligibility and perceptibility that she gives expression to an alternative order that escapes the coordinates of the existing landscape of the common. Her participation in the creation of a fugitive sensorium places the figure of

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[153] In this tradition Deleuze has read the narrator's affairs as a distinct phase of his apprenticeship in the interpretation of signs in *Proust and Signs*. Bowie has understood the Albertine volumes as a particularly vivid depiction of the mind in motion (*Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as Fiction,* 50-1). Emma Wilson has read it as a "hermeneutic quest" *"Sexuality and the Reading Encounter: Identity and Desire in Proust, Duras, Tournier, and Cixous* [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996] 62). And Edward Hughes has given an account of the economic relations that invest and structure the narrator's love (*Proust, Class, and Nation* [Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011], 182).

[154] Jacques Dubois, *Pour Albertine: Proust et le sens du social* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 12.

Albertine at odds with recognitive understandings of politics as defined by projects of progressive inclusion.

Albertine's Refusal:

In the second last volume of the *Recherche,* long after her death, Albertine is conjured by a shock of jealousy that retroactively reconfigures an often-recalled memory of the narrator—the nightly transformation of the dining room in the hotel at Balbec into a luminous aquarium. Much earlier in the novel, the first description of the hotel as aquarium compares the lethargic elegance of the hotel's occupants as they dine, to the residents of Balbec who gather at the window intently looking in. While initially the narrator remembers this episode as innocuous, it now raises an entirely different possibility: "…toute cette population entassée dans l'ombre…faisant se frôler (je n'y avais jamais pensé), dans sa conglomération, les pêcheuses et les filles du peuple contre les petites bourgeoises…petites bourgeoises parmi lesquelles il y avait sûrement presque chaque soir Albertine…qui sans doute levait là quelque fillette qu'elle rejoignait quelques minutes plus tard, dans la nuit, sur le sable…"[155] What was once an abstract out-of-field for him, excluded from the frame of visibility, comes alive with concrete possibilities for connections between bodies that he had never previously imagined. Out on the beach, in the darkness, entangled in the arms of a new lover, Albertine turns her back to the spectacle of visibility that

[155] Proust, *Albertine Disparue,* 1996; "all that populace crowded together in the dusk…producing a contact [of which I had never thought] in their conglomeration, between the fishermen and girls of the lower orders and the young ladies…young ladies among whom there had certainly been almost every evening Albertine…who doubtless used to accost some little girl whom she would meet a few minutes later in the dark, upon the sands" (*The Fugitive,* 703).

captivates the other onlookers. Indifferent to the cynosure that Marcel imagined his world to be, she is voluptuously enveloped in another landscape of the possible. No longer conforming to the role of the *petite bourgeoise* seeking admittance and recognition within his world, Albertine's pleasures are expressive of a distinct sensibility, a refusal to covet the goods and pleasures of the realm to which she is denied access.

Differentiating between the two novels contained within the *Recherche,* Bersani writes: "The narrator writes the romantic novel of what he desired, and the realistic, comic novel of what he saw."[156] The novel troubles itself, unfolding both within the confines of a certain regime of visibility and desire, and simultaneously upsetting the mechanisms that assure its uniformity and consistency. But Proust also writes the novel of what goes unseen, of what escapes. Focalizing the anxieties about this invisible realm through the figure of Albertine, without granting direct access to it, Proust positions his readers such that we, like Marcel, are excluded. Allowed only periodic glimpses of this world, the narrator is consumed by the threat that it poses to his own, not necessarily because it actualizes different possibilities, but because its field of possibilities is not determined by the same coordinates as his own world. Nicholas Grimaldi attributes it to the narrator's jealousy that "[t]out le réel est désormais gâté par l'imagination du possible."[157] But in restricting his analysis to jealousy, Grimaldi focuses on the inability for Marcel to know what Albertine is doing when she is away from him. The narrator's anxiety goes far deeper; he cannot even know what is possible in the world to which she belongs. It is this world as much as his lover's role within it that renders his own contingent.

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[156] Bersani, *Marcel Proust: the Fictions of Life and Art*, 14.

[157] Nicholas Grimaldi, *Essai sur la jalousie: L'enfer proustien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010), 15.

The initial description of the hotel/aquarium diagrams a site of exclusion. Visibility is on the side of the elect, and the fascinated onlookers, outside in the dark, are defined only in relation to their exclusion from it. The potential for a redistribution, to borrow from Rancière's vocabulary, of subject positions and of visibilities that would result in their inclusion is expressed in the brief aside that, as was discussed in the introduction, raises the possibility of revolution. This passing speculation about the excluded gaining entry into the aquarium, breaking the glass and "culling" the fish, produces far less anguish than the later realization that perhaps they are, after all, not even watching. The forcible entry that "introduces new objects and subjects onto the common stage," which Rancière understands to be the locus of the political, assures that the excluded remained indexed to the visible world.[158] The narrator is paralyzed by the realization that, not only have the audience members decamped, making the dinner performance of aristocrats little more than an insignificant dress-rehearsal for their own benefit, but these unfaithful observers may even have begun to improvise their own world.

The same image of the illuminated dining room is dramatically re-diagramed in this later episode, in which it becomes clear the extent to which the temporality of cinematic superimposition is also the time particular to escape. The explicit lines of division remain the same, but the excluded do not define themselves in terms of their relation to the beneficiaries of the existing distribution. Indifferent to the sensibilities of the established order, they exploit the invisibility imposed upon them, in order to engage in the creation of another world. The stage of the common is thus contested, not only in terms of the actors and objects that it permits to play a role, but also the assemblage of space and time that it presupposes. For Rancière, the scene of visibility can be occupied in new ways that actualize different potentials, as a result of a litigious

[158] Rancière, *Politics of Literature*, 4.

dispute through which the excluded manage to appear and be heard on the stage of the common, but the insistence on appearance remains. Here, instead, Proust's novel allows for the power of invisibility, as the opportunity to meet unseen and unencumbered by the values and identities of the dominant social order. It is the luxurious aquarium/stage that becomes the limiting position. Marcel is made suddenly aware that the transparent walls do not only protect him from the curious beyond, but also confine him. The bright lights that illuminate his world also make it impossible for him to see out, enclosing him in reflections that blind him to the inaccessible landscapes beyond. The relation between the inside, as the site of inclusion, and the outside, as the site of exclusion, is upset. It is he who suffers now, as Bersani terms it, from a "painful sense of exile."[159]

Where Rancière formulates a fundamental equality that would allow those excluded from a given distribution of the sensible to lay claim to inclusion, this shadow sensorium expresses the possibility for the excluded to invent new relations, without reference to the reigning distribution. Rather than seizing the time that they do not have for poetry and politics, as in Rancière's account, they take advantage of the time and invisibility that they do have, precisely because of their exclusion, in order to disobey and misbehave. Indifferent to the imperative to seek admittance to the "aquarium," these figures relate to it in the mode of theft and lies. Rather than seeking legitimation within its parameters, they begin negotiating their own illicit forms of collective life.

Rancière focuses on the political possibility of transforming truth, understood as "the immaterial illumination lighting the perceptible world," of remapping the visible, modifying

[159] Bersani, *Fictions of Art and Life,* 45.

gazes, and "reframing… material and symbolic space."[160] By contrast, Albertine and her strategic allies flee from the light of this truth, throwing up temporary shelters in the shadows cast by the false. Albertine's great capacity for lying and forgetting is, therefore, not a symptom of her guilt, but of her disengagement from a specific logic. And the revaluation that takes place as a part of her creation of an alternative sensorium does not consist of a mere inversion of hierarchies such as truth/lies, innocence/guilt, memory/forgetting, faithful/unfaithful, love/indifference. These oppositions become senseless, as Albertine refuses to comply with the horizon of alternatives dictated by the existing system of values.

Grimaldi's treatment of jealousy in the *Recherche* seems to, if not equate, at least group all of the loved women together in a single category, but Albertine repeatedly breaks the mold. In his description of Rachel, Grimaldi asserts that she must lie and conceal her life from Saint-Loup because otherwise she would rapidly lose her allure. It is the mystery that she only appears to envelop, as she is well aware, that is the source of Saint-Loup's love for her. She is cunning enough to know that she would not measure up to the image that Saint-Loup has created of her and therefore lies out of necessity, ultimately an impulse of self-preservation. Albertine, by contrast, lies excessively and even at times against her own interests.

Unlike, Rachel, Albertine attempts to construct a palliative version of herself, playing the roles that he expects of her. She does so in order to appease him and weaken, rather than enhance, his interest, but only such that she might better escape. Albertine persistently regains her mysterious and alluring status because she does in fact enclose a mysterious world that Rachel only tries to emulate. Both women lie, both have other lovers, both engender obsessive

[160] Rancière, *Politics of Literature*, 149; —, *Politics of Aesthetics,* 39; —, *Aesthetics and its Discontents,* 21; 24.

jealousy in their partners, but one does so from a position firmly delimited by the existing distribution, while the other escapes it. Rachel is unfaithful and a liar, Albertine escapes the categories that would differentiate between faith and faithlessness, lies and truth. Unlike Swann and Saint-Loup, Proust's narrator falls in love, not with a courtesan, although she may share many of the traits that characterize Odette and Rachel, but with a fugitive.

The narrator's consistent failure to make sense of Albertine is not, therefore, a result of incomplete information, but of his incomprehension of the chasm separating their differential sensoria. He is doomed to always ask the wrong questions, which inevitably register as nonsensical and insignificant for Albertine, and to be confounded by her responses. There is a persistent unintelligibility at the heart of Albertine's actions and words throughout the *Recherche*, as she repeatedly affirms both sides of what should be a disjunctive alternative. In this sense, Proust does not merely fulfill Rancière's imperative that art make us see otherwise, but, through Albertine, he makes us see double, creating a kind of broken stereoscope, to return once again to one of his favorite technologies of vision. The images of the different sensoria do not coalesce into a single shared world, but pull away from one another, as one is set into the motion of flight.

Through this character, Proust gives expression to a question with deeply political resonances: what happens when, instead of seeking entrance into society and claiming a stake in the goods that it shares out, the excluded turn away from its privileged modes of visibility and audibility, rejecting its distributions and evaluations, in order to create and affirm their own? This turning away does not mark a return to the secessionary Utopia's of the 19th century with their lofty goals of eventually giving rise to a corrected world, but rather describes a series of

provisional experiments that, in the meantime, begin mapping different trajectories for collective life.

The Captor's Ignominy:

It is this other possible world, which recedes from him, that both captivates and threatens Marcel. It is not only because Albertine is the object of his desire that her imprisonment becomes necessary, but also because she is a subject belonging to this other world, whose very existence exposes the contingency of his own. The narrator explicitly articulates the relation between the fugitive woman, her world, and its capture, once again drawing on the technology of stereoscopic visibility:

> On a vu une femme, simple image dans le décor de la vie, comme Albertine profilée sur la mer, et puis cette image, on peut la détacher, la mettre près de soi, et voir peu à peu son volume, ses couleurs, comme si on l'avait fait passer derrière les verres d'un stéréoscope. C'est pour cela que les femmes un peu difficiles, qu'on ne possède pas tout de suite, dont on ne sait même pas tout de suite qu'on pourra jamais les posséder, sont les seules intéressantes.[161]

Albertine persists in resisting stereoscopic stability because she continuously escapes into the other sensorium conjured by the sea. It is not only that her social group places her outside of his

[161] Proust, *Le Côté de Guermantes,* 1027; "One has seen a woman, a mere image in the decorative setting of life, like Albertine, silhouetted against the sea, and then one has been able to take that image, to detach it, to bring it close to oneself, gradually to discern its volume, its colours, as though one had placed it behind the lens of a stereoscope. It is for this reason that the women who are to some extent resistant, whom one cannot posses at once, of whom one does not indeed know whether one will ever posses them, are alone interesting" (*Guermantes Way,* 495).

own milieu, but that she somehow belongs to another element altogether, so different and unrecognizable are the colors and movements that betray the existence of this other world. Albertine must be detached from this other world into which she escapes and confined behind the glass of the stereoscope in order that she might be understood, brought close, and made to endure. The extent to which this rendering visible is violent becomes particularly evident in the language of overcoming her resistance. Far from seeking admittance, for Albertine, appearance under such conditions would necessarily be a defeat.

Nathan Guss is one of the few critics to consider the complexities of what necessitates Albertine's captivity beyond sexual desire. For him "her body is or evokes an unbound space," and therefore Albertine encapsulates an aesthetic of the exterior that the narrator attempts to interiorize through her enclosure in his apartment.[162] While this reading gestures toward the inaccessible realm that Albertine evokes, it does not pursue the political inflection of her alternative world. It is not merely an exterior or unbound space, defined negatively in relation to the limits of his own world, that Albertine encapsulates. It is an alternative landscape of the possible, in which assemblages and valuations impossible for Marcel are pursued and invented. Marcel seeks at once to access and to circumscribe this world, through his possession of Albertine. His fascination with her, imprisonment of her, and insistence on her apprenticeship in the tastes and pleasures of his world express the conflicting impulse to enter her world and to cut her off from it in order to affirm and secure his own.

Marcel loves her most when she most fully escapes him, but he is impelled to contain the threat that she poses. It is for this reason that he prefers Albertine when she is asleep and can

[162] Guss, *Proust Outdoors* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009), 66.

satisfy both impulses: "En fermant les yeux, en perdant la conscience, Albertine avait dépouillé, l'un après l'autres, ses différents caractères d'humanité qui m'avaient déçu depuis le jour où j'avais fait sa connaissance… Son moi ne s'échappait pas à tous moments, comme quand nous causions, par les issues de la pensée inavouée et du regard."[163] Albertine's eyes represent such a threat to him because they look out on an unfamiliar world. Even when she is with him, he is aware that she is distant from him because of their incompatible points of view. When Albertine expresses thoughts and ideas that are familiar to him, he knows that other unavowed thoughts cluster around them in constellations foreign to his own sensibilities.

Critics who treat Albertine as simply the object of his love and jealousy miss the significance of such references to her escape. It is only when she sleeps that she becomes an compliant object, no longer animated by her own system of evaluation, her own way of seeing. Albertine may only appear in the novel through her interactions with the narrator, but we are constantly reminded that she incessantly eludes his grasp. Even Albertine's attempts to dissimulate her secret filiations thread his world with peril. In confining her to his apartment, Marcel attempts to limit her perception and thoughts to what is familiar to him. But it is only when the other landscape of the possible that she enfolds retreats within her, as she sleeps, that he can feel secure.

To speak only of jealousy with regards to this relationship is to fall back on what Deleuze has described as the "prefabricated emotions of commerce."[164] Proust invents for his

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[163] Proust, *La Prisonnière,*1654; "By shutting her eyes, by losing consciousness, Albertine had stripped off, one after another, the different human personalities with which she had deceived me ever since the day when I had first made her acquaintance…Her personality was not constantly escaping, as when we talked, by the outlets of her unacknowledged thoughts and of her eyes…" (*The Captive,* 84).

[164] Gilles Deleuze, "The Brain is the Screen: An Interview with Gilles Deleuze" [1986], *The Brain is the Screen,* ed. Gregory Flaxman (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2000): 365-374, 370.

character unfamiliar emotions that do not simply trade upon existing categories, disrupting the equivalencies that might otherwise appear to hold sway. Grimalidi's formulation: I am jealous and therefore I love, which inverses the common understanding that would make jealousy a result of love, fails to account for the mutability of the emotions which traverse Marcel. His resistance to Albertine's flight, to the challenge that she poses to his world is coupled with a longing to be drawn into it and not in the mode of jealous possession, but escape.

His love of automobiles and airplanes, his desire for speed and untrammeled motion, express his frustration with the torpidity of his identity and the reduced parameters of the field of the possible to which he voluntarily circumscribes his life. Happening upon an airplane one day he reflects: "Cependant l'aviateur sembla hésiter sur sa voie; je sentais ouvertes devant lui – devant moi si l'habitude ne m'avait pas fait prisonnier – toutes les routes de l'espace, de la vie ; il poussa plus loin…puis prenant brusquement son parti, semblant céder à quelque attraction inverse de celle de la pesanteur, comme retournant dans sa patrie, d'un léger mouvement de ses ailes d'or il piqua droit vers le ciel."[165] Often Marcel will equate his inability to leave Albertine with a failure to reopen this horizon of possibilities for himself. But he clings to her, not only out of habit, but because he senses that it is she who, like the pilot, leaves behind the customary routes of space and life. Unable to follow, he becomes consumed by the need to constrain her by the same gravitational pull that grounds him, attempting to secure her on a course of seeking social-acceptance, rather than yielding to her various unruly inclinations.

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[165] Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe,*1529-1530; "Meanwhile the airman seemed to be uncertain of his course; I felt that there lay open before him - before me, had not habit made me a prisoner - all the routes in space, in life itself; he flew on…seeming to yield to some attraction the reverse of gravity...with a slight movement of his golden wings, rose sheer into the sky."

