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## THE “DEBRIS OF EXPERIENCE”: THE CINEMA OF MARCEL PROUST AND RAOUL RUIZ

As the last and most theoretical volume of Marcel Proust's novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*, *Le Temps retrouvé* would appear to be a very unlikely source of inspiration for a major motion picture. In almost every possible way it resists an adaptation into another artistic medium, particularly since it narrates the discovery of a literary vocation. *Le Temps retrouvé*, more than any other volume, presupposes a familiarity with the plots and characters of all six preceding volumes of Proust's novel and so a cinematic adaptation either must trust that the film spectator already knows Proust's work or must incorporate elements from the whole novel into its portrayal of the last volume. *Le Temps retrouvé* contains practically no plot on which to base a dramatic representation, unlike other sections of the novel, such as *Un Amour de Swann* and *La Prisonnière*, that have both been more or less successfully adapted into film.<sup>1</sup> Most importantly however, it is in this volume where Proust, or his narrator, aggressively denounces cinema as incapable of portraying the true nature of time. Raoul Ruiz's film adaptation of *Le Temps retrouvé*, in grappling with perhaps the least adaptable of texts, pushes the boundaries of the cinematic form in order to conceive new ways of creating images of time that would rival those of Proust's literary inventions.<sup>2</sup>

### *Proust and Cinema*

Proust's *Le Temps retrouvé* follows the narrator's discovery that his reliance on a spatial foundation of identity, manifested in his obsession with various places (Balbec, Venice, and Combray), has led him astray from his vocation as a writer of a book about time. Only through an experience and exploration of time can he understand the “essence” of the world and realize the full potential of literature. Naturally, cinema's reliance on spatial imagery as its primary

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1. See Marion Schmid and Martine Beugnet, *Proust at the Movies* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2004), as well as Peter Kravanja, *Proust à l'écran* (Brussels: Éditions de la lettre volée, 2003) for comprehensive studies of the various adaptations and influence on cinema of Proust's novel.

2. *Le Temps retrouvé*, dir. Raoul Ruiz (Kino, 1999).

mode of expression along with its dependence on a succession of still images to create the illusion of movement pose an apparent threat to Marcel's new-found cult of time. For the narrator, cinema fails because it relies on what can be captured on film, the simple common denominator of reality that presents itself in the same manner to everyone: "cette espèce de déchet de l'expérience, à peu près identique pour chacun."<sup>3</sup> Literature, for Proust's narrator, works through metaphor to mediate perception and memory, bridging time through mental images, as opposed to cinema's visual images.

Proust's critique of cinema as a debris of experience, an illusion of reality produced by a seemingly objective machine, echoes debates that emerged at the beginning of cinema and continue today as film theory grapples with the nature of cinema itself in the wake of new technologies for capturing moving images. In his classic work on cinematic adaptation, *Novels into Film*, George Bluestone shares a similar line of reasoning with Proust's narrator when he proposes that the difference between the two media, cinema and literature, lies in the nature of their images: the film is composed of visual, and therefore spatial, images; the novel of mental images.<sup>4</sup> More fundamentally for Bluestone, film and novel place their emphasis on opposing elements of human experience: "Both novel and film are time arts, but whereas the formative principle in the novel is time, the formative principle of the film is space. Where the novel takes its space for granted and forms its narrative in a complex of time values, the film takes its time for granted and forms its narrative in arrangements of space."<sup>5</sup> Only the novel, from this perspective, can successfully capture lost time because its narrative modulates the experience of time whereas cinema is, or appears to be, limited to the mechanized time of (greater than sixteen) frames per second.<sup>6</sup>

As Mary Ann Doane, among others, has shown, the shock of modernity, of a mechanized and monetized temporal experience, is both embodied and thwarted by cinema, since the movie camera produces a mechanical

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3. Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 4 vols., 1987–1989) IV 468. All further quotations from the *Recherche* are from this edition indicated by volume and page numbers.

4. George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, [1957] 2003) 1.

5. Bluestone 61.

6. More recent film theory challenges this assumption. As Robert Stam claims, "The cinema is ideally equipped to magically multiply times and spaces; it has the capacity to mingle very diverse temporalities and spatialities." Robert Stam, "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," *Literature and Film*, eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 13.

abstraction of lived experience in the service of archiving the image of the present, of time.<sup>7</sup> The attraction of cinema is linked to this duality, to cinema's ability to refer to a past reality (its indexicality) and to the unexpected effect in the future of projecting images of time (its contingency). In Doane's words, "The developing classical conventions [of early cinema] structure time and contingency in ways consonant with the broader rationalization and abstraction of time in an industrialized modernity . . . Cinema comprises simultaneously the rationalization of time and an homage to contingency."<sup>8</sup> If the cinematic form is a structuring of time and contingency (albeit one that is problematized and self-aware), it would indeed run counter to the Proustian notions of time and the role of art. For Christie McDonald, Proust's novelistic project depends upon the chance associations of involuntary memory, that is, what lies beyond a rational or mechanical understanding of time.<sup>9</sup> Proust's writing, in the form of his "general laws," sought to extract the universal truth from individual experience without privileging one or the other; according to McDonald, "Proust wrote literature, as Heidegger and Wittgenstein were to write philosophy, in order to display the universality and necessity of the individual and the contingent. He was a master at making the contingent into a given, at linking the singular and the universal."<sup>10</sup> Cinema's mechanical and rational time excludes the singular, the individual experience of time and so cannot lead to a universal truth.