Indebtedness and Forgetting:

Another means of securing his world and protecting it from Albertine's disruptive potential is to capture her within the structure of indebtedness that defines it—monetary debts, debts of gratitude, debts of friendship etc. Debt is the social and amorous currency of the Proustian universe. Among the various lovers, friends, allies, and social-climbers, it is only Albertine and, to a lesser extent, the narrator (and only when he finally takes up his calling to become a writer[166]) who escape the cycle of obligation and indebtedness. Debt is what assures the consistency of relationships over time, as both owing and being owed require that an ongoing association be maintained between the debtor and the creditor.

Debt and indebtedness form a complex calculus in the *Recherche* made up, not only of monetary debts, but debts of gratitude between friends. Such debts can be magnified or mitigated by unforeseen factors that make their terms constantly renegotiable. Regarding a friend for whom one does a favor, the narrator reflects: "il n'a pu profiter entièrement de la démarche que vous avez faite pour lui, que d'ailleurs déjà trois autres lui ont proposé de faire et dont il ne vous est ainsi que légèrement obligé."[167] A discrepancy between what the creditor feels is owed and the extent of the debtor's sense of obligation underlies the basic structure of indebtedness. The

[166] "Je ne me sentais plus la force de faire face à mes obligations avec les êtres, ni à mes devoirs envers ma pensée et mon œuvre, encore moins envers tous les deux. Pour les premières, l'oubli des lettres à écrire, etc., simplifiait un peu ma tâche…La perte de la mémoire m'aidait un peu en faisant des coupes dans mes obligations ; mon œuvre les remplaçait."(Proust, *ALRTP, Le Temps Retrouvé,*2396-2397; "I no longer possessed the strength to carry out my obligations to people or my duties to my thoughts and my work, still less to satisfy both of these claims. As for the first, my forgetfulness of the letters I had to write to some extent simplified my task… Loss of memory helped to delete social obligations which were replaced by my work…" (*Time Regained,* 521-2).

[167] Proust, *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 586; "he has not been able to turn to full advantage the step you took on his behalf, which in any case three people had already offered to take, so that he is only moderately indebted to you" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 438-9)

nature of social debt is such that the balance is never fully paid and resentment insists at its very core. The language of profit is never far from descriptions of friendship in the novel, describing a society that ensures its smooth functioning by way of an endless series of covenants and concessions, both large and small, which render it calculable and therefore deplorably comforting in its predictability.

The structure of debt becomes a kind of social diplomacy that some manipulate more expertly than others. "Madame de Souvré," for example "avait l'art, s'il s'agissait d'appuyer une sollicitation auprès de quelqu'un de puissant, de paraître à la fois aux yeux du solliciteur le recommander, et aux yeux du haut personnage ne pas recommander ce solliciteur, de manière que ce geste à double sens lui ouvrait un crédit de reconnaissance envers ce dernier sans lui créer aucun débit vis-à-vis de l'autre."[168] The double meaning of her gesture is not blameworthy within the regime of indebtedness because it does not threaten the underlying structure of the debtor/creditor relation. She is merely adept at profiting from the conventions governing such relations. Petitioners and penitents, creditors and debtors, the worth of various characters in the society depicted by the *Recherche* is frequently determined by the positions they occupy within such relations, rather than any particular ability or quality.

Swann's jealous refusal to send money to Odette, by Contrast to Madame de Souvré's duplicity, is understood as a misstep because it frees her of the sense of indebtedness that would bind her future to his. "S'il avait approuvé son projet, d'ailleurs défendable," the narrator reflects, "elle aurait eu l'air d'être là-bas d'après son avis, elle s'y serait sentie envoyée, logée

[168] Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe,* 1247; "Madame de Souvré had the art, if called upon to convey a request to some influential person, of appearing at once, in the petitioner's eyes, to be recommending him, and in those of the influential person not to be recommending the petitioner, so that her ambiguous gesture opened a credit balance of gratitude with the latter without putting her in debit with the former" (67).

par lui, et le plaisir qu'elle aurait éprouvé à recevoir ces gens qui l'avaient tant reçue, c'est à Swann qu'elle en aurait su gré."[169] By refusing to pay, Swann releases Odette from the sense of indebtedness by which alone he could successfully govern her future behavior. By giving into his present jealousy, Swann has made it possible for her to elude his control, which the need to repay him would have forestalled.

The discussion centers, not only on the temporality of debt, but the defensible nature of Odette's plan, evoking that most natural coupling of debt and judgment. A system of judgment, that is a shared ability to designate right and wrong, is necessary in order to assure that the debtor will pay. It also can justify actions that might otherwise be reprehensible, if they were not framed as producing a commensurate sense of indebtedness. Odette's desire to entertain her friends and her other lover at Swann's expense, is doubly justified within the register of indebtedness because in doing so she will pay a debt to the friends who have previously entertained her and simultaneously provide evidence of her reliability as a debtor, assurance that she is good for the debt that she thereby enters into with Swann.

Mutually implicated, debt and judgment necessitate that, as Maurizio Lazzarato explains, "the task of a community or society has first of all been to engender a person capable of *promising,* someone able to *stand guarantor for himself* in the creditor-debtor relationship, that is, capable of honoring his debt. Making a person capable of keeping a promise means constructing a memory for him, endowing him with interiority, a conscience which provide a

[169] Proust, *Du Côté de Chez Swann,* 245; "If he had approved of her plan, which for that matter was quite defensible, she would have had the appearance of being there by his counsel, she would have felt herself sent there, housed there by him, and for the pleasure which she derived from entertaining those people who had so often entertained her, it was to him that she would have had to acknowledge her indebtedness" (*Swann's Way,* 431).

bulwark against forgetting."[170] Memory and interiority are the guarantors that the person who promises will remain consistent enough over time to continue to identify as the person who owes. Subjects are therefore structured according to a system of indebtedness even *before* entering into a particular debt. The creditor must trust in advance of the debt itself that the person who will owe is also the kind of person who will pay. Albertine's great strength, therefore, is that she has neither the memory nor the interiority that would make of her a properly indebted subject.

It is because of "sa faculté de changer, son pouvoir d'oublier, presque de haïr, l'objet récent de son amour..." that somehow Albertine fails to internalize the necessary lessons of the creditor-debtor relation.[171] She does not remain the same long enough to owe, let alone pay. And why, after all, should she pay today for something she no longer desires and perhaps even hates? For this Albertine must be punished. As Deleuze and Guattari explain:

> the bad debtor… must be understood as if the marks had not sufficiently "taken" on him, as if he were or had been unmarked. He has merely widened, beyond the limits allowed, the gap that separated the voice of alliance and the body of filiation, to such a degree that it is necessary to re-establish the equilibrium through an increase in pain.[172]

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[170] Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of Indebted Man,* trans. Joshua David Jordan (Amsterdam: Semiotext(e), 2011), 40.

[171] Proust, *La Prisonnière,* 1619; "Her faculty of changing, her ability to forget, almost to hate the recent object of her love…" (*The Captive,* 19).

[172] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* trans. Robert Hurley, Seem Mark, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 191.

Albertine's prison is a debtor's prison and Marcel incarcerates her precisely because she will not acknowledge the debt that he presumes her to owe. Because he cannot trust that she will willingly repay him with the loyalty that he demands, he confines her to the domain of his surveillance. In line with the logic of debt that "injury done = pain to be suffered,"[173] Albertine is cut off from her pleasures as much as possible in order to "pay" for her lies and her infidelity to the lover who financially supports her.

The debtor-creditor relationship persists fundamentally in the functioning of the temporal stereoscope. Subjects capable of promising, as Lazzarato, and Nietzsche before him, point out, narrow the future into a limited series of possibilities that allow them to remain the same and so ensure payment. The image of the present as a dynamic field of possibilities leading to an open future is replaced by the present as an overlay of the promises made in the past and the future necessary in order to honor them. As Lazzarato points out, "debt simply neutralizes time, time as the creation of new possibilities, that is to say, the raw material for all political, social, or esthetic change. Debt harnesses and exercises the power of destruction/creation, the power of choice and decision."[174] The indebted subject is structurally unlikely to become the agent of change. The alternative sensorium that Albertine creates is therefore takes the very form of the resistance to the present, whose lack is lamented by Deleuze in this chapter's epigraph.

Albertine, on the other hand, remains profoundly disruptive. The alternate system of evaluation arising from her flight transforms her obligations into a debt that she cannot owe. For the sake of contrast, consider when Morel borrows money from Bloch. He contorts himself and

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[173] 191.

[174] Lazzarato, *Making of the Indebted Man*, 49.

his memory in order to avoid paying his debt, but he does so in a manner that re-inscribes him within the logic of indebtedness: "Le premier mois, Morel…lui envoya immédiatement les mille francs, mais après cela il trouva sans doute qu'un emploi différent des quatre mille francs qui restaient pourrait être plus agréable, car il commença à dire beaucoup de mal de Bloch."[175] This is one of many examples of Proust's biting humor, so often underemphasized by critics. The absurdity of the mental gymnastics necessary in order to evade feelings of guilt is ruthlessly exposed, while simultaneously played off against a more subtle critique of the overarching structure of indebtedness, which inflects, if not determines, most relationships in the novel. Working himself up to a blind hatred of Bloch, and ultimately to anti-Semitism, in order to justify the non-payment of a debt, Morel will go to any length to excuse defaulting on his loan. This evasive resentment, however, in no way endangers the fundamental structure of debtor and creditor.

Albertine, by contrast, is never a properly indebted subject in relation to Marcel. She refuses to internalize either the guilt or the sense of obligation that he expects from her. When he prevents her from going to the Verdurin's but promises her a dinner party as recompense, she gives him a look which seems to say: "Merci, dépenser de l'argent pour des choses qui m'embêtent, quand sans argent je pourrais en faire qui m'amusent!" [176] This is one of many gestures of her refusal of the logic of equivalences that imprisons subjects through gratitude, obligation and indebtedness. By insisting on the non-equivalence of what she is refused and what

[175] Proust, *La Prisonnière,* 1642-1643; "The first month, Morel…sent him the thousand francs immediately, but after this he doubtless decided that the remaining four thousand francs might be put to more satisfactory use, for he began to speak extremely ill of Bloch" (*The Captive,* 62).

[176] 1858-9; "Thank you, the idea of spending money upon things that bore me, when without money I could do things that I enjoy doing!" (457).

she is given in exchange, Albertine enacts a more radical refusal than if she were to simply avoid payment, as Morel does. Hers is a refusal to owe, not a refusal to pay.

Within the debtor-creditor structure: "You are free insofar as you assume the *way of life* (consumption, work, public spending taxes, etc.) compatible with reimbursement."[177]Albertine disrupts precisely such a *way of life.* It is not her individual choices that are so catastrophic to Marcel's peace of mind; it is her refusal of all of the alternatives presented. Freeing herself of the obligation of reimbursement is one of her most liberating inventions, leading to necessary disruption of all of the attendant evaluative categories that dominate the social sphere into which she penetrates. Albertine enters Marcel's world not in the acquisitive mode of indebtedness, but in an exhaustive mode of experimentation, and she leaves it owing nothing.

Once again this character offers a counterpoint to Rancière's envisioning of politics as the excluded proving their equal capacity to participate in the realm from which they are excluded. "Through transgression," he writes, "they find that they too, just like speaking beings, are endowed with speech that does not simply express want, suffering, or rage, but intelligence…in this staging of a nonexistent right...they have become beings who may very well make promises and draw up contracts."[178] The right to engage in the contractual exchanges of the dominant social order is precisely what Albertine declines. There is no question of her proving herself according to the capacities valued within the situation into which she enters. She is proof instead of what is possible when one refuses to acquire the capacity for promising, an aptitude which is inevitably in the service of making oneself an indebted subject.

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[177] Lazzarato, *Making of the Indebted Man*, 31.

[178] Rancière, *Disagreement*, 24-5.

To Rancière's insistence that politics occurs when the excluded "prove that they are indeed speaking beings, participating in a shared world and not furious or suffering animals," Albertine's character would seem to respond that they have nothing to prove and much to gain from embracing their rejection from this "shared world" and creating another one.[179] If only Albertine would consent to prove herself according to the logic of his world, Marcel would not feel obligated to reassure the legitimacy of its hierarchies and distributions by imprisoning her. Whether it is the physical prison of the apartment or the economic and psychological prison of indebtedness, the narrator's impulse to contain her arises from the fear that the possible world that fascinates him is also threatening, as it evinces no reciprocal interest in his own.

Fugitive Strategies:

Albertine profoundly disrupts the temporal stereoscope, which gives stability and depth to the present only by reducing it to a still image of itself consistent with a degraded past and foreseeable future. This temporality makes the world predictable and safe, but only at the cost of suppressing the emergence of the new. In the hotel at Balbec, for example, an actress and her friends are described as insulated from the world by habit: "en les enveloppant ainsi d'habitudes qu'ils connaissaient à fond, elle suffisait à les protéger contre le mystère de la vie ambiante."[180] They exist in a present so assured by habit that the world beyond is reduced to a mere image of

[179] Rancière, *Politics of Literature*, 4.

[180] Proust, *À l'Ombre Des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs,* 540; "by engulfing them thus in a system of habits which they knew by heart it sufficed to protect them from the mystery of the life that was going on all round them" (*Within a Budding Grove,* 353)

itself: “la mer n’était suspendue en face d’eux que comme une toile agréable accrochée dans le boudoir d’un riche célibataire.”[181] This agreeable painting is most certainly not an Elstir, which might disrupt the coordinates of their sensory experience. It is simply the illustration produced by the elimination of movement, the ocean denied its dynamism. Not only does a fundamental paucity of visual experience result from such habitual sensory selection, it is supplemented by an accompanying reliance on “… des critériums communs à eux pour distinguer le bon et le mauvais,” which renders “insupportable la vie en commun avec des gens qui n’y avaient pas été initiés.”[182] Their shared system of evaluation, excludes any possible connection with others.

As Zourabichvili points out a possibility of life “ is an *evaluation*: not simply the evaluation of the possibilities of life, once we have already apprehended them as such; but the possibility of life itself as evaluation, a singular manner of evaluating or apportioning the good and the bad, the distribution of affects…The invention of new possibilities of life therefore presupposes a new way of being affected.”[183] The possibility of life encapsulated by the actress and her friends is so rigidly determined that everything is experienced as a repetition of the same. No new ways of seeing or being affected are permitted to disrupt the solidity of the image of the present that they stage in the form of a static tableau. It is through the contrast with Albertine who, on the other hand, continuously gives rise to new possibilities of life that the apparent security of the stereoscopic present begins to reveal itself as a form of capture and Albertine’s lies and forgetfulness an escape.

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[181] 540; “the sea was suspended there before their eyes only as a canvas of attractive colouring might hang on the wall of a wealthy bachelor’s flat” (353).

[182] 540; “critical standards common to all their party whereby they distinguished good work from bad…” (540); “rendered intolerable a life in common with people who had not been initiated into those mysteries.” (353)

[183] Zourabichvili, “Deleuze and the Possible,” 156.

Even as Albertine seemingly attempts, through her lover, to penetrate the ranks of the society that condemns and excludes her, she remains a fugitive from it. It is not only in her final extensive flight, but in her intensive fleeing that Albertine escapes, while remaining in place, through tactics of verbal evasion and subterfuge. As the narrator explains: "Entre vos mains mêmes, ces êtres-là sont des êtres de fuite…il faut calculer qu'ils sont non pas immobiles, mais en mouvement, et ajouter à leur personne un signe correspondant à ce qu'en physique est le signe qui signifie vitesse.[184] Even as he holds her, Albertine flees her own corporeal registration within the sensible coordinates of the situation within which he seeks to keep her captive. She refuses to coincide with the appearance that she is permitted, and this refusal does not take the form of attempting to appear otherwise, but as flight. In its treatment of Albertine, therefore, Proust's novel engages in the "scrambling [of] the distribution of places and discourses," which Rancière insists is the task of art, but it also offers an account of her flight from the obligation to appear at all. Albertine is apparently indifferent to the redistribution, called for by Rancière, that would grant visibility and audibility to the "wordless victims" excluded from the social order. Where Rancière insists on this coming into appearance, Albertine is always seeking the means by which to take cover. Even when she does enter into one of the roles available to her it is in the mode of a perpetual withdrawal. One seeks the shadows, the other attempts to redirect the light.[185]

To the privilege of registering sensibly and intelligibly, which is denied to many, is attached the exhortation to *be sensible!* This imperative to adapt oneself to the common sense

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[184] Proust, *La Prisonnière,* 1671; "Even when you hold them in your hands, such persons are fugitives…we must recognise that they are not immobile but in motion, and add to their person a sign corresponding to that which in physics denotes speed" (*The Captive,* 113-14).