A closer reading of the passage in Proust's *Le Temps retrouvé* where the narrator confronts cinema uncovers a more nuanced perspective on the relationship between novel and film. Midway through the text, directly following the five successive episodes of involuntary memory experienced by the narrator while he is waiting in the Guermantes's library, the narrator realizes that his vocation is to be a writer, in particular a writer of a book about time. Involuntary memory serves a crucial role in that it teaches him how to convey his experience through art, or more precisely, metaphor. Only metaphor can bridge the distance between two sensations in the way that involuntary memory bridges two separate times. Metaphor is the key element of literature for Proust because it allows for the perception, indeed the recovery, of time. The narrator's criticism of cinema interrupts, literally breaks into, this theoretical elaboration of metaphor and time:

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7. Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, and the Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002).

8. Doane 32.

9. Christie McDonald, *The Proustian Fabric: Associations of Memory* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1991) 36–37.

10. McDonald 15.

Une image offerte par la vie nous apportait en réalité à ce moment-là des sensations multiples et différentes. [. . .] Une heure n'est pas qu'une heure, c'est un vase rempli de parfums, de sons, de projets et de climats. Ce que nous appelons la réalité est un certain rapport entre ces sensations et ces souvenirs qui nous entourent simultanément – *rapport que supprime une simple vision cinématographique, laquelle s'éloigne par là d'autant plus du vrai qu'elle prétend se borner à lui* – rapport unique que l'écrivain doit retrouver pour en enchaîner à jamais dans sa phrase les deux termes différents. On peut faire se succéder indéfiniment dans une description les objets qui figuraient dans le lieu décrit, la vérité ne commencera qu'au moment où l'écrivain prendra deux objets différents, posera les rapports, analogue dans le monde de l'art à celui qu'est le rapport unique de la loi causale dans le monde de la science, et les enfermera dans les anneaux d'un beau style. Même, ainsi que la vie, quand en rapprochant une qualité commune à deux sensations, il dégagera leur essence commune en les réunissant l'une et l'autre pour les soustraire aux contingences du temps, dans une métaphore.<sup>11</sup> [My emphasis]

The purported realism expressed through cinema conceals the true reality of time because it only captures the remainders of an image, "cette espèce de déchet de l'expérience"; a "debris" that would be a common denominator of perception unable to evoke the memory of past sensations. With literature, on the contrary, when virtual, past perceptions are forced to coexist with present sensations, as in the "anneaux d'un beau style" of literary metaphor or in involuntary memory, two places are forced to occupy the same space and pure time is perceived momentarily.<sup>12</sup> The taste of the madeleine forces all of Combray to open out of a teacup, and the essence of Marcel's past is transported to the present.

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11. IV 467–68.

12. According to Gilles Deleuze in *Proust et les signes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), Proust conceives of time as consisting of a past that coexists with the present it was—to use the Bergsonian vocabulary adopted by Deleuze, the virtual (the past) exists alongside the actual (the present). Conscious perception, voluntary memory, and cinema portray time as a succession of presents cut off from the past: "Mais c'est parce que les exigences conjointes de la perception consciente et de la mémoire volontaire établissent une succession réelle là où, plus profondément, il y a une coexistence virtuelle" (73). Literature's superiority, for Proust, rests in its ability to show through metaphor time's dual nature as virtual and actual, whereas cinema continually projects their disunion as a succession of separate moments.

Cinema's unexpected appearance in the middle of the long Proustian sentence exposes its repressed importance: the two hyphens that bracket the anti-cinema diatribe connect the description of past memories and present sensations to the work of the literary writer in the eye of the reader. The reference to cinema imitates visually what the writer is supposed to do linguistically, "enchaîner à jamais dans sa phrase les deux termes différents." Proust plays with a negative image of film to arrive at a conception of literature's potential. Cinema is necessary to literature's revelation of time, if only to mark the difference between surface reality (the domain of cinema) and the more profound truth, at least according to the Proustian narrator, created by literature. Following the narrator's logic, a simple cinematic vision as the embodiment of mechanized time would serve to make time pass, to hide the essence of reality, which must be discovered later through the work of literature.