[185] Rancière, *Politics of Literature*, 184; *Disagreement* 126.

categories and values of the consensual paradigm is rejected by Albertine. The fugitive does not merely fail to register as sensible—she refuses, and this refusal operates in the both registers, perceptibility and rationality. It is at once a strategy of imperceptibility and an unwillingness to adhere to good or common sense. This is why Marcel will try to educate his captive, in his melancholy apartment, in the pursuits and pleasures of his world. He fosters Albertine's interest in fashion and old silver and trains her to read and to play the piano. His impulse to inscribe her within the logic of his world stems from the intuition that if she enjoys its pleasures, she will learn, in her own interest, to fear its consequences and to discipline herself accordingly.

Marcel seeks to entice her into conforming to the sensibilities of the society to which he belongs, so that she may be captured by its familiar categories and become, in a word, recognizable. Initially the signs of her adaptability to the values and pastimes of his world reassure him, but gradually he comes to interpret them as expressive, not of capitulation, but of dissatisfaction. "Elle avait même commencé," he relates, "de jolies collections qu'elle installait avec un goût charmant dans une vitrine et que je ne pouvais regarder sans attendrissement et sans crainte car l'art avec lequel elle les disposait était celui fait de patience, d'ingéniosité, de nostalgie, de besoin d'oublier, auquel se livrent les captifs."[186] He senses the extent to which Albertine's occupations are not a manifestation of the covetousness and vanity that he hopes will bind her to him, but a means of being elsewhere, even momentarily. While it seems that he is constantly in search of the answers to what she desires, how she spends her time, who she sees, he is actually attempting to answer such questions by transforming her into what he already

[186] Proust, *La Prisonnière,* 1880; "She had even begun to form a neat collection which she installed with charming taste in a glass case and at which I could not contemplate without affectionate dismay, for the art with which she arranged them was that born of patience, ingenuity, home-sickness, the need to forget, which prisoners practice" (*The Captive,* 497).

understands, which requires that she be more successfully interpolated in the stereoscopic present of his social milieu.

It is in this sense that Albertine's lies become a fugitive strategy. If she were only to evade his watch, to successfully enjoy her illicit rendezvous, she could still be caught by the prevailing logic—in the form of the unfaithful lover. In order to exceed such an identity, her lies extend far beyond what is necessary or even in her interest: "Ses mensonges si nombreux, parce qu'elle ne se contentait pas de mentir comme tout être qui se croit aimé, mais parce que par nature elle était, en dehors de cela, menteuse, et si changeante d'ailleurs que même en disant chaque fois la vérité…elle eût dit chaque fois des choses différentes."[187] Albertine does not merely lie; her truths are transformative and unstable. The mutable past of Proust's cinematic evocations is not only a source of disruption to the present, it can be a means of escape. She cannot be captured within a secure past and a predictable future because she escapes into a mutability born of the ingenuity she has developed in her captivity. Marcel struggles to discover consistency in her, to establish a fixed trajectory and set of characteristics that would aid him in accurately interpreting her lies in the future, but truth itself is inconsistent for her. It is through her incessant lies that Albertine escapes while remaining in place, and also yet another means by which she begins to forge resistance to the present. She occupies the meanwhile in such a way that that she flees into the interval between truth and its transformation, between one identity and the next, between a promise and its intolerability.

[187] 1675-6; "She was not content with merely lying, like everyone who imagines that he or she is loved, but was by nature, quite apart from this, a liar (and so inconsistent moreover that, even if she told me the truth every time …she would say something different" (122).

Maintaining a persistent illegibility within the situation, Albertine becomes impossible to judge. At one point the narrator reflects: "Nos fiançailles prenaient une allure de procès et lui donnaient la timidité d'une coupable. "[188] Judgment, however, relies on the fixed categories and stable identities that she continuously escapes. He can never be sure if he should condemn or absolve her, and her timorousness passes so easily into "une telle force de passivité, une si grande faculté d'oublier…" that her inconsistencies become less a reluctance to own up to her intentions and past actions, than an ongoing recreation of her world.[189] Her very passivity is a refusal of the voluntary action required by the present moment in order to hold the subject accountable for those actions in the future. The narrator's interrogations seek to establish stable truths, a consistent identity, a continuous past, all of which he mistakenly believes her to be concealing from him. In fact, there is nothing to conceal. To conceal something would require that it remain true and that the subject remain the same. The kind of consistency over time necessary in order to have something to conceal becomes increasingly foreign to Albertine, as she hones her skills of escape and forgetting.

Albertine, therefore, seems to be an expression of Deleuze's claim that: "if it is so disgusting to judge, it is not because everything is of equal value, but on the contrary because what has value can be made or distinguished only by defying judgment."[190] The values that could be placed on this or that trait, honesty, fidelity, honorability, within the situation are not made equal to dishonesty, infidelity, and cheating, in some sort of relativizing refusal on Albertine's

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[188] 1645; "Our engagement was assuming the aspect of a criminal trial, and gave her the timorousness of a guilty party" (68).

[189] 1618; "such extraordinary passivity, such a powerful faculty for forgetting" (18).

[190] Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical,* 135.

part to distinguish between them. They are upended and redistributed by her affirmation of whichever most effectively defies and upsets the evaluative system that ensures perpetual judgments and inevitable condemnations. Albertine is not simply a liar, her truths are as mutable as her lies, and her past is not a continuous sequence of causes and effects, but a broken line of sporadic ventures into new desires, identities and assemblages.

As Guss points out Albertine's "restless mobility, her continuous walking and cycling figure her unknowability."[191] But it is not only in response to this extensive motion that the narrator's obsession becomes one of making her immobile, visible, and legible, but the intensive flight that is her unrecognizable life. Marcel would like nothing better than to comply with what Rancière considers to be the task of the aesthetic regime of the arts: to "confer visibility on the masses, or rather on anonymous individuals."[192] Clearly, Marcel's way of doing so would be restrictive and assimilative, rather than the transformative inclusion that Rancière proposes, but there is nonetheless a shared drive toward making visible. Marcel does not only want her to be localizable, something he can at least partially achieve through restricting her activities and having her followed, he wants her to be rendered sensible, and therefore accountable. If she cannot be relied upon to have consistent interests and to act in those interests, predicting and controlling her actions becomes impossible. If truth is not something that remains consistent for her, she cannot be compelled to give an account of herself, or even, as he gradually realizes, to be held accountable in a system of indebtedness that simply does not take hold. It is in her material interest to remain with him and to assuage his fears, but even this fails to compel her obedience.

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[191] Guss, *Proust Outdoors,* 70.

[192] Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 32.

Eventually the captive does physically flee, but why? It is not simply a question of calculating, mercenary self-interest, a bid to force him to marry her, as some critics claim. Instead it seems to arise from her exhaustive posture in relation to the potential of the situation. Having gained access to his world, Albertine begins testing all of the possibilities that it offers. When she has exhausted them all, she leaves. At first her unbounded curiosity leads her to explore the world in which she finds herself, disregarding the implicit rules that structure the spaces through which she moves: "Elle n'aurait pas fermé une porte et, en revanche, ne se serait pas plus gênée d'entrer quand une porte était ouverte que ne fait un chien ou un chat."[193] Her movements and the motivations for those movements are reduced to an animal logic here, but her indifference to the spatial coding of his home allows her greater freedom than what even he is permitted because he dare not transgress, as is evident in his fear of being seen or heard by Françoise.

Not only does Albertine go where she pleases, exploring this new world, but she exhausts its roles as well. She plays the lady of fashion—a version of the Duchesse de Guermantes—in her Fortuny gowns. She hones the refined tastes of the collector—a version of Swann or Charlus—in her newly developed expertise in old silver. She even takes on some of the distinctive characteristics of Marcel for a time, having become, according to his own estimation, extremely intelligent, spending her time reading, playing the piano and even mastering the literary language of quotation particular to his family. By contrast to the narrator's analytical insights about the various characters that he encounters, Albertine displays a singular capacity for adopting their persona, testing out their various powers, and then moving on. In exhausting

[193] Proust, *La Prisonnière,* 1613; "She would never think of shutting a door and, by the same token, would no more hesitate to enter a room if the door stood open than would a dog or a cat" (*The Captive,* 9).

these many roles, she is herself exhausted, becoming "la grise prisonnière, réduite à son terne elle-même."[194] In each particular part she plays, she becomes recognizable to him and loses her appeal, but, reaching the end of the exhaustive series available to her within this world, she departs. Having mistaken her role-play for capitulation, the narrator is shocked by her sudden escape.

Critical engagements with Albertine that align with the narrator's more condemnatory views tend to frame her as manipulative, as lying so as to have her pleasures and keep his money, ignoring the fugitive quality of this character. The narrator's world demands memory and she is a creature of forgetting. Marcel demands that she be accountable, produce stable truths, but she is in constant flux, creating new ways of being that make lies of the old ones. He demands that she relate to the world as a fixed horizon of mutually exclusive alternatives, but she relates to it in an exhaustive mode that allows her to always chose *both and*.

Albertine expresses another field of possibilities that cannot be evaluated along the lines of what is real, true, preferred etc. Such categories have ceased to make sense. This is why accounts that, on the other hand, attempt to recuperate this character, to show that she is the equal of her captor, that she possesses *logos* and can reason and interpret just as he does, radically diminish her disruptive potential. If Albertine could be made his equal, she would no longer be fugitive. Whereas she escapes the categories that could establish equivalence.

Preserving Potentiality, or Why did Albertine have to be killed?

[194]1733; "the grey captive, reduced to her drab self" (225).

In a well-known essay by Rancière, "The Putting to Death of Emma Bovary," he transforms the question of the cause of Emma's suicide—debt, disillusionment, unhappiness—into a question of the writer's motivation for killing off his character. "Before the trial the right-thinking put the writer on," writes Rancière, "there is the trial the writer puts his character on."[195] Characters such as Emma must be punished for their aestheticization of daily life in order to differentiate between the right and the wrong way of negotiating the blurred line between art and life that, for Rancière, is the defining problem of what he calls the aesthetic regime of art. He offers a similar reading with respect to Proust:

> Proust would get stuck into high society by putting on trial those aesthetes who require art to light up their lives, to mark time to their love affairs or decorate their interiors. And he will invent all kinds of sentences to punish their crimes against literature and art: he will marry Swann off to the cretinous demi-mondaine he loves for her resemblance to one of Botticelli's figures; he'll send Saint-Loup to death on the battlefield as the price for his dreams of a new epic; and he'll chain Charlus, the man who treats works of art as souvenirs of nobiliary glory, to the 'rock of sheer matter', in Jupien's brothel.[196]

When we ask this same question of Albertine's death, however, a very different answer suggests itself. Addressing the death of Albertine, Rancière argues that it is so that Marcel's way of relating to her can be destroyed, so that he can pass from the lover into the author: "If he loses

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[195] Rancière, *Politics of Literature*, 53-54. The first reference is to Flaubert's having been put on trial for indecency and insulting public morals after the publication of Madame Bovary.

[196] 59.

Albertine, he may well wind up seeing the right way to look at a splotch moving along a shore. He might see the real identity of literature and life: literature is the only true life, life truly lived and made clear to itself."[197] But what of Albertine herself? When examined in her own right, the girl's death takes on a different significance from when she is treated merely as the object of his affection. So why did Albertine have to be killed?

The first reason is because Proust knows better than most that the event will not resemble its results. The terrain of the possible that Albertine enfolds cannot be fully articulated because, as Zourabichvili explains of evental disruption, "The new sensibility does not have at its disposal any concrete image that could be adequate to it: from this point of view there is only creative action, guided not by an image or a project prefiguring the future, but by affective signs that, according to a leitmotif-formula, 'do not resemble' that which actualizes them."[198] Albertine's flight does not allow for a future that can be anticipated and prepared for. Her escape maps a set of strategies by which to flee the evaluations, sensibility, and temporal restrictions of the present, as it is actualized within a particular social order. It is not, however, the first step in the realization of a concrete project as suggested by Hughes's musings about whether "the flight of Albertine from the economic control of Marcel is the harbinger of a wider social emancipation."[199] Albertine's escape, her invention of the means of resisting the present, of creating a different possibility of life, is not an example of the form that a general social

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[197] 65.

[198] Zourabichvili, "Deleuze and the Possible," 160.

[199] Hughes, *Proust, Class, Nation,* 208.

emancipation should take. Rather, she dies so that, like the work itself, her potential is preserved without being circumscribed by such a predetermined end.

Far from engaging in utopian representations of Albertine's alternate sensorium, there is a concerted blindness when it comes to any possible glimpse of it. As Elisabeth Ladenson points out in her book *Proust's Lesbianism,* the blinds are drawn in the Montjouvain scene. Similarly, in the case of Albertine, "She is there, in front of him, willing to take off everything, and yet he still cannot see what defines her."[200] Understood by Ladenson as reflective of the alterity that Proust preserves with regards to lesbian desire, this refusal to image the actual of a new sensibility is the expression of a more general rule operative in the *Recherche*, extending, for example, to the people who will one day break down the walls of glass that separate the classes.

Albertine must be killed, not because she is found guilty by the author in a tribunal of art's proper relation to life, but in order to preserve the potentiality that she gives expression to. As Hanney observes: "Her death, which occurs characteristically in the realm of speed and sports (she is killed by a fall from a horse), is the final, irreversible flight. It 'fixes' her as a figure 'en fuite.'"[201] If she were to live, this potentiality would either become domesticated in her return to Marcel, thereby extinguishing the possible landscape that she encloses, or radically circumscribed by its actualization in an image that would attempt to describe what the new sensibility would look like. The latter would succumb to what Jameson identifies as a problem haunting utopian efforts in which "even our wildest imaginings are all collages of experience, constructs made up of bits and pieces of the here and now… [which] suggests that at best Utopia

[200] Ladenson, *Proust's Lesbianism*, 77.

[201] Hanney, *Invisible Middle Term,* 63.

can serve the negative purpose of making us more aware of our mental and ideological imprisonment."[202] Proust requires that Albertine die so that a different sensibility remains possible without having to be pictured as a collage of scraps of the possible as it is available in the present moment, so that instead of exploring the nature of our imprisonment he can begin to map an escape.

The second reason that Albertine must be killed is to release her from the structure of judgment that the narrator imposes on her, and that Rancière tries to superimpose on her by way of the author. When Proust kills his character, it is not as a judgment upon her, but to preserve the possibility of a new sensorium. As Deleuze indicates, it is "judgment that presupposes preexisting criteria (higher values), criteria that preexist for all time (to the infinity of time), so that it can neither apprehend what is new in an existing being, nor even sense the creation of a mode of existence…"[203] Rancière's insistence that when it comes to a character's death in the aesthetic regime it is invariably a murder, turns Proust into a judge, obfuscating the ways in which the *Recherche* uses the character of Albertine to become sensitized to "what is new in an existing being" and deploys her in the discovery of a new mode of existence.

But the real must remain a shock, and Albertine only indicates our distance from this new mode of existence: "Hélas, les yeux fragmentés, portant au loin et tristes, permettraient peut-être de mesurer les distances, mais n'indiquent pas les directions. Le champ infini des possibles s'étend, et si par hasard le réel se présentait devant nous, il serait tellement en dehors des possibles que, dans un brusque étourdissement, allant taper contre ce mur surgi, nous tomberions

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[202] Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future,* xiii.

[203] Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical,* 134-5.

à la renverse."[204] Without knocking against the wall of an attempted representation of this reality, the *recherche* develops its own fugitive strategies from the state of the situation. While we are waiting for the people to smash the aquarium and to cull its fish, effectively redistributing the sensible, the writer outside in the dark observes the rules and limitations of the world inside, but also the forces of an alternative landscape of the possible that threatens it. Like the melancholy eyes of Albertine, the *Recherche* gestures toward a different sensorium, a new form of life, but refuses to indicate the direction we must take.

[204] Proust, *La Prisonnière,*1671; "Alas, the multifaceted eyes, far-ranging and melancholy, might enable us perhaps to measure distance, but do not indicate direction. The boundless field of possibilities extends before us, and if by any chance the reality presented itself to our eyes, it would be so far outside the limits of the possible that, knocking suddenly against this looming wall, we should fall over backwards in a daze" (114).

CHAPTER 4

Captivity and Combat:

Tired Captors, Exhausted Fugitives

"'Tous vos films sont-ils des films sur le temps ?'
'Oui. Il n'y a que cela qui m'intéresse, le temps et l'espace. L'espace, cela veut dire aussi l'enfermement.'"[205]

"Il faut distinguer le combat contre l'Autre, et le combat entre Soi."[206]

Chantal Akerman's Proustian adaptation *La Captive* (2000) takes *La Prisonnière* as its source text and centers on the figure of Albertine. Faithful to this character's fugitive status, Akerman invents cinematic strategies in order not only to depict, but also abet Albertine in her flight. These strategies necessarily differ from Proust's, which sent his novel escaping into the cinematic. Instead of turning to a language of images capable of introducing aberrant temporal movements to the progression of words, as Proust did, Akerman pursues properly cinematic avenues for troubling the stereoscopic clarity of the present, from which Albertine, now Ariane (played by Sylvie Testud), attempts to escape. Exploiting the ambivalence of the image in order

[205] Antoine Compagnon, *Lire et relire Proust* (Nantes: Éditions nouvelles Cécile Defaut, 2014), 71.