Cinema not only connects the writer to two aspects of time (the actual perception of the present and the virtual or remembered perception of the past), but also, and more fundamentally, as the narrator says, cinematic vision "suppresses" the relationship between these two aspects of time: memory and perception. The spatial images caught and projected by film would focus exclusively on surface perception and would discard memory, resulting in the suppression, or the passing, of time. Film and media theorist Raymond Bellour links Proust's notion of the suppression of time by cinema from the end of the *Recherche* to a sentence from the very beginning of *Combray*, when the narrator describes the magic lantern: "Et rien ne pouvait arrêter sa lente chevauchée."<sup>13</sup> The cinema machine, likewise, cannot be stopped, it cannot, therefore, reflect or think; the capacity to combine different moments in time, to show the image of thought would be confined to the domain of literature. Yet, Bellour argues, the greatest cineastes have always forced the cinematic image to slow down or stop ("arrêt sur image"), producing the effect of thought, and by extension a thinking spectator, "un spectateur pensif."<sup>14</sup> The endless unfurling of isolated presents captured by the movie camera, which inspires such horror in Proust's narrator, is turned on itself, made to reflect and think, by the film director, who thus invents a singular experience out of the common "déchet de l'expérience."

If a cinematic image can reflect upon itself, it can also magnify its own process of recording time, cinema's "suppression" or separation of time's two components, in order to render visible time itself, its continual division into actual perception and virtual memory. A year after Bellour's short essay on

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13. I 10; Raymond Bellour, *L'Entre-Images: Photo, Cinéma, Vidéo* (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 2002) 71.

14. Bellour 71.

Proust and cinema, Gilles Deleuze conceived of such a filmic manifestation of time in his *Cinéma 1* and *2* through a paradoxical reworking of Henri Bergson's very anti-cinema philosophy of indivisible movement and time as *durée*.<sup>15</sup>

For Deleuze, cinema presents time indirectly through images that are in movement and in relation to each other as sets (*ensembles*) are to wholes (*touts*)—a conceptual move similar to the passages on boxes and vases he analyzed twenty years earlier in *Proust et les signes*.<sup>16</sup> More importantly, cinema presents time directly through what he terms “time-images” or, borrowing from Felix Guattari, “crystals of time.”<sup>17</sup> A time crystal is an image where the virtual coexists with its own actual present in a state of indeterminacy before they split off into past and future:

Ce qui constitue l'image-cristal, c'est l'opération la plus fondamentale du temps: puisque le passé ne se constitue pas après le présent qu'il a été, mais en même temps, il faut que le temps se dédouble à chaque instant en présent et passé, qui diffèrent l'un de l'autre en nature, ou, ce qui revient au même, dédouble le présent en deux directions hétérogènes, dont l'une s'élançe vers l'avenir et l'autre tombe dans le passé [. . .]. Le temps consiste dans cette scission, et c'est elle, c'est lui qu'on voit dans le cristal.<sup>18</sup>

Similar though not identical to Proust's metaphors that connect virtual memory to present, actual perception, Deleuze's cinematic time crystal exposes time's fundamental dual nature as virtual and actual by juxtaposing the virtual and actual in the same image and eliminating the distinction between the two.

The emblematic crystal image for Deleuze would consist of cinema's self-reflexivity, of shots of mirrors in film, where virtual and actual are indeterminate, such as at the funhouse sequence at the spectacular end of Orson Welles's “The Lady from Shanghai” or in Alain Resnais's “L'Année dernière à Marienbad,” where the endless tracking shots of a baroque hall of mirrors reflect and produce the temporal uncertainty of the narrative. Other manifestations of time crystals can be seen in the presence of multiple versions of the same character or in any technique of mise en abyme such as films about film.

15. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 1 L'Image-mouvement* (Paris: Minuit, 1983); *Cinéma 2 L'Image-temps* (Paris: Minuit, 1985). For an explanation of Bergson's conception of time, as well as reception of his theories, see Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2006).

16. *Proust et les signes* 73.

17. Félix Guattari, *L'Inconscient machinique* (Paris: Éditions Recherches, 1979).

18. *Cinéma 2* 108–9.

For Deleuze, Proust was the first in the realm of the novel to have discovered time's dual nature.<sup>19</sup>

If Proust's *Le Temps retrouvé* explicitly rejects the notion that cinema is an art of time and thus equal to literature, the details of his text implicitly call for a reevaluation of cinema's relationship to the novel. Cinema's mechanical "scission" of time, its "suppression" of the two aspects of time, may, for Proust, only result in a "déchet de l'expérience," a remainder or waste product brought about by the destructive work of time. But by turning the cinematic machine on itself, by filming the "debris" in the process of becoming, a film director creates a readable, singular, text. Combining the tools of the myriad other optical devices that find their way into the *Recherche* (from the magic lantern to the photograph, along with magnifying glasses and telescopes), cinema makes a virtue of the vice denounced by Marcel: by showing the process of the separation of time into its two components, the actual and the virtual, cinema, in its most rarified manifestations, arrives at the very image of time.<sup>20</sup>

### *Ruiz's Search*

Film theory claims for cinema Proust's recuperation of time through art. Raoul Ruiz, in his own writing on film but most strikingly in his film "Le Temps retrouvé," translates the hundreds of pages of Proust's general laws and theories into cinematic practice in a way that continues and expands Proust's literary exploration of time, while being informed by Deleuze's interpretations of Proust and cinema. Remarkably, Ruiz experiments with time using the simplest of cinematic techniques, most often, as he himself claims, borrowed from Proust's contemporaries Méliès, the Lumière brothers, and Max Linder.<sup>21</sup> In Ruiz's film, Proust's book itself becomes the virtual, as episodes from all volumes of the *Recherche* are evoked in the film without being contextualized. The filmic narrative relies on a prior experience with the novel, though not necessarily a familiarity with the actual text. Ruiz, in an interview with Stéphane Bouquet in *Cahiers du cinéma*, asserts that any experience we may have with Proust's novel is always virtual: "Il faut postuler que personne n'a lu Proust, que ceux qui l'ont lu l'ont oublié, et que chacun, même s'il ne l'a

19. *Cinéma* 2 110.

20. As Roger Shattuck writes, "Proust drew on an incredibly rich repertory of metaphors. But it is principally through the science and the art of *optics* that he beholds and depicts the world. Truth—and Proust believed in it—is a miracle of vision." Roger Shattuck, *Proust's Binoculars: A Study of Memory, Time, and Recognition in À la recherche du temps perdu* (New York: Random House, 1963) 6.

21. Interview with Stéphane Bouquet, "Dans le laboratoire de *La Recherche*, entretien avec Raoul Ruiz," *Cahiers du cinéma* 535 (1999): 48.

pas lu, se rappelle quelque chose."<sup>22</sup> No one who has read Proust can remember all three thousand pages at once, and forgetting is just as fundamental to the mechanics of the novel as remembering, for time cannot be regained unless it has first been lost. At the same time, anyone who has not read the novel is already immersed in the changes in contemporary culture wrought by Proust or is at least surrounded by the waves of kitsch that emanate from the Proustian mythology.<sup>23</sup> This past experience with Proust's written work serves as a virtual memory to be superposed with the "actual" experience of cinema's own means of production and thereby creates an image of time as both virtual and actual. Ruiz, by his own admission, sets out not to explain the literary work, nor to render it into images, but to evoke it as a virtual image, a memory common to all. Ruiz recalls a memory of the novel to emerge in the film viewer (through explicit quotations of passages and references to various episodes throughout the *Recherche*) and simultaneously forces that memory to coexist with an obvious filmic experience, an actual image that nonetheless strives to differentiate itself from the original, virtual novel.

Beyond the critique of cinematic time, however, the narrator's claim in Proust's novel that cinema only depicts a surface reality, a debris of experience, uncovers a more profound truth about the nature of the image in the novel and in cinema. To see the image of time in cinema, there must be indeterminacy in the passing of time, the virtual must be indiscernible from and continually change places with the actual.<sup>24</sup> Proust's novel claims the same phenomenon for involuntary memory, when the memories of past and present places coexist and render us incapable of choosing between them.<sup>25</sup> In the case of Ruiz's film adaptation, the film must be in turn matter and memory, readable and visual, projected on a flat space and immersed in the depth of time. When cinema or literature render the image of time, distinctions between spatial and temporal, visual and linguistic representations become indiscernible at the instant of their becoming.

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22. "Dans le laboratoire de *La Recherche*" 53.

23. For a detailed analysis of postmodern Proustian kitsch, see the final chapter of Margaret E. Gray's *Postmodern Proust* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1992).

24. *Cinéma* 2 109.

25. "Ces résurrections du passé, dans la seconde qu'elles durent, sont si totales qu'elles n'obligent pas seulement nos yeux à cesser de voir la chambre qui est près d'eux pour regarder la voie bordée d'arbres ou la marée montante. Elles forcent nos narines à respirer l'air de lieux pourtant lointains, notre volonté à choisir entre les divers projets qu'ils nous proposent, notre personne toute entière à se croire entourée par eux, ou du moins à trébucher entre eux et les lieux présents, dans l'étourdissement d'une incertitude pareille à celle qu'on éprouve parfois devant une vision ineffable, au moment de s'endormir" (IV 453-54).



The doubled, or enfolded, image of time produces, in turn, figural images, hieroglyphs that incite both aesthetic and conceptual interpretation. For Julia Kristeva, Proust's narrator seeks to decipher impressions (as opposed to signs or ideas) that manifest themselves as hieroglyphs: "The Proustian impression, which takes one thing for another, is another word for metaphor. [. . .] Impressions, which are *sensory hieroglyphs* or *figured truths*, always take the form of 'complex abracadabras,' of superimpositions in which the Platonic idea is only one thread among many."<sup>26</sup> Impressions, not signs, are associative, and when figured in a hieroglyph, they blur the boundaries between the rational and the irrational, the visual and the decipherable. Likewise, in cinema, the present and the past, as well as and especially the visual and the readable, become indistinguishable, according to Deleuze, in the figural image of time projected by cinema.<sup>27</sup> In a film adaptation, space and time, word and image become fused in a hybrid image; the actualization of virtual time occurs in space just as the depth of an abstract linguistic concept appears through printed letters on a flat page, and so the visual images of a film adaptation contain within them the mental, linguistic images of their literary source.