[206] Deleuze, *Critique et Clinique* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1993), 165; "The combat against the Other must be distinguished from the combat between Oneself" (Critical and Clinical, 132).

to produce a shifting field of antagonisms, Akerman introduces a combative element to the mechanisms of flight and exhaustion previously identified in Proust.

The film opens with the sound of crashing waves. Turbulent lines of foam surge out of black water, climbing the screen in stark white horizontals before folding back into the darkness. This is the first in a series of gestures towards a void that the film will continuously return to. In order to assist Ariane in her disappearance, Akerman repeatedly brings the film's images to the brink of this void, submerging them in darkness. She uses the corporeality of images in order to register the exhaustion of bodies on screen, but also to exhaust the images themselves. As Elena Gorfinkel writes, cinema "exhausts bodies, not only profilmic ones but also the body of its own apparatus and of its material, celluloid. But cinema can also provide the register, archive, and index of these bodies' exhaustion."[207] Akerman's films offer precisely such an archive of exhaustion, and the void, summoned by the exhaustive procedures that she invents, is always in the register of defiance, a refusal to make appear.

As the opening credits of *La Captive* end, Akerman cuts to an 8mm movie. Only the whirring and clicking of a projector is audible, as the film begins wordlessly with one of its most beautiful scenes. A group of young girls play in the surf. Their muted laughter beckons, even as the film's very silence excludes us. One woman, later to become recognizable as Andrée, struggles and is momentarily engulfed by the water. As Ariane helps her to shore, the viewer is witness to their intimate exchange, though not privy to their conversation. While Rancière's emphasis falls on being seen and heard, and Proust's is on the capacity for the excluded to see without themselves being seen, Akerman sews the seeds of another antagonism in this severing

[207] Elena Gorfinkel, "Weariness, Waiting: Enduration and Art Cinema's Tired Bodies," *Discourse* 34, no. 2-3 (2012): 311-3347, 320-21.

of the viewer's power to see from the ability to hear. Ariane's inscrutable expressions, her silently moving lips and dark impervious eyes, which form black discs as she stares into the camera, weaken the image's narrative moorings, offering a defiant challenge before she turns from the camera and flees toward the open water (fig. 1).

Figure 1. "Ariane's dark impervious eyes," *La Captive.* Directed by Chantal Akerman, Gemini Films, 2000.

A voice-over interjects and the camera reluctantly pulls away from what turns out to be only a projection within the diegetic space of the narrative. Drawing us out of the ebullient world of the girls, Akerman now places the viewer in what is immediately a more sinister setting. We join Simon, Akerman's Marcel (played by Stanislas Merhar), who watches the projection, as we have just watched it, and our seemingly innocent witnessing of the intimacy between these girls becomes inflected by his possessive voyeurism. As he rewinds and replays the film, Simon repeats *'je, je, je vous aime,'* attempting to affix meaning to Ariane's moving lips, to restore

memory and story to the soundless images. In her article, "Je Vous" Kaja Silverman dwells on the indeterminacy of this opening scene, arguing that the 'je je je vous …' could refer to Simon reading Ariane's lips, or it could be his address to her as he watches, or Ariane's address to Andrée.[208] This is not simply to say that we cannot know which interpretation is correct, but that all are affirmed in a relay of subject positions that destabilizes the consistency of the 'I' and the object of desire, who keeps escaping into her own subjective position and diverting desire in a new direction.

The open space of the sea expressed by this exuberant series of images, from a time prior to the young women's incarceration in her lover's apartment, will serve as a counterpoint to the spaces of enclosure that come to dominate the film as it shifts to the perspective of Simon. The alternation between longshots of the open water and close-ups of the girls' intimate world will be replaced by the linkages proper to Simon's jealous perspective, often taking the form of a series of claustrophobic medium shots that cut spaces off from the broader world, making of his apartment, of Paris, of his car, sites of imprisonment. The viewer, as much as Ariane, begins to long for an escape from the oppressive confinement of these spaces. "L'espace," as Akerman reflects in the epigraph, "cela veut dire aussi l'enfermement."

It is not only space, however, that becomes synonymous with captivity in her films, it is also a certain form of time. *La Captive*, like so many of Akerman's films, keeps a more or less meticulous account of passing time, as though anxious that, in the monotony of habitual repetitions, whole days might be lost altogether. In *La Captive,* a well as *Jeanne Dielman: 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Brussels* (1975) which will be discussed below, intertitles announce the days and time of the day, visually dividing temporal blocks, which might otherwise become

[208] Kaja Silverman. "Je Vous," *Art History* 30, no. 3 (2007) 451-467, 451.

indistinguishable in their repetitiveness.[209] The days are made to render themselves, if not remarkable, at least marked. These intertitles serve the same purpose as the marks made each day by a prisoner in her cell or by Robinson Crusoe alone on his island; because otherwise time could be lost altogether, full days unremarked, swallowed by a temporal form that does not distinguish between the seemingly endless repetitions of habit. Akerman' choice to adapt *La Prisonnière* is therefore unsurprising, for this is the temporality of captivity.

Akerman's characters suffer from the temporal structure that Michael Hardt describes as prison time:

> Time is empty because of the repetitiveness of the prison schedule and routine. Time stretches out and collapses in a kind of optical illusion. Each day is filled with precisely specified, required activities and appointments. Time moves at a snail's pace; the day is never-ending. You watch that fly on the wall and its motions seem infinitely slow. Mealtime never seems to arrive. Look back at those days from a distance, however, and they are indistinguishable. They fold into each other like the bellows of an accordion. Time spent seems to have no duration, no substance, because of the precise repetition of its component parts, the homogeneity, the lack of novelty.[210]

The nature of imprisonment is that it empties waiting of its meanwhile. In restricting the time of his captive to a relentless repetition of authorized activities, Marcel/Simon subjects her to precisely this form of time. The "optical illusion" that Hardt refers to equally applies to the

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[209] "Quelques jours plus tard," "Le lendemain" (*La Captive* Directed by Chantal Akerman, Gemini Films, 2000.) "fin du premier jour," "fin du deuxième jour," (*Jeanne Dielman: 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Brussels.* Directed by Chantal Akerman. Paradise Films, 1975).

[210] Michael Hardt, "Prison Time," *Yale French Studies*, no. 91 (1997): 64-79, 65.

stereoscopic effect of a present devoid of dynamism. It is therefore a temporal as well as spatial escape that Albertine/Ariane must achieve. And it is in time as well as in space that she must stage her combat, producing, for example, an interval through which she escapes the homogeneity of her life as a captive and disrupts the temporal consistency of Simon's habitual experience.

In the opening scene as Simon moves toward the projected image, attempting to traverse the space separating him from the girls, he transforms, as Beugnet and Schmid describe it, "into a dark silhouette, a gaping hole that threatens to absorb the lover's image into its void."[211] In the projected image, Ariane turns from the camera and flees (fig. 2). In this instance, the threatening aspect of Simon's predatory relation to Ariane is visually constructed through his ominous appearance only as a "gaping hole." It is Ariane, however, whose name is so proximate to her perpetual refrain of *à rien,* who recomposes herself with the forces of the void, turning it against Simon in order to introduce a breach in the connections that stabilize his world. The nothing summoned by her repeated *à rien* exceeds its function of refusing to answer his questions. It opens an interval between his perceptions, affections, and actions, such that what Simon feels, sees, and does become uncoupled from one another. His struggle to master and act upon a situation is repeatedly frustrated by this gap through which too many uncertainties steal in.

Figure 2. "Ariane turns from the camera and flees," *La Captive.* Directed by Chantal Akerman, Gemini Films, 2000.

James Penney argues that following the opening scene the viewer shares "Simon's perspective as well as, less consciously of course, … the abstract and disembodied 'perspective' of the apparatus itself."[212] At times, however, the disembodied perspective of the apparatus joins forces with Ariane, not only refusing to render her available to Simon's masterful gaze, but conspiring with her in his decomposition. It is not only that Simon fails to grasp Ariane; it is that in searching for her he repeatedly encounters this unfathomable void, a chaos that invades him. The game of shadowy absences that intervenes between the captor and his captive is visually revisited, for example, in Simon's hunt for Ariane through Paris. As he searches for her through the dark streets, the shadows that look like her, the footsteps that sound like hers, the scarf that he doggedly follows up a darkened stairway, until he sees the face of its wearer—the wrong face—all conspire to mislead him.

[212] James Penney, "The Failure of Spectatorship," *Communication Theory* 17, no. 1 (2007): 43-60, 54.

It is as though Paris and its women collude with Ariane in her flight, combating his predatory gaze. The shadows that he chases also extend to his own person, as he is stalked by his reflections in the darkened restaurant windows and by his own shadow, which towers menacingly over him. The very logic of his jealous perspective, which reorients space toward enclosure and confinement, cutting off outlets and narrowing possibilities, is made to work against him as the camera joins forces with Ariane in her combative flight.

Chantal Akerman's concern with captivity and enclosure is well-documented. Her camera's sympathetic embodiment of feminine perspectives, temporalities, and rhythms has been repeatedly explored. What has gone relatively unremarked however are the combative postures articulated by her films and crystallized in two of her most notable heroines, Ariane and Jeanne Dielman. These two figures model two conflicting regimes of combat that correspond to a distinction briefly outlined by Deleuze in his essay "To Have Done with Judgment," in which he disentangles the concept of "combat-against" from "combat-between." As Deleuze explains, "the combat-against tries to destroy or repel a force (to struggle against 'the diabolical powers of the future'), but the combat-between, by contrast, tries to take hold of a force in order to make it one's own. The combat-between is the process through which a force enriches itself by seizing hold of other forces and joining itself to them in a new ensemble."[213] While Ariane engages in a combative flight, continuously transforming precisely the forces that would contain her into sources of a propulsion of her escape, Jeanne attempts to impose a certain elegance on her restricted life, through an elaborate and inflexible ordering of her daily activities, which devolves into a violent reaction *against* her situation.

[213] Deleuze, Critical and Clinical, 132.

Albertine's fugitive status within the *Recherche* makes her unpalatable to a certain kind of critical reflection. She is present in the traces that she leaves upon the narrator, but very rarely staged in her own right. Perhaps this is why this character in particular has elicited artistic rather than critical interpretations. The very fugitive and unsettling nature of her presence within the work invites artistic license, and Albertine has been repeatedly adapted in various media, notably Akerman's *La Captive* (2000); Ricky Ian Gordon and Richard Nelson's musical *My Life with Albertine* (2003); a novel, *Albertine* (2002), by American Proustian Jacqueline Rose; and Anne Carson's poem "The Albertine Workout" (2014).

It is my contention that Akerman's film adaptation is unique in that, while she puts pressure on certain elements of the Proustian original, she does not do so by trying to reconcile the narrator's fevered imaginings with a more objective account of the other's position. Even though Ariane must necessarily appear on screen in *La Captive,* she does so without becoming visible and audible according to the terms of the distribution of the sensible that she threatens. She, like Albertine, maintains an exhaustive posture with regards to the possibilities that the existing order offers her, troubling its consistency in her refusal to seek admittance.

Other artistic interpretations either keep Albertine as a love object or attempt to redeem her by endowing her with the same capacity for logos as the narrator. Works in the former style, such as *My Life with Albertine*, are complicit with a certain chauvinism characteristic of the original, while works in the latter style, such as Rose's novel and Carson's poem, attempt to correct this, and in doing so Albertine is made to appear. She is given consistency and recoded

according to the familiar coordinates of sensibility from which she once escaped. In Rose's novel, for example, she is made to give the very account of herself that the narrator so longingly and persistently tried to elicit from her. It is difficult not to imagine the controlling pleasure he would experience in the discovery of this very work, finally fully annexing his lover's thoughts and emotions. Albertine is forced at last to *be sensible*. She no longer proceeds in the exhaustive mode. Cause and effect are restored to her story. We see her, sympathize with, and understand her. Thus, she is captured in a manner never achieved by the Proustian narrator.[214]

Marcel's impulse to contain Albertine is fundamentally tied to the need to domesticate the possible. His lover made the exclusive disjunctions of his world inclusive, jettisoning the familiar alternatives of *either/or* for an exhaustive series of *and/and/and*. She was most threatening to him, not as an unfaithful love object, but as a motor for the exhaustion of the possibilities of his world, making it vulnerable to the unpredictable. Recuperations of this figure restore the possible as a delimited field, making room for Albertine within its coordinates. Akerman's film, by contrast, is less concerned with formulating a strictly feminist rereading of the source text (although her films undoubtedly have much to offer feminist studies) than developing a properly aesthetic politics of the possible. Akerman leverages the allusive quality of her medium in order to intensify the dynamism of this figure's flight from appearance. Akerman's *La Captive,* perhaps even more than the original novel, insists on the difficulties of extricating ourselves from the existing forms of life, and the necessary ingenuity required to continuously invent new fugitive strategies.

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[214] Rose's novel, tends toward the form of feminist critique that she deploys so masterfully in her non-fiction work: *Proust Among the Nations, Sexuality in the Field of Vision, Women in Dark Times.*

More recently critics have engaged in an effort to nuance the feminist readings of this director that dominated her initial reception. In particular, Ivone Marguilies' *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyperrealist Everyday* (1996) and Veronica Pravadelli's *Performance rewriting identity: Chantal Akerman's Postmodern Cinema* (2000), have attuned themselves to other key influences and thematics that inform Akerman's work. Margulies' attention to the 'hyperrealist' element of Akerman's films shifts her analysis away from either a purely feminist or modernist approach. She focuses instead on the everyday and the corporeal, extending her reading of Akerman's influences to the European realists and neorealists. Similarly, Pravadelli complicates Akerman's feminism with an analysis of the postmodern element of her work, which does interesting work to highlight some of the ways in which Akerman's work is also a critical pastiche of French New Wave and North American Stucturalist films.

Proust, however, is conspicuous in his relative absence from these two decisive studies, as is the significance of Akerman's youthful desire to become a novelist, rather than a director, which is never far from her struggles with and against her medium of choice. Largely overlooked, except in relation to *La Captive,* Proust has been most often treated as a thematic source of inspiration, rather than the site of stylistic and conceptual affiliations.[215] This is a peculiar lacuna given Akerman's own repeated insistence on the fundamental importance of Proust for her work. In a recent interview Akerman responds to Compagnon's query: "On pourrait donc aussi peut-être dire que ce film-là [*La Captive*] n'est pas plus proustien que les autres," with the following response: "Ou que les autres le sont autant."[216]

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[215] Carol Mavor's reading of *Jeanne Dielman* as a Proustian film in a chapter of her book *Reading Boyishly: Roland Barthes, J.M. Barrie, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Marcel Proust and D.W. Winnicott,* is a notable exception.

[216] Compagnon, *Lire et Relire Proust*, 71.

I take Proust not only as the author of the source text for *La Captive,* but as a means of entering into the very heart of Akerman's concerns as a filmmaker, and, perhaps more surprisingly, her politics. It is not that Akerman, in pursuing such a Proustian politics, abandons women to their fate. Rather, her films pose the question of their emancipation, and that of others, in unusual terms—combat and exhaustion.

Failures of a Master Detective:

In *La Captive,* Akerman seizes upon the detective story that surfaces at various points in the fifth volume of the *Recherche.* Consumed by an obsessive fascination, Marcel compulsively tracks the movements of his lover. Even from a distance, through the offices of Andrée and Françoise, he follows her, anticipating every potential encounter. The narrator explicitly articulates the lover-detective assemblage in the following:

> Or, il peut y avoir dans la vie des hommes et dans celle des peuples (et il devait y avoir un jour dans la mienne) un moment où on a besoin d'avoir en soi un préfet de police, un diplomate à claires vues, un chef de la Sûreté, qui au lieu de rêver aux possibles que recèle l'étendue jusqu'aux quatre points cardinaux, raisonne juste, se dit : …Si telle personne s'est enfuie, ce n'est pas vers les buts *a, b, d,* mais vers le but *c.*[217]

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[217] Proust, *La Prisonnière,* 1620; "Now there may occur in the lives of men and of nations (and there was to occur in mine) a moment when we need to have within us a chief of police, a clear-sighted diplomat, a master-detective, who instead of pondering over the possible contingencies that extend to all points of the compass, reasons soundly and says to himself… 'If so-and-so has fled, it is not in the direction *a* or *b* or *d*, but to the point *c*" (*The Captive,* 21).