The intertext generated from the translation of the novel's conceptual time into cinema's mechanical time and spatial medium requires different critical tools for the analysis of the new, hybrid images. David Rodowick, synthesizing concepts of the figural by Jean-François Lyotard and the hieroglyph by Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier in the context of cinema and new media, defines what he calls the "figural" as an indeterminacy of the readable and the visible, a deconstruction of the "ontological distinction of 'linguistic' and 'plastic' representations."<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Mieke Bal has studied within Proust's work "visual writing," what she calls "figuration," "a metaphor for writing as a graphic art."<sup>29</sup> Proust's novel everywhere inscribes the visual in the text, even as it repeatedly dismisses the error of vision and vision machines, while Ruiz's film heightens the visual presence of the written word on the screen. As we have seen in Marcel's dismissal of cinema as "un déchet de l'expérience," the very structure of Proust's sentences juxtaposes or separates clauses to produce meaning visually. Proust explicitly states, in regard to the madeleine, that involuntary memory is often provoked by senses other than sight, such as

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26. Julia Kristeva, *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature*, trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia UP, 1996) 255.

27. "L'image doit être 'lue' non moins que vue, lisible autant que visible," *Cinéma* 2 34.

28. David Rodowick, *Reading the Figural, or, Philosophy After the New Media* (Durham: Duke UP, 2001) 45.

29. Mieke Bal, *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*, trans. Anna-Louis Milne, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) 3-5.

taste and smell.<sup>30</sup> And yet the novel continually calls on us to notice the play of the visual in the text, from the obsession with painting and photography to very specific moments of the narrative, for instance when Gilberte's signature is mistaken for Albertine's in *La Prisonnière*. Proust's "binoculars," "predellas," and "palimpsests" all testify to the richness of interpretational responses by Proustians to the hybrid images of time, but fail in general to anticipate the potential of a cinematic intertext.<sup>31</sup>

Ruiz's film, in its experiments with Proustian time, creates direct references to Proust's figural images and invents its own images in order to explore the limits of cinematic form. From the first sequence, after the opening credits, the film announces thematically the tension between visible and readable, book and celluloid. The first shot shows the "author" Proust dictating to Céleste, his real life housekeeper, while the viewer is treated to distorted images of the manuscript pages—the materiality of the book and of its production is enhanced, while its cinematic representation is exposed as nothing but simplistic "trucage" or special effect, as all the pieces of furniture are on their own tracks moving independently from the camera.<sup>32</sup> Proust, the author turned cinematic character, then looks through a magnifying glass at photographs of both real people said to be the models for the novel's characters (such as a photograph of Proust's father and mother) as well as photographs of the actors who will later appear in the film. The novel's virtual characters find a materiality through their incarnation as photographs of real people, whereas the film's actors are memorialized or rendered memory, killed by photography even before they appear on the screen.<sup>33</sup>

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30. 146.

31. Roger Shattuck, in *Proust's Binoculars*, argues that stereoscopic vision in Proust transposes depth perception in space to depth perception in time. For Georges Poulet, Proust's novel is also about space regained. Poulet uses the metaphor of the predella, with its multiple juxtaposed images, to evoke how time can be spatialized (*L'Espace proustien* [Paris: Gallimard, 1963]). Gérard Genette shows how metaphor for Proust is the stylistic equivalent of involuntary memory, but notices that Proust's novel has many purely spatial transpositions, which, like a palimpsest, are composed of a superposition of objects perceived at the same time: "Le temps en effet métamorphose non seulement les caractères, mais les visages, les corps, les lieux mêmes, et ses effets se sédimentent dans l'espace (c'est ce que Proust appelle le 'Temps incorporé') pour y former une image brouillée dont les lignes se chevauchent en un palimpseste parfois illisible, presque toujours équivoque" (*Figures I* [Paris: Seuil, 1966] 51).

32. According to Ruiz: "Dans la chambre de Proust, tous les meubles sont placés sur des rails, et se déplacent en sens inverse du travelling. Les statues bougent également. A un autre moment, tous les meubles sont une fois et demie plus grande que leur taille normale" ("Dans le laboratoire de *La Recherche*" 49).

33. Vera A. Klekovkina argues that "Ruiz's decision to cast well-known actors in *Le Temps retrouvé* produces a double effect: the indexical singularity of image is further

The presence of an actor portraying the real author Proust in the first sequence is followed by no fewer than four different actors, who contribute to the fluid image of Marcel / Proust: child, adolescent, adult, older man (and therefore also Proust as author), and a voiceover by filmmaker Patrice Chéreau, who narrates the film in the first person as Proust. The author as character often appears at the same time and in the same shot as versions of Marcel, the narrator. The identity of the narrator in the *Recherche* is highly ambiguous, as Proust plays with the autobiographical elements of the text, all the while claiming the novel as fiction. The film, however, does not collapse the difference between author, narrator, and character; rather, it enhances this difference and adds another level with the voice of Chéreau, which links the art of filmmaking to that of writing. Ruiz renders visually the ambiguity that already existed within the narrative "je," that is, between the young "je" who is narrated, and the much older "je" who narrates, as well as between a character and an author who happen to share the same name.<sup>34</sup> The projection of multiple identities for a character in the same shot during a flashback already constituted for Deleuze a crystal image, and Ruiz uses the coexistence of different "Marcel" in time to great effect to multiply the signifying uncertainty within an image as well as to heighten the interplay between the virtual and the actual of the filmic adaptation.<sup>35</sup> By placing multiple Marceles in the same screen space instead of in a montage sequence or dissolve, Ruiz is able, like in a Proustian metaphor, to show the paradox of a common experience in time and the different incommensurable selves that inhabit successive presents.

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remedied by actors whose well-known faces have acquired their own 'icon-status.' These performers are part of our daily experience since the star system plasters their faces on magazine covers or the silver screen, securing them a privileged position in our collective consciousness" ("Proust's *souvenir visuel* and Ruiz's *clin d'œil* in *Le Temps retrouvé*" *L'esprit créateur* 46.4 [2006]: 159). For a discussion of *Le Temps retrouvé*'s controversial casting choices see J. Milly "Le Temps retrouvé de Raoul Ruiz" in *Bulletin Marcel Proust* 49 (1999): 176–78; Jan Cléder "Métaphore et régression: les délais de la connaissance—M. Proust; R. Ruiz," *Proust et les images* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003) 187–202; and Vincent Ferré "'Mais dans les beaux livres, tous les contresens qu'on fait sont beaux': M. Proust, R. Ruiz, V. Schlöndorff et H. Pinter," *Proust et les images* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003) 203–20.

34. In Proust's text, the name Marcel only appears twice, both times in *La Prisonnière* (900 pages from the ending, or over two-thirds of the way through the novel), and there only hypothetically: "Elle [Albertine] retrouvait la parole, elle disait: 'Mon' ou 'Mon chéri' suivis l'un ou l'autre de mon nom de baptême, ce qui en donnant au narrateur le même nom qu'à l'auteur de ce livre eût fait: 'Mon Marcel,' 'Mon chéri Marcel'" (III 583). The pluperfect subjunctive—"eût fait"—serves as a conditional mode, indicating that the connection between author and narrator is purely hypothetical.

35. *Cinéma* 2 92.

The most striking juxtaposition of "Marcel's" occurs twenty-six minutes into the film, after Marcel has had a conversation with Charlus and finds himself in what the script calls a "salle cinématographe," a sort of chic café that doubles as a screening room. Here there are two Marcel's: the narrator, who uncannily resembles photographs of the middle-aged Proust but who is played by a different actor than the one in the initial bedside dictation scene, and the child Marcel, who is holding a film projector. The narrator, or middle-aged Proust, sitting in his chair, begins to levitate a few feet off the ground; the camera tracks right, following him as he moves toward the screen at the back of the room until he is directly in front of it and next to the child Marcel. As the older Marcel floats around the room, he reads a letter from Gilberte, heard in a voice-over read by her character played by Emmanuelle Béart. The letter is an exact quotation from the novel; except that in the novel, Marcel reads one of her letters in a sanitarium, a "maison de santé," and the other upon his return to Paris, and not, as here, in a "salle cinématographe."<sup>36</sup> The child Marcel is framed in the same way as when he is holding the famous "magic lantern" earlier in the film, but now he projects footage from the First World War, which corresponds to the content of Gilberte's letter. As Gilberte recounts the ravages of war on space, the screen space is slowly transformed by the war footage. The two Marcel's appear on screen together with the images of the war projected onto their bodies, as if by a "magic lantern." War and cinema are coupled in this scene, as Paul Virilio might have remarked, indistinguishable from each other for their ability to hone perception and flatten space to two dimensions.<sup>37</sup> Here the novel is reduced to an absent, offscreen voice, and the film reflects its own destructive mode of production in the form of "actualities," where the present passes into archive.

This extraordinary sequence begins by separating the individual elements of the screen space as they would appear conventionally: the main character, the voice-over, the music, and the screen itself, where the war footage is shown. The older Marcel hovers in the air, the voice-over corresponds only partially to a letter in the novel, and the music being played in the room does not match

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36. "Vous n'avez pas d'idée de ce que c'est que cette guerre mon cher ami, et de l'importance qu'y prend une route, un pont, une hauteur. Que de fois j'ai pensé à vous, aux promenades, grâce à vous rendues délicieuses, que nous faisons ensemble dans tout ce pays aujourd'hui ravagé, alors que d'immenses combats se livraient pour la possession de tel chemin, de tel coteau que vous aimiez où nous sommes allées si souvent ensemble!" (IV 335).