The master-detective must accurately interpret, lucidly reason, and respond appropriately to clues garnered from the situation. He is determined to solve the mystery of his lover's sexuality, understanding it as a problem in need of a solution, the site of an as of yet undetermined crime. Like Marcel, Simon proves incapable of this kind of lucid reasoning and decisive action. Overcome by fantasmatic considerations of all of the different possible scenarios that could explain each of Ariane's unfathomable actions, gestures, and looks, he loses himself in a temporality characterized by the loss of a predictable future or stable interpretation of the past. What he does not realize is that no one answer will ever explain Ariane because, dwelling happily in precisely this form of time, she exploits its very dynamism in order to recreate not only herself, but her past and future. Whereas Simon experiences this loss of temporal orientation as terrifying, Ariane exploits the disorientation of the meanwhile in order to flee the captivity of her present.

As Beugnet and Schmid point out: "Together with *Le temps retrouvé,* the final volume which contains Proust's theoretical treatise on aesthetics, *La Prisonnière* is the most philosophical and introspective of all the volumes; it is a highly modernist text which increasingly privileges reflection over action and is more interested in the workings of the mind rather than in any external reality."[218] They, among many other critics, see this to be the greatest challenge to a film adaptation of *La Prisonnière*. The need to adapt the inner workings of a tortured mind to the visual medium of cinema, however, is precisely what drew Akerman to the project. It is also one of the sources of the film's affinity with Hitchcock. As Akerman reflects:

[218] Martine, Beugnet and Marion Schmid. "Filming jealousy: Chantal Akerman's *La Captive* (2000)," *SFC.* vol. 2, no. 3, 2002, 157-163, 157.

> I love Vertigo and I watched the sequence where Jimmy Stewart is following Kim Novak to see how it was done. But La Captive is about someone who tries to unpick another person's mind, whereas in Vertigo Stewart does the reverse, building up an image of Novak to match his fantasy. When you try to show reality in cinema, most of the time it's totally false, but when you show what's going on in people's minds that's very cinematic.[219]

La Captive is a modified detective story—from Proust via Hitchcock— in which the action unfolds in the mind, as much as between bodies. The reference to *Vertigo* allows Akerman to mobilize the cinematic apparatus invented by Hitchcock in order to convey the mental in images. But while Hitchcock's film is a tale of Scottie's struggle *against* the sensory illusions and obsessions that are intentionally woven by the duplicitous Madeleine/Judy, Simon faces the duplicity of a woman who endlessly recomposes herself in relation to the forces she encounters.

Akerman mimics the sequence in which Scottie, the clear-sighted investigator, perplexedly follows Madeleine's car through the streets of San Francisco. But where Scottie will gradually unravel the mystery of Madeleine, realize his error, and correct his interpretation, Simon, in true Proustian fashion, confusedly awaits a revelation regarding his lover that will never come. The sensory-motor schemata are mapped out unambiguously for the viewer in *Vertigo*'s chase scene. We see Scottie watching, see him thinking, as he manifestly surveys the scene before him. We see his reaction, and its connection to the action that he takes. The link between Simon's perceptions and actions are, by contrast, extremely tenuous. As he follows Ariane, Simon stares immediately before him. His fixated expression is that of a sleepwalker in

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[219] Chantal Akerman, interview by Nick James, "Magnificent obsession," *Sight & Sound*, Jul 2001, 11 no. 5, 20-21.

the midst of a nightmare, rather than a detective reasoning through clues. Abandoning his car to follow Ariane on foot, he trails behind her, stiffly upright in a kind of anguished trance.

The windshield and the car's paint are highly reflective in Akerman's version of the chase, and, where in *Vertigo* no reflections distract from the action of the sequence, Simon is seen through the competing patterns of the reflections of trees and buildings that play beautifully over the shiny surface of the car (fig. 4). This not only distances the viewer from an identification with Simon's point of view, it produces a sense of isolation. The car becomes an extension of the claustrophobic enclosure of his apartment, as the city slides over its body in a caress that cannot reach him. Ariane's convertible, by contrast, allows the wind to play through her hair as she passes from sunny illumination to shadowed silhouette. She is connected to a world beyond, ever open to new relations, whereas Simon is severed from it.

Figure 3. "Simon seen through the competing patterns of reflections," *La Captive.* Directed by Chantal Akerman, Gemini Films, 2000.

Vertigo plays with its viewers' expectations in that, as Rancière writes of the film, "the alliance of causes produces an entirely different effect from the one anticipated."[220] In *La Captive,* on the other hand, expectations are not only contradicted by the disclosure of an unexpected cause for the effects that have been witnessed, cause and effect are continuously uncoupled. In this sense Akerman's film offers a response to Rancière's observation that, unlike words, cinema cannot use images to simultaneously add and subtract information. It is in reference to *Vertigo* that Rancière observes: "the art of images struggles to achieve what the art of words can do: subtracting even when adding material. In cinema, an addition remains an addition. So correcting apparent appearances is always a risky operation."[221] In *La Captive* addition and subtraction are replaced by a different logic—exhaustion. The film never offers the kind of correction to which Rancière refers. Ariane is the suspect of Simon's investigation, accused of lying and infidelity, but she is both faithful and unfaithful, lying and not. She is also the victim of a crime, of which Simon is both guilty and not guilty. Rather than presenting one set of clues and subsequently correcting it with another set of facts, Akerman affirms both trajectories, giving rise to a temporality in which the ability to see, foresee, and recognize are denied.

By way of such inclusive disjunctions, Akerman sews the seeds of an internal combat that destabilizes identities such as detective, voyeur, criminal and victim, the man of action and the intellectual. It is a film that treats combat in such a way that there is no stable enemy. If Simon fails so bitterly to achieve anything, it is because he cannot defeat the aspects of himself that thwart him, whereas Ariane is victorious, even in her death, because she is able to seize on

[220] Jacques Rancière, *The Intervals of Cinema,* trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 20), 2014.

[221] 26.

forces even in Simon that propel her further in her flight. This is the difference between a "combat-between" and "combat-against."

Similarly, the viewer does not progress from misinterpretation to revelation, but is instead implicated in an exchange of positions between witness, stalker, and even prey, circulating through conflicting positions within the web of antagonisms that the film maps. The camera in Hitchcock's sequence shares Scottie's perspective, producing a mobile reframing of the world as he sees it from the safety of the car's interior. In Akerman, by contrast, the camera sits precariously out on the hood of the car, producing a lower, more tense angle. The camera, situated in between Simon and Ariane, makes of the viewer partly a stalker, implicated in the violence of the chase, but also the prey, straining forward to escape Simon's implacable gaze.

The combat-between that characterizes the film's complicity in Ariane's flight also invites a recomposition of the viewer, as she passes through these various positions. Losing the position of objective mastery, the viewer is never quite sure of the status of what has happened or what is happening, denying her the ability to accurately predict what will happen. Furthermore, the viewer can never be quite certain as to what position she occupies in relation to what is presented. How can she pass judgment on what she sees, when it is impossible to know if she is stalker or stalked, witness or perpetrator? As Simon follows Ariane through the Rodin museum, for example, the camera begins by sharing his perspective, but then lingers, falls behind and begins to shadow him instead. Invited to put too many stories to the images that are presented, the viewer, like Simon, is perpetually denied a stable position from which to reason: "If so-and-so has fled, it is not in the direction *a* or *b* or *d*, but to the point *c*." The detective story becomes unmasterable.

The decisive action of the master-detective is perpetually returned to "pondering over the possible," because the preferences that would lead Ariane to point *a* or *b* are not the same as those of the woman she will become in the interval between her departure and her arrival there. As Rancière explains, it is "the delay or interval that makes it possible for the gaze to put a story to a face. It is that interval that provokes Scottie's obsession with the false Madeleine. And that interval is also the one behind the obsession of the narrator in Proust for Albertine."[222] While Vertov, as Rancière indicates, suppresses the interval in order to do away with the possessive, narrativizing gaze of the love story, Akerman extends it so radically that too many possible stories attach to the face. Ariane escapes Simon by opening up a transformative interstice not only between who he thinks she is and who she really is, but who she has been, who she is and who she is about to become depending on the woman she meets, the song she sings, or the direction she takes. Hence her disturbing adaptability when he declares that they must part ways and then, having dragged her from her bed and returned her to her aunt's, he insists that she leave with him again. This is how she escapes the prison time to which Simon attempts to circumscribe her days. By remaining radically open to the chance of an encounter of any kind, she ensures that one moment cannot resemble the next, despite the repetitive closure of her captivity. It is in order to thwart the master-detective and ensure that all directions remain available that Proust and Akerman must kill Albertine/Ariane, keeping the possible open: a *and* b *and* c *and* d.

A Tired Simon in the Labyrinth:

[222] Rancière, *Intervals of Cinema*, 31.

By transposing Albertine into Ariane (French for Ariadne), Akerman threads yet another reference through the film—the master-detective enters the labyrinth. The roles typical of a detective story: investigator, suspect, witness, victim, already unstable and falsified, are redistributed along an alternate axis. The logic of the labyrinth introduces new roles: captive, beast, hunter, and guide, which resonate with, but cannot be adequately mapped onto those pertaining to the detective story. Within this other distribution, Simon is at times the hunter, stalking an unfamiliar beast, at others he is himself trapped and tries to keep pace with his guide. Ariane, in turn, is at times this guide, at others the hunted beast, or, as Olney points out, "the labyrinth itself."[223]

The labyrinth is also one of the means by which Akerman gives expression to desire and thought in cinematic terms. As Beugnet and Schmid observe: "the mythological 'Ariane'… evokes the Cretian labyrinth where Theseus faces the Minotaur and, thus, by analogy, the mental labyrinth in which Simon loses himself."[224] Simon is lost because the thread of Ariane's fleeting presence leads him into a treacherous internal maze of doubt and deception. His grasp continually closes around shadows because Ariane has invariably fled the place where he hopes to discover her.

The mental labyrinth that Simon struggles to escape is repeatedly made visible in *La Captive* by the way that another possible world impinges on his own, destabilizing his sense of a single shared reality, and altering a decision that he has made based on the finite possibilities of a self-contained world that is now altered. Simon is repeatedly framed in an enclosed space, which opens onto an out-of-field that disrupts his protected sphere. Through windows, hallways, and

[223] Olney, *Proust Through the Lens of Chantal Akerman,* 159.

[224] Beugnet and Schmid, *Filming Jealousy,* 159.

doorframes his world is destabilized by these invasive adjacencies. By securing Ariane, Simon attempts to absorb her possible world, so that it will no longer threaten to carry him away. In holding her captive, he wants to be the one that is safely protected from the chaos of an outside that keeps finding its way into his ordered existence. But this carceral strategy would only succeed in response to a combat-against, protecting oneself from attack. Ariane's combat-between, by contrast, invites other worlds in. Even through the bars of her prison/balcony, she launches herself out into new relations that in turn recompose Simon's world.

In order to remain in place, Simon must limit the possible itself, reducing Ariane's world to the expression of a preference between fixed alternatives. It is because of this need to assimilate otherness, to seal off all possible escapes, to hold himself still against the movements of the world, that Simon becomes so vastly tired. The possible as exceeding a fixed set of predetermined alternatives becomes his labyrinth. He would not be so anxious, if he could only make her share his horizon of preference, or at the very least if he could know if she is either telling a lie or the truth, either a lesbian or not, either in love with him or not. Simon wants for everything to fit into the *déjà-vu déjà-entendu* of a repetition. It is the unfamiliar of the meanwhile that terrifies him.

Music in particular is a means by which Ariane not only flees the identity and preferences that Simon wishes to impose on her, but also propels him deeper into the labyrinth. "The labyrinth," as Deleuze writes of Nietzsche's Ariadne, "is no longer architectural; it has become sonorous."[225] Overcoming Simon's will, music repeatedly diverts him down a different path from the one of his choosing. From street level he listens to Ariane's duet on the balcony above, and the music drives him away in search of answers to the questions that her intensity, desire,

[225] Deleuze, *Critical Clinical,* 104.

and joy pose for him (fig. 5). She combines her voice with the power of the other woman's in order to create an ensemble that is not defined by her captivity. Simon hopes that finding the answers to his questions will enable him to finally block such a means of escape, but the answers inevitably send him farther afield because Ariane continuously enters into new combinations that carry her outside of herself.

Figure 4 "Ariane's duet on the balcony," *La Captive.* Directed by Chantal Akerman, Gemini Films, 2000.

Rancière's insistence on the excluded as seeking audibility once again proves inadequate, as Simon wants nothing more than for his captive to speak, to account for herself, but instead she sings and, despite himself, her song moves him. When Ariane sings, Simon hears neither the words of an equal, nor an animal cry of pleasure or pain, but a secret language that excludes him, calls to him, and rejects him, tracing a path between chaos and order that he cannot adequately map. This is so profoundly disturbing to Simon because, as Deleuze writes: "the Other assures the margins and transitions in the world. [She] is the sweetness of contiguities and resemblances. [She] regulates the transformations of form and background and the variations in depth. [She] prevents assaults from behind. [She] fills the world with a benevolent murmuring."[226] Ariane

[226] Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 305.

destroys this security. Her perspective does not reassure his own, because she looks out on a world that is as foreign to him as the antagonizing murmuring of inaccessible desires evoked by her song. He ranges himself against her, incapable of the kind of combat-between that might enable him to join with the unfamiliar forces that she unleashes in order to escape himself.

It is the otherness and inaccessibility of the world to which she belongs that spurs him on into the labyrinth of his desire, rather than using her music as the thread that could lead him out, into a new ensemble. As McKibbin explains, "Ariane's possible lesbianism becomes an issue for Simon not of jealousy, but of curiosity—more readily an act of thinking than of feeling. Yet out of that act of thinking comes feeling."[227] His obsession arises from the sense that, rather than seeking entrance to his world, those who do not have a place in it have created another one, which escapes him and which he cannot understand. He is curious enough to want to gain entry, but too cowardly to do so except in the form of a combat-against that attempts to aggressively limit the effects that this world could have on him in advance.

He is tired out by his effort to narrow all the possible trajectories down to the one correct point where he will finally grasp Ariane's position. A listless somnambulist, Simon restlessly pursues his lover, who is never where he seeks her because Ariane does not actualize the virtual through a series of actions and decisions, she possiblizes and does so in an exhaustive series that never marks a preference. He attempts to locate her on one side of a disjunctive alternative: lover or traitor, hetero or homosexual, incessantly asking her the same questions, trying to force her to repeat, to become familiar. But her exhaustive strategy means that Simon can never choose the right path and know that the others can be safely excluded. Ariane draws him down one path

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[227] Tony McKibbin, "La Captive and the Power of Love," *Studies in French Cinema*, vol.3, no.2, 2003, 93-100, 95.

only to appear on another, which seemed to have been disqualified by a previous choice. Simon does not understand exhaustion. He is only tired; so very tired that by the end of the film, hunched in the front of the boat, even he seems unsure as to whether or not he is the one who has killed her.

Beauty Asleep:

In his desire to hold Ariane still and possess her inert body, Simon will push her progressively closer and closer to death. Marcel's preference for Albertine asleep therefore becomes a key episode that Akerman includes from the original novel. The repeated series of sleeping episodes that unfolds throughout the film is her filmic response to Proust's pseudo-iterative, which is impossible to show on screen. Simply by the use of the word "quelquefois" (sometimes), the narrator makes of the episode a repeated event:

> Quelquefois, en effet, quand je me levais pour aller chercher un livre dans le cabinet de mon père, mon amie m'ayant demandé la permission de s'étendre pendant ce temps-là, était si fatiguée par la longue randonnée du matin et de l'après-midi, au grand air, que même si je n'étais resté qu'un instant hors de ma chambre, en y rentrant, je trouvais Albertine endormie et ne la réveillais pas.[228]

For Akerman, working within the constraints particular to her medium "sometimes" is unavailable, except perhaps as a voice-over—a technique that she never resorts to in order to account for the image, only to destabilize it. Instead of attempting to approximate in images what

[228] Proust, *La Prisonnière,* 1654; "For sometimes, when I got up to fetch a book from my father's study, my mistress, having asked my permission to lie down while I was out of the room, was so tired after her long outing in the morning and afternoon in the open air that, even if I had been away for a moment only, when I returned I found her asleep and did not wake her" (*The Captive,* 84).

is only possible in words, Akerman chooses to unfold this "sometimes" into its multiple iterations. By actually repeating the scene Akerman gives it a mutability that the original sacrifices to the economical force of the iterative, and is thus able to make visible the shifting terrain of antagonism that prevents Simon from achieving the same pleasure from the repetition of the scenario.

In the first sleeping episode, Ariane comes to Simon's bed when she is called and promptly falls asleep when he steps out of the room. The music falls silent drawing the viewer into sensory proximity with the couple as Simon begins to manipulate first her hands and then her body. Akerman removes the elegant and beautifully written descriptions offered by Proust's narrator. The unadorned presence of the bodies of the actors on the screen, unaccompanied by any voice of explanation, replaces the narrator's vegetal and oceanic metaphors. In the original, the narrator's contemplation of his mistress' sleeping body is eventually interrupted by the admission that "parfois, il me faisait goûter un plaisir moins pur."[229] In Akerman's version this coy aside is replaced by the melancholy violence of Simon's thrusting body, against a passive Ariane.

Ariane willingly offers herself up as the object of his passion and her seemingly unconscious state protects him from the threat of the other world that she enfolds. But Akerman's film insists on a contrast between his piteous desperation and Ariane's escape, as she 'awakens' with Andrée's name on her lips. In the novel the reader is offered the narrator's assertion that: "Je ne m'inquiétais pas des mots qu'elle laissait parfois échapper en dormant, leur signification m'échappait, et, d'ailleurs, quelque personne inconnue qu'ils eussent désignée,

[229] 1656*;* "sometimes it afforded me a pleasure that was less pure" (87).

c'était sur ma main, sur ma joue, que sa main, parfois animée d'un léger frisson, se crispait un instant."[230] In *La Captive*, the images are not required to account for themselves in the same way. Her words are heard by the viewer, rather than indirectly recounted by the narrator. Even as Ariane complies with his desire, she antagonizes him by relaying his desire into relation with another possible world. A later conversation between Simon and her friends reveals how forcefully this unnerves him. When Sarah admits to enjoying the freedom of "picturing someone else" and the subsequent shock of opening her eyes to the person she is actually with, Simon is quick to read this as the same form of escape that Ariane indulges in.

The second episode occurs in the car during the couple's return from the *bois* and consists of a failed attempt on Simon's part to restage the first encounter. Forcibly dragging Ariane away from her friends at the Opera, Simon interrogates her about her relations with the opera singer Lea. He rapidly becomes convinced that Ariane is lying to him, but her half-hearted attempts to defend herself prevent him from arriving at a conclusive judgment. Ariane's very lack of concern at having been discovered in a lie forestalls the judgment that he attempts to pass. She eludes the guilt of a system of values to which she does not adhere. She does so, not through critique or negation, which would index her to those same values, but through her intense passivity.

In the first episode Ariane escaped into a dream that removed her from his grasp. In this episode she evades him through the illegibility of the signs that she emits. It is not because her signs are arbitrary, and so become a productive source of interpretive work for the narrator, as Deleuze puts it in *Proust and Signs,* but because they originate in an entirely different perceptual

[230] 1657; "I was not troubled by the words that she murmured from time to time in her sleep; their meaning was closed to me, and besides, whoever the unknown person to whom they referred, it was upon my hand, upon my cheek that her hand, stirred by an occasional faint tremor, tightened for an instant" (88).

and affective distribution, that they stymie his interpretive ability.[231] A fugitive from him, even as she sits mildly by his side, Ariane's passivity is in fact an intensive flight. Sensing this, Simon attempts to force the multiple selves that he glimpses in each shifting answer and gesture to retreat back into her body, despairingly instructing her to go to sleep.[232] Even when he grasps her, however, Ariane manages to remain unlocalizable. She does not coincide with her sleeping form. This time she plays her role too well. She is too quickly asleep and her feigned disorientation when she supposedly wakes only increases Simon's agitation.

In this instance Simon cannot enter into his fantasy of possession. In a visual parallel to Simon's failure to grasp Ariane, Akerman films the episode in such a way that total darkness intermittently invades the screen, repeatedly swallowing the image in a void of illegibility. Despite being one of Akerman's less formally experimental films, *La Captive* invents ways to thwart the viewer's need for sensory mastery. Whereas the first episode held the viewer at a distance, alienating them by denying a glossy seduction through the proliferation of unromantic details, now the viewer is antagonized by visual lacuna. The unfulfilled need to master the image draws the viewer into complicity with Simon, mirroring his need for control.

In the third version of the sleeping episode, Simon asks a prostitute who resembles Ariane to feign sleep. This only serves to make explicit the fiction of Ariane's consent. As Simon drives slowly by the line of prostitutes he is intrigued and troubled by the commodified staging of the different worlds on offer. The prostitute, in obeying him as Ariane does, reveals the extent to which Ariane's own behavior is already a role that she chooses to play. The exchange of

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[231] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 21.

[232] Proust*, La Prisonnière,* 1654-55; "Elle avait rappelé à soi tout ce qui d'elle était en dehors, elle s'était réfugiée, enclose, résumée, dans son corps"; "She had called back into herself everything of her that lay outside, had withdrawn, enclosed, reabsorbed herself into her body" (Captive 84).

money with the dismissed prostitute calms him somewhat; at least in this he can assert control, whereas it is never clear that Ariane is sufficiently reliant on his wealth.

The fourth iteration of the sleeping scene most proximately resembles a rape. Ariane, asleep in her canopied bed of pastel brocades, appears as a kind of sleeping beauty. The pale blues and gold of the bed hangings contrast sharply with Simon's dark overcoat as he climbs on top of her, an ominous shadow over her vulnerable body. Simon attempts to take hold of her world unawares, now that he has discovered in her consent a mechanism of escape (fig. 6). In Ariane, Albertine becomes a sleeping beauty forced to remain in seclusion, and forever returning to sleep so as to be kissed yet again by the Prince, whose possessive desire relies on her returning to the passivity of sleep.

Figure 5. "Simon attempts to take hold of her world unawares," *La Captive.* Directed by Chantal Akerman, Gemini Films, 2000.

By unfolding the original into these repeated episodes Akerman is able to continuously shift the register of legibility. Readings of the film that understand it purely as a feminist critique, as a condemnation of Simon, and by extension the Proustian narrator, overlook the way in which Akerman's camera enters into sympathetic proximity at times with Ariane, at times with Simon. As Penney observes, "By consistently and courageously frustrating the demands that we place as spectators on the image, Akerman forces her hystericized viewer to come to terms with the tragic pathos of Simon's obsession."[233] The repetition of the episode allows Akerman to trace the difference between Simon's combat against Ariane, who throws his world into disequilibrium, even as she flees and her combat-between that catalyzes his desire, and that of others in order to move between worlds. Simon is ultimately defeated by the exhaustive permutations that forbid the repetitions that he craves in order to assure the stability of his world and his desire.

The Death of Ariane:

In the film Ariane dies of drowning, rather than in a riding accident as Albertine does. This ending is nonetheless not a complete departure from the original, nor is it merely an allusion to Agostinelli's death by drowning. It can be understood as evolving quite naturally out of the indolent violence that lurks in the Proustian narrator's subaqueous associations with the sleeping woman, whose unconsciousness places her "devant moi, à moi."[234] Albertine seems already to be drowned in her sleep: "sentant que son sommeil était dans son plein, et que je ne me heurterais

[233] Penney, "Failure of Spectatorship," 54.

[234] Proust*, La Prisonnière,* 1657; "before me, at my disposal," (Captive, 89)

pas à des écueils de conscience recouverts maintenant par la pleine mer du sommeil profond, délibérément je sautais sans bruit sur le lit…"[235] The narrator's need for an inanimate lover pushes Albertine deeper and deeper underwater, as he drapes himself over her. Simon repeatedly runs aground the reefs of Ariane's consciousness until finally she must be covered by the high water of the most profound slumber, in her death by drowning. This ending is therefore the final iteration of the sleeping episode.

The crescendo that the film builds toward does not reveal a spectacular truth. No problem is solved. No conclusion is reached. The viewer's appetite for revelation is never sated. The film ends in this death; a death that, unlike the source text, may have been an accident, a suicide, or a murder. The indeterminacy of the end met by Ariane, is not a simple refusal to solve the case, antagonizing the viewer who seeks closure, it is the necessary ambivalence of an exhaustive series of *ands,* which affirm opposing alternatives. Ariane has not died by accident *or* murder *or* suicide, but by accident *and* murder *and* suicide.

[235] 1656*;* "feeling that the tide of her sleep was full, that I should not run aground on reefs of consciousness covered now by the high water of profound slumber, I would climb deliberately and noiselessly on to the bed…)" (87).

Figure 6. "Simon is only a shadow, slightly darker than the rest," *La Captive.* Directed by Chantal Akerman, Gemini Films, 2000.

Akerman forces the anxiety of the void on her viewer, denying them the establishing and reverse shots that would situate them. When Simon stands out on the balcony scanning the water for Ariane, for example, the camera remains inside the hotel room. Simon is only a shadow, slightly darker than the rest, and we are never permitted to see what he sees (fig. 8). Almost every frame of the death sequence is entirely submerged in darkness. The viewer struggles to see and remains forever unsure of what has happened. We are captive to the time and perspective that the camera allows us, and in *La Captive* we cannot help but feel that everyone else is seeing more than us. The viewer must decide whether to relate to the void as an opportunity, as Ariane does, or as a frustrating absence to be overcome, to be filled at all costs with meaning, in the manner of Simon.

Ian Onley reads Ariane's death solely as murder, an illustration of the only possible outcome of such an obsessive patriarchal relationship. For him, Akerman stages the murder as an implicit critique of how easily Proust lets his narrator off with Albertine's accidental death. This assignment of guilt, however, overwrites the ambivalence of the episode. Onley's insistence on Simon's guilt in general, and of the murder in particular, restores the very system of judgment that the character of Albertine/Ariane troubled. There are no reliable witnesses, not even the viewer and no judge, not even the director, who resists the urge to hand down a sentence. The lines of relation between friend/enemy, victim/aggressor, innocent/guilty are instead redrawn in continuously falsifying relations of affinity and repulsion. This is not to say that the film absolves Simon, but then I do not find, as Onley does, that the novel exculpates Marcel either.

Rather it is to refrain from the master-detective's reasoning that would choose only one answer, at the expense of the possible.

Albertine Alive: Jeanne Dielman

Ariane, like Albertine, must die so as to preserve the potential of the world that she encloses without necessitating the depiction of its actualization. But if Albertine/Ariane had not died, what would have become of her? Akerman's character Jeanne Dielman, I argue, offers the beginning of a response to this question. In order to make *Jeanne Dielman,* Akerman reread Proust's *La Prisonnière*, and Jeanne is in a sense the first of Akerman's Albertines. A widow caught in the regime of domesticity that Ariane's sudden death removed her from; Jeanne is Albertine if she had lived, married, and had a child. In Jeanne, Albertine's sexual adventures have been domesticated into the daily chore of prostitution, her athletic grace reduced to the precision and finesse with which she makes a meatloaf, and her mystery is lost on a son who barely looks at her and evinces no curiosity in how she occupies her days. Jeanne uses domesticity to ward off the horror of what she has become, and to fill the emptiness of her days.

Jeanne Dielman, is Akerman's most extensively discussed film, but very few critics take up its resonances with Proust's work. Mavor has drawn the connection between Proust and *Jeanne Dielman*, but for her Jeanne is Françoise, and it is the detailing of domestic labor in all its tedium that connects the two.[236] Jeanne's particular form of madness, however, is completely foreign to Françoise's phlegmatic pride in her benevolent domestic tyranny. Jeanne's is an obsession, not with knowing and seeing all that passes within her domain, but with the possible.

[236] Mavor, *Reading Boyishly,* 400.

She longs to confine the possible, to restrict it to a predetermined order consistent with her own confinement.

The two captives, Ariane and Jeanne, therefore express two different relations to the possible. Ariane, as we have seen, leaves her captivity behind even when she remains in place. Without destination or fixed orientation, sexual or otherwise, she flees intensively, exhausting the possible, rather than circumscribing it. Jeanne, by contrast, copes with her captivity by marshaling the forces of anti-chaos, making of her prison a limited field of possibilities within which she can assert her control. Even when she moves through the city Jeanne brings her captivity with her, never veering from her destination as she treads her habitual paths. She empties waiting of its meanwhile, killing time. Not wanting to feel the passage of time, she fills each moment with the predictability of a specific task to be completed. She carves each day up into manageable pieces in order to evacuate it more completely of its duration. It is evident in her practiced gestures and vacant expressions how determined she is not to feel the prison time of perpetual waiting, whether it is for son to return home, for a client to arrive, for a package from her sister. For Ariane, on the other hand, the meanwhile is an ongoing creation. It is not given in advance and in need of being filled, but must be extricated from the causal series and mutually exclusive alternatives that carve up time in order to make it pass.

Jeanne's life is for the most part restricted to the pathways determined by her small apartment and Akerman's camera dwells repeatedly on its narrow hallway lined by closed doors. In stark contrast to the Borgesian forking paths conjured by the labyrinthine flight of Ariane, these shots of the shuttered hallway offer a visual elaboration of the model of the possible to which Jeanne, complicit in her own subjugation, restricts herself. Possibility is circumscribed in

advance by preexisting limitations and governed by exclusive alternatives—to enter the bedroom is to decide between sleep or prostitution etc.. Jeanne punctiliously opens and closes the doors of the rooms that she enters and leaves, in a gesture that reaffirms the logic that to enter one room is to exclude the possibilities enclosed by others. Possibility even on this trivial level is always vigilantly confined.

Where Albertine summons unfamiliar forces in order to escape even as she seemingly sleeps. Jeanne's body has been conditioned through repetition, and when this automatism is interrupted by the fleeting burst of chaos that is her involuntary orgasm, her carefully constructed world begins to unravel and the seamless enmeshment of time and space produced by the habitual motions of her body begins to come apart. Preference is overpowered, to put the potatoes in the kitchen or the bathroom become equivalent. The possibility of new ways of relating bodies, objects, and spaces opens up against her will and, rather than seizing on them as an opportunity for a new kind of assemblage, she tries desperately to put them back together as they were.

Akerman's film takes up the viewer's time with these tasks. As Mavor describes: "just as Proust *holds* time still and at a distance with his breathless, labyrinthine sentences, *Jeanne Dielman* achieves its incredible boredom through its *held* still 'shallow-boxed framing,' with no reverse shots…"[237] But while Jeanne uses her daily tasks in order to fill her time and not feel it, the film causes the viewer to experience the passage of time through Jeanne's laborious work. Starkly framed at the table in the kitchen she stares blindly into space. The viewer sees what goes into producing the finished dinner, which for Jeanne's son miraculously appears each evening. As Mavor writes, "as if Akerman were Proust masquerading as a 1970's feminist, we do not

witness just the eating of the meal, we witness the meal in its entirety: its purchase, preparation, consumption, the cleaning up of the table, and the washing of *every* dish."[238]

But it is not only in making visible women's work that the film makes more of Jeanne's life than she does. The viewer is allowed to become bored and then on the other side of boredom begins to discover the intensity of her minor frustrations, the color and contrasts of the image, the texture of the meat itself becomes fascinating, the sound as it clings to her fingers (fig.9). The viewer is therefore not subjected to the same attenuation of the possible that Jeanne experience. Instead, as Marguilies explains, "it is as if we had gained an extrasensorial dimension."[239] The viewer is gradually shifted into a different relationship to the meanwhile, whereas Jeanne is a persistent counterpoint, closing off the possible.

Figure 7. "Experiencing the passage of time through Jeanne's laborious work," *Jeanne Dielman: 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Brussels.* Directed by Chantal Akerman. Paradise Films, 1975

Jeanne Dielman ends in a different form of violence from *La Captive*. The possible is so tightly circumscribed that the slightest loss of control becomes deadly. One of the reasons that Jeanne will murder the last john, something that many feminist critics have objected to as the

[239] Marguilies, *Hyperrealist Everyday, 70*.

'wrong' way out of her impossible situation, is that the diminished field of the possible left no room for anything else. Akerman says of the murder:

> [It] was the logical thing to have happen there. To me, she had only two solutions: either to kill herself or kill someone else. Of course there is some part of me in the film and I would have killed someone else. Certain people hate this murder and say, 'you have to be more pure. If you show a woman doing the dishes you shouldn't show a murder.' The strength of the thing is to show them both in the same film. And it didn't end with the murder. There were seven really very strong minutes after that.[240]

The murder itself is in some ways less jarring than when Jeanne's dignified control is lost as she wanders confusedly down the hallway holding a pot of potatoes. And far more disturbing than either is the moment when the quietude of the film is torn as a baby begins to scream. The bad manners of breaking free of the circumscribed social symbolic code is unthinkable for Jeanne. As Michel de Certeau writes:

> Where and when is there ever anything bodily that is not written, remade, cultured, identified by the different tools which are part of a social symbolic code? Perhaps at the extreme limit of these tireless inscriptions, or perforating them with lapses, there remains only the cry: it escapes, it escapes them. From the first to the last cry, something else breaks out with them, the body's difference, alternately in-fans and ill-bred, intolerable in the child, the possessed, the madman

[240] Cerne, "Maternal Matters: Jeanne Dielman and Emma Bovary Strange(ly) Familiar Reflections on Everyday Domestic Scenes." *Studies in the Maternal* 2, no. 1 (2010): 1-11, 6.