37. Paul Virilio, *Logistique de la perception: Guerre et cinéma* (Paris: Galilée, 1984). For an analysis of time and image in Virilio, see Patrick M. Bray. "Aesthetics in the Shadow of No Towers: Reading Virilio in the Twenty-first Century," *Yale French Studies* 114 "Writing and the Image Today" (2008): 4-17.

the images projected on the screen. These separate elements are then brought together to compose a new, figural image. The older Marcel floats in front of the screen, the music, no longer diegetic, takes on a menacing tone, the voice-over recounts both the destruction of the area around Combray as well as the effects of Gilberte and Marcel's relationship over time, and the young Marcel points the projector onto the older Marcel. At the end of the sequence, the voice-over and the music fade out, the two Marceles move off the screen, and all that is left is the two dimensional silent footage of WWI planes bombing a village. The three-dimensional "salle cinématographe," its depth emphasized in the beginning of the sequence by excessive camera movement (the camera tracks across the entire length of the room twice), becomes a simple two-dimensional screen, where the spoken words of a letter are transformed into the silent images of film. The flatness of the images in the "salle cinématographe" confuses the writing of the novel and the film's images. For Deleuze, Proust's "magic lantern" already expressed in cinematic terms how bodies inhabit space in a way that is "incommensurable" with the place they inhabit in time.<sup>38</sup> In this sequence, the older Marcel thus serves as what Mieke Bal calls a "mottled screen," an enigmatic figure of subjectivity whose body screens the effects of memory and time.<sup>39</sup>

The sequence in the "salle cinématographe" forms a single image out of broken fragments, projecting simultaneously cinema's ability to archive the present and time's destructive nature. The workings of time, and of cinema, are thus shown directly on the screen in a virtuoso *mise-en-scène* of the time crystal, but what is often termed Ruiz's "surrealism" can obscure more subtle, and more original, explorations of cinematic time and figural images. Ruiz most often proceeds by association, scattering the debris of experience across sequences. The film's spectator is thus forced to watch actively the transformation or deterioration of objects in order to create associations between images.

In the remaining pages, I will argue that Ruiz's extensive use of statues—in particular the Callipygian Venus—throughout the film is one way, among others, that he calls attention to a material trace in the figural image. This very materiality serves to provoke an awareness of the filmic experience of time, necessarily inciting different memories in different viewers.

Ruiz's most inventive and challenging use of statues occurs near the end of the film to portray one of the five moments of involuntary memory in which the revelation of metaphor and the narrator's vocation is situated, though the critique of cinema that immediately follows the section on involuntary memory

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38. *Cinéma* 2 56.

39. For Bal, "figuration" in Proust is most often manifested by "flatness," both in the sense of two-dimensionality and the banal (*The Mottled Screen* 3–5).

in the novel is conveniently left out of the film. Since Proust explicitly states that involuntary memory is often provoked by senses other than sight, Ruiz displaces the novel's nonvisual sensations through figural images, most notably statues.

In the most remarkable of the five sequences in the film dedicated to involuntary memory, the texture of a starched napkin recalls Balbec-Plage: as in the novel, the narrator sips some tea (though in the novel it is orangeade) in the Guermantes' library and then wipes his mouth with a napkin. He is facing away from a window, whose light saturates the screen. As the narrator touches the napkin to his lips, the film cuts to a matching shot of the adolescent version of the narrator touching a similar napkin and facing away from a similar window. This younger Marcel then turns and opens the window, which looks out on a beach in Balbec. Here there is nothing noteworthy about the napkin, in contrast to the passage in the novel, when its very texture brought back the past. What is significant in the film, however, is that on the beach in Normandy appears the statue of the Callipygian Venus, in a high angle shot, where it is carried away by a group of five adolescent boys, dressed similarly to the younger Marcel.<sup>40</sup> After the statue is carried off the screen, we see an extreme close-up of the adolescent Marcel's lips as he again wipes his mouth with the napkin and another straight cut brings us back to the older Marcel in the same position. The statue, now greatly reduced in size, then can be seen in the Guermantes' library, where it had been absent before the involuntary memory in an almost imperceptible change to the eye of the viewer. In fact, while the rest of the sequence strictly adheres to the passage in the text, reference to the statue is to be found nowhere in Proust's novel.