> or the sick–a lack of 'good manners,' like the howling of the baby in Jeanne Dielman.[241]

It is precisely this scream that is unavailable to Jeanne, and in order to not scream she must kill. If Albertine and Ariane were killed to preserve potentiality, Jeanne kills because there is none left. This is the bad animosity that arises through a lack of possibilities rather than the exhaustion of the possible.

It is the combat-against that Jeanne succumbs to—although the film itself, like Albertine/Ariane, participates in a combat-between. Jeanne, like Simon, is tired, even as she murders the john she seems to merely slump forward, scissors in hand. If she were exhausted, Jeanne, like Ariane, might reach a limit beyond which a change of state would result. Merely tired, however, Jeanne can only react, never transform. After the murder, she sits at the table resigned to her captivity in whatever form it will now take. For over seven minutes until its end, the film contemplates the continued closure of the possible. Even in the desperate violence of this last act, the combat-against could not open an escape. This is the difference between two strategies, between Jeanne's overpowering fatigue in fighting against, against chaos, against uncertainty, against the perceived threat of others, and Ariane's exhaustion, as a combat-between that seizes on forces, even those that seek to decompose her identity and sever her relations, in order to endlessly invent unexpected recompositions.

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[241] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 147-48.

CONCLUSION

What is Possible in an Exhausted World? or Beckett's Joy

"*Say the night is young alas and take heart.*"[242]

"*...pour qu'un peu de joie soit sauvée qui nous fasse sortir de l'ombre et changer de genre.*"[243]

Death is never very far from procedures of exhaustion. Not only because death in the work of art, like that of Albertine or Ariane, allows for the preservation of potentiality, but also because exhaustion is always dual. One is always exhausted in the process of exhausting the possible. At the end of the *Recherche* the narrator reflects: "Je savais très bien que mon cerveau était un riche bassin minier, où il y avait une étendue immense et fort diverse de gisements précieux. Mais aurais-je le temps de les exploiter? J'étais la seule personne capable de le faire. Pour deux raison : avec ma mort eût disparu non seulement le seul ouvrier mineur capable d'extraire ces minerais, mas encore le gisement lui-même."[244] Both miner and the mined, he will

[242] Beckett, "Worstward Ho," in *Nohow On* (New York: Grove Press, 1980), 84.

[243] Deleuze, *Critique et Clinique*, ; "in order that a little joy might be saved that could make us leave the shadow and change kind." (*Critical and Clinical,* 145).

[244] Proust, *Temps Retrouvé,* 2393; "I knew that my brain was like a basin of rock rich in minerals, in which lay vast and varied ores of great price. But should I have time to exploit them? For two reasons I was the only person who could do this: with my death would disappear the one and only engineer who possessed the skill to extract these minerals and—more than that—the whole stratum itself." (Time Regained, 514).

doubly exhaust himself. By his labor and as the resource that it excavates, he will weary and deplete himself in order to produce the book. Exhaustive procedures ultimately exceed the limit of what can be sustained by an individual without changing shape, think of Spinoza's power to be affected.[245] But this change is not only experienced as a death, it is also the source of a transformation, even liberation—as in the great transmutation of Marcel into his book. The more frightening idea for him is the possibility of losing this precious ore, of dying before it could be mined and its raw material turned into the work.

These are not the only deaths resulting from exhaustion in the *Recherche*: "un livre, est un grand cimetière où sur la plupart des tombes on ne peut plus lire les noms effacés."[246] In the service of the book, people encountered in life are mined for their singular powers and relations. In the process, they are entirely used up, but in such a way that a change of shape is produced—they become the stuff of literature. Exhaustion, therefore, makes of such literary deaths a source of power, that is to say, of joy. "Les idées," the narrator muses elsewhere, "sont des succédanés des chagrins; au moment où ceux-ci se changent en idées, ils perdent une partie de leur action nocive sur notre cœur, et même, au premier instant, la transformation elle-même dégage subitement de la joie."[247] The nameless graves of the book/cemetery are the markers of such a transformation, the passage of individuals into the impersonal forces of literature. The narrator is passingly ashamed of the cruelty that underlies this use, even murder, of his acquaintances, but

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[245] An individual in Spinoza being whatever comes together to produce effects, its power being greater depending on its relative capacity to affect and be affected.

[246]Proust, *Temps Retrouvé*, 2290-91; "a book is a huge cemetery in which on the majority of the tombs the names are effaced…" (*Time Regained*, 310)

[247] 2293; "Ideas come to us as the substitutes for griefs, and griefs, at the moment when they change into ideas, lose some part of their power to injure our heart; the transformation itself, even, for an instant, releases suddenly a little joy" (315).

he does not spare himself in the process, writing himself toward exhaustion and death in order to create the book that will "leave the shadow and change kind."

One immediately perceives the appeal that these Proustian formulations will hold for Beckett, and both bedridden writer and nameless tombs appear in his work. The Proustian narrator is essentially the original iteration of Beckett's unparalleled catalog of exhausted, deathly, but never quite dying, figures. In Beckett, the death threatened by procedures of exhaustion itself becomes the goal. As Christian Kerslake suggests, of Deleuze's reading of Beckett, "the relentless and obsessive drive to exhaustion, makes the essay begin to seem disturbingly as if it might also be called *How to die.*"[248] And so it comes as no surprise when, near the end of this *Worstward Ho*, the unmarked graves of a Proustian book/cemetery are evoked: "Stooped as loving memory some old gravestones stoop. In that old graveyard. Names gone and when to when. Stoop mute over the graves of none."[249] But in these deaths, I contend, as in those in the service of Proust's great work, there is something that is not the mere sadness of the end, nor the cold indifference of anonymity, but its joy. The exhaustion of the possible that results in a change of shape is precisely what finally permits the creation of new possibilities of life.

Beckett's work has been persistently lurking behind this project's readings of Proust and Akerman that his own exhaustive strategies made possible. He was an oblique means of entry into their work that unfolded it along different lines. These readings in turn suggest a different inflection to Beckett's work, one that discovers in Beckett some of Albertine/Ariane's defiance and her joy. There is a thread of laughter that traces its way through exhaustive procedures,

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[248] Christian Kerslake, translator's introduction, "The Exhausted," *Paralax* 2 (1996): 113-135, 115.

[249] Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, 98.

perverse perhaps, but most certainly joyful and, as Deleuze reflects of Beckett: "I mean, it is difficult not to laugh when you read him, moving from one joyful moment to the next."[250]

Antipathetic Beckett: Rancière's Symptomatic Aversion

The facet of Proust's work exposed by a reading inflected by a sense of its affinity with Beckett—involving exhaustion and flight— revealed lines along which certain tensions with Rancière's reading of Proust and with his politics of aesthetics more broadly began to emerge. Beckett's work can be understood as crystallization of what Rancière's account of aesthetics is most deeply resistant to. As Nina Power recounts: "I once asked him [Rancière] what he thought about Samuel Beckett. He paused for a moment before replying: 'I 'ave no affinity for 'im.' And that was that."[251]

Turning to Beckett's *Worstward Ho,* therefore, offers an opportunity to briefly survey the terrain of dissimilitude between Rancière's account of the politics of aesthetics and the one that has been developed here. *Worstward Ho* in particular lends itself to such an endeavor because, as Badiou points out, "it functions as a sort of filter through which the multiplicity of Beckett's writings is made to pass, thereby reducing Beckett's work to its fundamental hypothetical

[250] Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-74,* trans. Michael Taormina (New York. Semiotext(e), 2004), 204. See Ruben Borg, "Beckett and Deleuze, Tragic Thinkers" in *Deleuze and Beckett,* eds. S.E Wilmer and Audrone Zukauskaite (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 193-206, for a discussion of Beckett's tragic laughter.

[251] Rancière, interview with Nina Power, "The excellent institution," *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization,* www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/inteview-jacques-ranci%C3%A8re

system."[252] What follows will therefore test Beckettian hypotheses against the Rancièrian claims contested by the previous chapters.

The impulse to make of *Worstward Ho* a challenging, but ultimately meaningful, text is pursued by various critics at the expense of its rhythm. What words mean in this piece simply cannot be disentangled from the rhythmic generation of their expression. There are three overarching rhythmic patterns that are of concern here and each reveals a particular tension with Rancière: first between Rancière's spatial reframings and Beckett's fundamentally temporal refrain; second between Rancière's insistence on appearance and Beckett's escape; finally, between Rancière's "dramaturgy of the intelligible" and the discordant cries of Beckett's passional body of thought.

Reframe vs. Refrain:

The first rhythm of note in *Worstward Ho* establishes a cyclical structure that carves out of the "dim" the territory of an investigation. This first rhythm follows the pattern of a kind of inverted call and response, statements echoing back from the void as uncertain questions. An assertion is made: "It stands." A question follows: "What?" And a cryptic response is offered: "Yes." Followed by an imperative: "Say it stands."[253] The pacing, circling thoughts that produce this refrain mark out a boundary, a territory. Not for the purpose of enclosure or reframing, but to render it susceptible to exhaustion.

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[252] Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics,* trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 90.

[253] Beckett, *Worstward Ho,* 78.

It is this refrain—statement, question, answer, command—that offers just enough security to map the far edges of the possible. It recalls that most basic refrain described by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*: "A child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath. He walks and halts to his song. Lost, he takes shelter, or orients himself with his little song as best he can. The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing, calm and stable, center in the heart of chaos. Perhaps the child skips as he sings, hastens or slows his pace."[254] Defiant and pleading, commanding and questioning, Beckett's refrain holds precariously to its own rhythm, its only orientation, as it circles and summons the chaos of the void. Characterized by hesitations and accelerations, it negotiates a perilous trajectory as it departs from the security of the possible, with its habitual organizations of experience, toward the abyss of its disappearance.

The nature of Rancière's aversion to Beckett begins to emerge. Fiction, for Rancière, "involves the re-framing of the 'real.'"[255] It is a delineative operation, conceived of in spatial terms. Beckett's refrain, by contrast, is fundamentally temporal, giving shape to a territory that does not preexist the passages and repetitions of its statements, questions, and imperatives. "The dim. The void." cannot simply be revealed, they are glimpsed and sought, "Gone too? Back too?", and momentarily assured only in moments of negation, "No. Say no." The dim is not a space awaiting disclosure by the appropriate reframing that would make it intelligibility; it is summoned. Where Rancière's re-framings make us see otherwise, lending themselves to the

[254] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus,* 311.

[255] Rancière, *Dissensus,* 141.

redetermination of who shares in the common world, the very possibility of a world to share-in is at risk in Beckett's summoning.

Rancière would no doubt resist the resulting *vision douteuse* of temporal uncertainty (which was already explored in Proust's work). If literature is to "carve up one or more common worlds," in Rancière's account, it is so that those worlds are then made available to potential interventions.[256] Even Rancière's account of molecular literary democracy, where he goes the furthest in the direction of the impersonal, "labours to develop the landscape of the visible."[257] This susceptibility to intervention is at the very heart of his politics and Beckett's temporal territory does not attain the necessary stability to stage an intervention in the visible, now gone dim, or the sayable, now unsaid.

For Rancière the field of the sensible is susceptible to reconfigurations. A new composition of the visible and audible can suddenly assert itself, recomposing "what is given as our real, as the object of our perceptions and the field of our interventions."[258] But the frame, even in a reframing, delimits. It offers a new disposition of sensory experience by asserting a new set of accompanying determinations. It is subject to future contestations, but nonetheless retains a degree of stability in itself that allows for the production of new objects of perception, a new configuration of the visible and the audible.

Beckett's refrain, on the other hand, remains tentative. It proceeds in an explorative manner, hence the rhythmic reappearance of questions that slow the forward march of the statements. It does not frame a field of intervention, not even "the impersonal web on which

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[256] Rancière, *Politics of Literature,* 4.

[257] 26.

[258] Dissensus, 148.

'personal' experience writes its own particular scenarios."[259] The rough sketch produced by the refrain emerges only in time, and only to be immediately dissolved: "The void. How try say? How try fail? No try no fail. Say only—."[260] Language attempts to bring the void into being in the statement "The void." But the power of language falters. It cannot summon the void into being by only saying it. It can only "try say." The refrain is necessary for the summoning that the statement alone fails to achieve. It produces only enough stability in order to begin extricating forces from the actualizations that anchor them to the situation. Marking out the very edge of what can be seen and said, this encircling rhythm discovers its limits only by passing and repassing them in the sonorous construction of an insubstantial temporal frame, rather than a stable spatial frame.

The refrain of this piece introduces multiple voices, or at least different inflections to the voice, in order to achieve this summoning, which is also an exhaustion. In this respect, it belongs to the second language of exhaustion that Deleuze outlines. Voices that exhaust language, but in doing so evoke possible worlds that must then be exhausted in their turn. Through the divergence between the different flows that make up this refrain, Beckett begins to carve out a space for the eruption of the void between two series.[261] *Worstward Ho* differentiates between these voices, these "blendable flows," in order to disrupt the homogeneous progression of any world toward consistency. It singularizes them only to then send them back toward indiscernibility, striving for silence.

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[259] *Politics of Literature,* 63.

[260] Beckett, *Worstward Ho,* 83.

[261] Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical,*156.

The emphatic tone of both statements and imperatives drive the piece on, "Somehow on." While the tremulous questions and hesitations nervously sound the chaos thereby unleashed, even as they goad the piece on: "Where it too if not there too? Ask Not. No. Ask in Vain…Ask not if can go. Say no. Unasking no."[262] The terror of the void is present as the piece ventures deeper into the "dim," and this circling refrain maintains just enough security to "Say on" and "Be said on," providing the shelter necessary to orient oneself *Worstward* and proceed. At times like the child in the dark, the pace of the text quickens or slows in reluctance or expectancy, but the footsteps of the two shades nonetheless plod on, their only security in keeping pace with one another: "Hand in hand with equal plod they go" toward the imperceptible and unsayable, whose very unavailability for intervention make Rancière so deeply uncomfortable. [263]

Appearance vs. Escape

The second fundamental rhythm that structures this piece is the tidal cadence of a voyage: "Inletting all. Outletting all."[264] This is the exhaustive determination that follows the direction declared by the title—*Worstward*. It resonates with the theme of the original *Westward Ho!,* to which the title mockingly refers. The great open space of the unknown associated with the daring sea voyages of the original reemerges, but the colonial impulse to chart and lay claim that characterized the original has most certainly disappeared; who, after all, would lay claim to the worst?

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[262] Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, 84.

[263] 80.

[264] 98.

This rhythm expresses the inexorable drive to the other side of the possible that swells, rolling forward, breaks, retreats, and surges onward again. It begins on an upsurge, "On Say on. Be said on. Somehow on," breaks upon a limit point, "Till nohow on," stutters and froths on the shore of this nohow and retreats: "…Move in. Out of. Back into. No. No out. No back. Only in. Stay in. On in. Still."[265] Each approach is matched by an undertow that undermines the possibility of unencumbered progress toward any end, whether saying something or none: "Say a body. Where none. No mind. Where none. That at least. A place. Where none."[266] The power of language to make a body appear, even "Where None," is driven up against the challenge to make body, place, and mind disappear: "They fade…Fade? No. Sudden go. Sudden back."[267] The "sudden back" of reappearance persistently threatens the progress of fading.

Where for Rancière the task of art lies firmly in the realm of appearance, it is through such a disappearance that Beckett is determined to achieve an escape. There is no "real world," for Rancière, outside of appearance. In redistributing appearance, therefore, fiction engages directly in the production of "our real."[268] In claiming that "appearance is not the mask of a given reality. It is an effective reconfiguration of the given, of what is visible, and therefore what can be said about it and done with respect to it," Rancière saves art from the accusation of trifling in *mere* appearances.[269]

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[265] 77.

[266] 77.

[267] 81.

[268] Rancière, *Dissensus,* 148.

[269] 207.

He simultaneously does away with any basis for asserting the necessity of the present order; the real, after all, is only the result of a particular configuration of appearances. This allows Rancière to develop his "critique de la nécessité historique," which culminates in the declaration that there are always "plusieurs présents dans un présent."[270] Other configurations of the present, therefore, subsist within the existing order, awaiting an appropriate reframing in order to make the leap into visibility. For Beckett, however, the 'real' of appearances is also anchored by the structure of the possible, such that it is not immediately susceptible to reconfiguration, despite the rejection of necessity.

The stage of appearance is of less concern to him than the powers necessary to forge an escape from the structure of the possible that assures, not only a particular configuration of visibility and audibility, but the conditions for the stage of a common world itself. It is not only what immediately appears, but what can come to appear that is determined by the possible, which forms a "marginal world," that "mantle or background, where other objects and other ideas may come forth in accordance with the laws of transition which regulate the passage from one to another."[271] Rather than the visibility of appearances, Beckett's tidal rhythm upsets the regulation of this very coming forth. Working the passages and transitions that it dictates back and forth against one another ("in. Out of. Back into") in order to exhaust the marginal world that regulates them.

The capacity to "say" is not privileged over that of "unsaying" or "silencing," in Beckett. Likewise, to "see" and "be seen" are not preferred to rendering "invisible." Beckett's

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[270] Rancière, *La Méthode de L'égalité: Entretien avec Laurent Jeanpierre et Dork Zabunyan* (Paris: Bayard, 2012), 259.

[271] Deleuze, *Logic of Sense,* 305.

simultaneous "See no more. Say no more. That alone...," jettisons reconfiguration in favor of striking out to escape the effectuations, contiguities, and transitions of the possible.[272] In the manner of Tournier's Robinson Crusoe, *Worstward Ho* engages in the arduous, sometimes tedious—"All of old. Ever tired. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."—work of extrication.[273] As Crusoe reflects: "this shedding of context was not completed in a day. At first, and as it were instinctively, I projected possible observers-parameters—onto hilltops or behind rocks or into the branches of trees. The island was thus charted by a network of interpolations and extrapolations which lent it different aspects and rendered it meaningful. This is what every normal man does in a normal situation."[274] The network of interpolations and extrapolations is not merely redrawn, as per a Rancièrian account; it must be shed, reaching a state in which the possible itself, that source of stable appearances, collapses.

Beckett achieves this extrication without having recourse to the physical separation of the desert island. It is the journey itself and not the hypothesis of isolation that is of importance to the escape enacted by *Worstward Ho*, which takes the world with it. The coordinates of habitual appearance are left behind in order to generate an image that owes as little as possible to the stability of appearances—"Worsening shades. In the dim void," and nothing more.[275] As Pascal Casanova writes: "[there are] no more referents, no more attempts to imitate reality or provide an equivalent to it, no more direct links of transposition or description of the worlds – a text that

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[272] Beckett, *Worstward Ho,* 83.

[273] 77.

[274] Tournier, *Friday,* 55.

[275] Beckett, *Worstward Ho,* 85

is indebted solely to itself for the fact that it could be written." [276] This nicely identifies some of the goals of the text's escape, but it is a much too conclusive account. It posits as having been accomplished a process that the piece in fact never completes. It is, after all, Deleuze reminds us, "extremely difficult to tear all these adhesions away from the image," to effectuate a real escape.[277] It cannot be done by fiat, through single word such as "nothing" or "void." As Beckett knows very well, it must be attained rhythmically.

Disclosure is the fundamental gesture of Rancièrian re-framings, the disclosure of a different present within the present.[278] He will insist on the equal capacity of all to *be* visible and audible, the condition being that they invent the means by which to achieve the necessary sensory re-framing. Where, for Rancière, fiction and its interventions belong to the "localizable present,"[279] Beckett instigates a journey that is non-localizable, consisting solely in the trajectory of an escape: "No ground. Plod as on void."[280] Rancière manages to make the stereoscopic image of the present contingent, as it is no longer assured by necessity. Beckett, on the other hand, subjects time to the aberrant movement of this tidal cadence, in order to render the present, not only contingent, but profoundly mutable. While the present has become susceptible to reconfiguration, in Rancière, it nonetheless remains a framed image, not yet permitting the dynamism that is persistently suppressed in his fundamentally spatial account of the distribution of the sensible.

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[276] Pascale Casanova, *Samuel Beck*ett (New York: Verso, 2006), 21.

[277] Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical,* 158.

[278] Rancière, *Méthode de L'égalité* , 259.

[279] *Politics of Literature,* 74.

[280] Beckett, *Worstward Ho,* 82.

This second of the three rhythms disrupts the relation between space and time presupposed by habitual experience, which Deleuze describes as follows: "J'avance, j'avance, tête obstinée, poum poum poum poum... Et quand j'avance c'est comme si j'ouvrais devant moi l'espace mais à condition de fermer derrière moi le temps. Quelle drôle de démarche, mais c'est ça, avancer. C'est pour ça qu'il vaut mieux ne pas trop avancer…" The steady beat of advancement is accompanied by a closing-off of time in one's wake. This is precisely the reason that flight must not primarily be a problem of space, but of time. The acceleration of spatial flight would only consign more time to the closure of having passed. As Deleuze continues, "Les personnages de Beckett, ont découvert cette vérité fondamentale, si bien qu'ils bougent extrêmement peu. "[281]

In *Worstward Ho* Beckett goes further than the gradual descent of his characters into greater and greater immobility. He does away with characters altogether, leaving only the "shades," who move, but only in time as they "plod unreceding on."[282] He attempts to prove "que c'est le temps qui est fondamentalement ouvert et l'espace fondamentalement fermé."[283] The steady "poum poum poum" of advancement is replaced by the contrary temporal flows of this tidal rhythm. Like Proust's meanwhile, this second rhythm moves in contradictory directions—"For to gain time. Time to lose. Gain time to lose."—releasing time from the closures of space.[284] The meanwhile, "in pastless now," does away with the security of a static image of the past and simultaneously affirms that there is "No future in this. Alas yes.,"

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[281] Deleuze, "Vérité Temps, Puissance de Faux," (lecture, Univ. Vincennes, 22/11/83).

[282] Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, 82.

[283] Deleuze, "Vérité, Temps."

[284] Beckett, *Worstward Ho,* 84.

foreclosing the anticipation of a future that would be recognizable in advance.[285] In a Beckettian register, the meanwhile would be "A time when try see. Try say," at once the vastness of anticipatory expectation and the tiny gap through which the dim steals in: "How small. How vast. How if not boundless bounded."[286]

"Dramaturgy of the Intelligible" vs. Passional Body of Thought:

The final rhythmic component worthy of note in *Worstward Ho* is the interruptive cry, the rare points of exclamation that burst forth among the questions, responses, commands, and exhaustions of the first and second rhythms. These exclamatory irruptions cluster in the middle of the piece, where, as Deleuze would say, things take on speed. What is particularly striking about this series of interjections is their discordant affirmation of precisely what the *Worstward* direction of the text attempts to leave behind: "Meaning—meaning!—," "How almost true they sometimes almost ring! How wanting in inanity!," "True. True!," "That near true ring!" And, perhaps most forcefully, the call to joy: "Just enough still to joy. Joy! Just enough still to joy that only they. Only!"

At the level of the discourse of worsening these exclamations are strikingly incongruous. What room is there for meaning, truth, or joy in the progressive worsening of exhaustion? These declarations neither follow logically from what has come before, nor anticipate what will follow. "This is the absurd logic of a crucial Beckettian torsion," reflects Gibson, "the work of worsening ironically releases a phantom of adequation which gives one the heart for more

[285] 94; 79.

[286] 79.

worsening." He argues that the logic of joy here is "to decree that one will never arrive at the worst."[287] But this meager reassurance is not equal to the effects of this torsion. The phantom of adequation ("That near true ring!") is not simply the expression of a remainder of intelligibility, however, but the mark of a transformation.

The passional and transformative register of these cries becomes evident when rather than engaging in "a systematic reading in pursuit of the general idea," we pursue, what Deleuze, refers to as an "affective reading, without an idea of the whole…carried along or set down, put in motion or at rest, shaken or calmed according to the velocity of this or that part."[288] It then becomes evident that the "almost true" of words does lie in their managing to still approximate some meaning despite exhaustion. It points to what they might *do* because of it—releasing potentiality in a burst from its habitual actualizations. To Rancière's "new fabric of collective experience…new scenery of the visible and…new dramaturgy of the intelligible," these interjections oppose impassioned cries, unwilling to stage the scene of their own intelligibility.[289] Words become sonorous bodies, released to be formed again, only just enough for that and nothing more.

This transformation cannot endure, which is why these exclamations emerge in the middle. Exhaustion must continue doggedly on. If joy were the remainder, a residue left after the fact of exhaustion, it would come at the end. Meaning, truth, and joy are not simply the vestiges of the appearances, identities, and emotions that have been exhausted; they are the vectors of a

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[287] Andrew Gibson, *Beckett and Badiou: The Pathos of Intermittency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 222.

[288] Deleuze, "Ethology: Spinoza and Us," in *Zone 6 Incorporations,* trans. Robert Hurley, ed. J. Crary and S. Kwinter (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 631.

[289] Rancière, Dissensus 141.

struggle, the signs of an uncertain victory. Escaping because of, and not despite exhaustion, such cries have little to do with a new intelligibility of the sensory field. They may be "wanting in inanity," but only because they simultaneously produce something like meaning ("meaning!") and refuse to make sense (!—). In this respect they are closely related to the blanks that tear through the discursive fabric of the piece: "No hands in the—.", "Time to—", "Say only—."[290]

These exclamations accelerate the piece, achieving the intense velocity of a sudden change of state. They belong to the Deleuzian philosopher's cry, which has nothing to do with the discursive quality of song:

> Chacun sait que chez les oiseaux, on distingue les cris et les chants. Le cri d'alarme, par exemple, n'est pas un chant...les discours ne sont pas la même chose que les cris, les discours c'est le chant des philosophes. C'est leur manière de chanter, et voilà qu'il y a des cris philosophiques…on sait bien que ce sont des cris alors, et que là, la philosophie y trouve les points de sa naissance, de sa vie.[291]

Such cries take one of two forms, either "vous ne pouvez pas nier que …" or the "et si moi je nie…[qui] lance la lutte contre les évidences...," neither of which attempt to logically account for themselves. In the case of Beckett's call to joy, they form the point at which *Worstward Ho* stakes its claim, refusing for a moment to either advance or retreat. The call to joy pivots precariously between the affirmation that no one can deny that despite everything some joy remains, perhaps even some hope, and the cry of unreason that declares that it is only through the very work of worsening that, against all evidence to the contrary, against the reigning consensus

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[290] Beckett, *Worstward Ho* 91; 88.

[291] Deleuze, "Cinema/Pensée," (lecture, Univ. Vincennes, 30/10/84).

of disbelief in this world, there can be "Just enough still to joy." The latter, "tout en faisant partie d'un tout autre monde," expresses the outcome of a combat in this world.[292] Rather than a staging that reconfigures the intelligible, the cry signals the creation of the possible—a new possibility of life.

Rancière attributes to the aesthetic regime of art a "molecular democracy" that is at a remove from the actions and emotions of any particular subject. "This is the point" he writes, "where the reference to Spinoza takes on an operative value. It provides the principle for a revolution in fiction, a reversal of the ontology and psychology proper to the representative system. In place of its types of individuals, mechanisms of passion, and concatenations of actions, absolute style sets forth the dance of atoms carried along in the great river of the infinite..."[293] The psychology and individuality of emotions and actions are certainly swept away, but we must take issue with the "dance of atoms," evoked by Rancière. Spinoza is not interested in dancing atoms. Even from the point of view of Nature, what is set forth is a constant composition and decomposition of *relations*.

The exhaustive procedures to which Beckett subjects thought, do not cause it to deteriorate into individual atoms, but to change shape as it is forced into new relations. Joy emerges from words because rather than a neutral fabric of meaning, the cry expresses a transformative encounter. As Audrey Wasser explains, "If the encounter is able to determine a mutation in thought this is only because, like the body, thought is passional, and has the capacity

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[292] "Cinema/Pensée."

[293] Rancière, *Politics of Literature*, 118.

to be affected."[294] Beckett's work, therefore, like Spinoza's and unlike Rancière's, engages in what Deleuze calls a "*lutte passionnelle"* "in order that a little joy might be saved that could make us leave the shadow and change kind"[295].

In Beckett, this "shadow" is not just that of sad passions, in the sense that Deleuze means here, but also the shadows that shelter the strange experiments of worsening and hide illicit commonings of the excluded who, like Albertine, escape the visibilities and audibilities that determine a given social field. This form of the shadows provides the necessary shelter from Rancière's "dramaturgy of the intelligible," which demands that one step into the light and account for oneself. This is why, amidst such declarations of the joyful emergence of a new possibility of life forged in the shadows, *Worstward Ho* ventures the declaration: "Say the night is young alas and take heart."[296] "The night is young alas," in the sense that it is early yet in the trials of exhaustion and there is much work of worsening to come. The pleasures and rewards promised in taking one's rightful place on the stage of visibility and audibility are not offered here. But "take heart" nonetheless because it is only in the shadows of this young night that the creation of new possibilities of life can commence. Such are the illicit encounters (from which even the passional body of thought is no longer exempt) that might scandalize Rancière with his dancing atoms.

The pernicious and incurable optimism that this project opened with has given way to something darker and paradoxically more joyous. For all Beckett's supposed bleakness, it is only beyond optimism that we might discover joy. The meanwhile does not only offer a different

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[294] Wasser, "Relentless Spinozism,"125.

[295] Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical,* 145.

[296] Beckett, *Worstward Ho,* 84.

strategic orientation toward conceiving of the transformative potential of art, emphasizing the temporal rather than spatial component of it. It also offers a different affective configuration, replacing hope and optimism—with their weak defiance before the impossible—for the uncompromising desolation of the exhaustion of the possible and its stubborn knack for discovering joy.

> To return once more to Jameson's assessment of Utopia in the modern age, he asks: Does this peculiar entity still have a social function? If it no longer does so, then perhaps the explanation lies in that extraordinary historical dissociation into two distinct worlds which characterizes globalization today. In one of these worlds, the disintegration of the social is so absolute—misery, poverty, unemployment, starvation, squalor, violence and death—that the intricately elaborated social schemes of utopian thinkers become as frivolous as they are irrelevant. In the other, unparalleled wealth, computerized production, scientific and medical discoveries unimaginable a century ago as well as an endless variety of commercial and cultural pleasures, seem to have rendered utopian fantasy and speculation as boring and antiquated as pre-technological narratives of space flight.

The proponents of optimism tend to display a mature cynicism and ironic distance in relation to the misery and violence of the first of these two worlds. Refusing to believe in *this* world, in the capacity for its transformation, they all the while hold out hope for a future made miraculously possible by the technologies and pleasures of the second. But even if wealth and technology could somehow create another world, we would still, like Robinson on his desert island, have yet

to learn to live and desire otherwise. The potential to recompose oneself in an ongoing escape in which thought and the world are equally at stake, this is the very heart of Rancière's inability to cope with either Beckettian exhaustion or Proustian joy, which is also to say Proustian exhaustion or Beckett's joy.

Fugitive vs. Ethical Community:

The question of political community raised in the analysis of Akerman suggests a further direction for this project to take, to trace what this fugitive position means for currently marginalized communities. The capacity of film to represent marginalized populations, to proffer recognition and compel viewers to *look,* is widely understood as fundamental to its political potential. Conversely, reorienting our understanding of community around this fugitive movement, would shift the focus away from the often paternalistic discourses of improvement and assimilation, looking instead to filmic techniques invented by and in relation to marginal populations in order to continuously evade and refuse the values, identities and sensibility imposed by the existing political landscape.

This is something quite other than the bearing "witness to the fact of the unpresentable" that Rancière associates with "an ethical community which revokes every project of collective emancipation," and forms the basis of his critique of Lyotard and even Deleuze. [297]Instead, the argument turns on the idea that it is precisely because of their exclusion from society's benefits that such populations, often understood as seeking admission, have also exploited the invisibility imposed upon them in order to engage in the creation of another possible world, sharing in the

[297] Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, 20-21.

invention of what I will call fugitive communities. Such communities are fugitive to the extent that they carry out an ongoing flight from the existing modes of representation rather than appealing to them, and also in the sense that the forms of 'commoning' that they invent are ephemeral and yet strategic, escaping the reifying and homogenizing impulses that often characterize community building.

For all that this project puts pressure on Rancière's understanding of the politics of aesthetics, he is right to remind us of the violent disgrace that risks being covered-over by the affirmation of concepts such as the nomadic, or in this instance the fugitive. "The nomadic moments invoked as evidence of the explosive power of the multitudes," he cautions, for example, "are in essence the movements of populations that have been forced to flee the violence of nation-states and the dire misery into which these failed states have dragged them."[298] But the shift in focus toward the fugitive does not exalt the sufferings of marginality or deflate the importance of attacking the violent mechanisms of oppression that such communities contend with.

It seeks instead to leverage the fugitive inventions that arise out of necessity against the sensibilities and values of a society that attenuates the collective possibilities even of its beneficiaries. Instead of understanding politics as an effort to make the lives of the marginalized more closely resemble those of the privileged, this project insists on the imperative to think in the opposite direction. Rather than formulating the problematic around issues of inclusion and recognition, the question becomes: how can the fugitive strategies produced by such films begin to teach us how to escape unsustainable forms of colonial life?

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[298] *Dissensus,* 89.

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