The sudden emergence of the statue in the "present" in the Guermantes' library amounts to a remainder or a debris of the experience of involuntary memory, where one place erupts into another. According to Proust, when the past place of memory confronts present perception during an involuntary memory, the present place always wins over the past one, but something of the past is left over in the present.<sup>41</sup> Elsewhere in the film, the same statue is seen several times, usually with other statues on the margins of the frame, as when it appears near Gilberte's staircase early in the film or in a fashionable

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40. The statue is a copy of the Callipygian Venus from the Farnese collection of the National Archeological Museum in Naples.

41. "Toujours, dans ces résurrections-là, le lieu lointain engendré autour de la sensation commune s'était accouplé un instant, comme un lutteur, au lieu actuel. Toujours le lieu actuel avait été vainqueur; toujours c'était le vaincu qui m'avait paru le plus beau" (IV 453). Roger Shattuck, in *Proust's Way*, describes six stages of involuntary memory, with the fifth stage consisting of a presentiment of the future, otherwise stated, the influence of the past onto the future (70).

restaurant when the narrator dines with Saint-Loup. Most significantly, the statue appears ten minutes after the scene in the library during the long sequence of a piano and violin duet, where it stands against a wall. At the end of that sequence, there is a straight cut from the pianist's hands to an establishing shot of a room where the narrator watches Albertine play the piano. She complains that Vinteuil's sonata is monotonous with its ever-repeating phrases and that she would like to meet Morel, whom she supposes would play it beautifully. The reference to Morel, whose homosexuality most likely reminds the narrator of his suspicion that Albertine is a lesbian, leads him to abruptly change the topic to the merits of repeating themes in music and literature. As he starts to lecture her, the camera changes to a shallow focus, leaving the actors in the background, and tracking very slowly left, shows one by one a series of small statues, three of which are identical copies of the Callipygian Venus.

The statue here is explicitly linked to the nature of art as that "hidden reality revealed by a material trace," as Marcel says in the film; the reality hidden under the surface reality is that of time. The material trace, or what remains of the past in memory, is inscribed in the image of the statue. The Callipygian Venus figures memory (both narrative memory and the viewer's memory of the novel) and desire, since Albertine, in the novel, is always associated with Balbec, where the statue inexplicably appears after the narrator's involuntary memory in the Guermantes' library. The presence of Albertine and the statue together in Marcel's apartment in Paris evokes the memory of Balbec. Ruiz himself claims that this statue corresponds to classical memory, to images that serve to recall texts and past events.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the narrator, in his lecture to Albertine on art during the procession of statues, cites the example of the recurrence of stonecutters and statues in the works of Thomas Hardy, but he is unable to finish his thought on parallels in literature after he mentions the repeated theme in Hardy of three successive lovers, further solidifying the link between memory, statuary, and sex.

The unexpected appearances of the Callipygian Venus serve as a perfect visual crystallization of the film's work to adapt Proustian time to cinematic space. The statue portrays a beautiful young woman, chaste and innocent

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42. "On bascule dans le passé de manière abrupte, et lorsqu'on revient dans le présent, il y a quelque chose qui reste, une statue par exemple sur la table de la bibliothèque de la princesse de Guermantes, qui n'était pas là avant l'enclenchement du souvenir. Cette statue, c'est la Vénus Callipyge, elle correspond à la mémoire classique, à ce qu'on appelle les *imagos* : des images qui servent à rappeler les textes, les événements passés" ("Dans le laboratoire de *La Recherche*" 53). Ruiz elaborates on the *imago* in his *Poétique du cinéma 2*, affirming the image's primacy over narration. Raoul Ruiz, *Poétique du cinéma 2*, trans. J. Lageira (Paris: Dis Voir, 2006) 13–21.

when viewed from the front, but whose head and shoulders are turned away in an effort to look at her back side, which has been left uncovered (hence her hybrid name Venus, or Aphrodite, Kallipygos—"beautiful buttocks"). The statue can be seen as turning toward the future while looking back at the past, as it contemplates past memory and present sensations. It represents at once sublime beauty and vulgar sensuality, a Roman copy of a Greek statue brought to Naples. Connections in Proust's text (between Albertine and Balbec and between memory and desire) are actualized on the screen, while the film's own images fade in and out of memory, as they are by turns discarded and recuperated. At the same time, its recurrence within the film ties distinct moments of the narrative together around the character of Albertine, who shares the statue's ambiguous portrayal of (false) innocence, beauty, and sexuality. The statue is a hieroglyphic image that is at once visible and readable, a three-dimensional plastic representation flattened onto a two-dimensional screen, an image of memory erupting into the present, but also an enigmatic marker of the link between desire, memory, and time. A work of art combining two moments in time, as in a Proustian metaphor, the image of the statue materializes the "time regained" through confrontation of the spatial art of cinema and the metaphorical art of literature. If, according to Proust, cinema amounts only to "cette espèce de déchet de l'expérience," Ruiz shows us, through the cinematic manifestation of the Callipygian Venus, that in this debris lies the image of time itself. In Ruiz's own words, "Tout film se nourrit de déchets."<sup>43</sup>

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43. *Poétique du cinéma* 2 11.



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