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# Proust and the Avant-Garde
## Perception, Knowledge, Representation

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# Proust and the Avant-Garde

*Perception, Knowledge, Representation*

**Katherine Brook**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**King's College London**

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# Abstract

This thesis compares Proust's *Recherche* with the work of the Cubists, Futurists, and Surrealists. Few scholars have considered the novel's engagement with avant-garde ideas and aesthetics, despite Proust's geographical and temporal proximity to avant-garde activity. Without arguing extensively for direct influence or even significant interaction between the two, my research focuses on a broader pool of ideas and cultural-historical developments, around which Proust's work can be brought into dialogue with both the collective aims of particular groups within the avant-garde, and with the paintings and (to a lesser extent) writings of individual artists. Throughout the thesis, I use their work as a means of shedding light on the conflict and crossover between states of 'insidership' and 'outsidership', and on the manner in which these states define relations between perceiving, acting subjects and the external objects and spaces they encounter. Chapter 1 focuses on the artistic perceptive faculty and the relation it enables between the artist and the external world, using Bergson's opposition of 'analysis' and 'intuition' as a theoretical framework. Chapter 2 is centred around the metaphor of the work of art as a 'window on the world' and its implication that a painting is primarily a representation, rather than an object in its own right. Chapter 3 investigates the influence of mechanised transport technologies both on perceptions of space and on relations between people, while Chapter 4 uses Didier Anzieu's theory of the *Moi-peau* to argue that the self is defined not only by bodily but by architectural boundaries, which also shape the subject's relationships with other people. Ultimately, the thesis asks whether the work of Proust and the avant-gardes conceives of the subject's interaction with the world as a function of surface or of depth, or as a more complex troubling between the two.

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# Abbreviations

References to Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* are taken from the Pléiade edition in four volumes, edited by Jean-Yves Tadié (Paris: Gallimard, 1987-89), and are given in the text, using Roman and Arabic numerals to signify the volume and page numbers, respectively.

Other references to Proust's work are from the following editions:

*Contre Sainte-Beuve, précédé de Pastiches et mélanges et suivi de Essais et articles*, ed. by Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard [Bibliothèque de la Pléiade], 1971) (referred to in the text as *CSB*).

*Jean Santeuil, précédé de Les Plaisirs et les jours*, ed. by Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard [Bibliothèque de la Pléiade], 1971) (referred to in the text as *JS*).

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# Introduction

This thesis is a comparative study of Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* and the visual works of the Cubist, Futurist, and Surrealist movements. Proust and the historical avant-gardes are two immeasurably important strands in Western cultural history, and they overlap both chronologically and geographically. Yet the possibility for a comparison between the two has often been shunned, whether directly or indirectly. Roger Shattuck, for example, who has specialised in both Proust and avant-garde studies without ever attempting to reconcile them, writes in his study of the origins of the avant-garde, *The Banquet Years*, that Proust belongs in a 'family group' with Renoir and Ravel, whose 'rich, beautifully orchestrated masterpieces portray *la belle époque* at its ripest and never lose control of its sensuous plenitude.'[1] All three, he claims, 'gaze fondly back toward the waning century and tell us not so much what has changed since 1885 as what can be made to survive. Their very technical mastery makes them the old guard who will never die.'[2]

The scholarly landscape has changed since Shattuck wrote these words. For some time, the consensus has been that Proust was an innovator and a modernist, not a *passéiste*.[3] But avant-garde? The lack of academic enquiry into this area suggests that such a comparison might be a step too far. A handful of studies, it is true, have compared Proust's work to the Cubists and Futurists; one or two have speculated on his dealings with the French Dadaists, André Breton and Philippe Soupault. But while the role of the visual arts in Proust's novel has quite rightly been explored in detail, generally speaking, as Luzius Keller writes, 'on se tourne plutôt du côté de Giotto, Carpaccio, Botticelli ou Vermeer, de Degas, Manet, Renoir ou Monet, de Turner ou Whistler, de Moreau ou Redon que vers Boccioni ou Carrà, Gleizes ou Metzinger, Delaunay, Braque ou Picasso.'[4]

The importance of older artistic currents for Proust's novel is not in doubt. But we can no more deny the importance of cultural modernity for Proust's novel

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[1] Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France: 1885 to World War I* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), p. 30.
[2] Ibid.
[3] 'Few writers,' asserts Margaret E. Gray, 'are so confidently cited as high modernist.' (*Postmodern Proust* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), p. 1.) Hugh J. Silverman calls Proust's novel, along with those of Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, and James Joyce, 'major documents of modernist literary production' ('Introduction: The Philosophy of Postmodernism', in *Postmodernism – Philosophy and the Arts*, ed. by Hugh J. Silverman (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 2).
[4] Luzius Keller, 'Proust au-delà de l'impressionnisme', in *Proust et ses peintres*, ed. by Sophie Bertho (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 57-70 (p. 59).

than we can ignore his admiration for the cultural heritage. As Nigel Harkness and Marion Schmid remind us:

> Proust, though a passionate admirer of the literature and art of earlier centuries – references to which are omnipresent in *A la recherche du temps perdu* – is above all, we must not forget, a contemporary of Freud, Einstein, Picasso and Schoenberg, to name only these four pioneers of the twentieth-century modern revolution. Having made his debut in literature and criticism under the auspices of Decadence and Symbolism, the two dominant movements of the fin de siècle, Proust writes the early drafts for what will become *A la recherche* during the beginnings of Cubism and Futurism; the genesis of the last two volumes, on the other hand, coincide with Dada and Surrealism.[5]

Harkness and Schmid's observations appear in the introduction to their co-edited volume, *Au Seuil de la modernité: Proust, Literature and the Arts*. Published in 2011, this collection is a recent contribution to a sub-category of Proust studies that has emerged, broadly speaking, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and which considers Proust's engagement with the objects, processes, and experiences of cultural modernity. It was inaugurated by William Carter's *The Proustian Quest* (1992), which focuses on the theme of speed in Proust's novel, opening with a fascinating account of a period shaped by such developments as electricity, telegraphy, cinema, the telephone, and the bicycle, automobile, and aeroplane, many of which find their way into Proust's novel. Sara Danius's work on Proust in *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (2002) takes up many of the same themes, situating Proust in a context of social and cultural upheaval, in which new technologies were challenging traditional modes of perception and ways of thinking. Elsewhere, Akane Kawakami has published on the role of the aeroplane in the *Recherche*, while Harkness and Schmid's volume features articles by Jack Jordan on the relation of Proustian car travel to Einsteinian space-time, and by Diane R. Leonard on Proust's engagement with the idea of time as a fourth dimension. The importance for the *Recherche* of photography, in its various forms, has been explored

[5] Nigel Harkness and Marion Schmid, 'Introduction', in *Au Seuil de la modernité: Proust, Literature and the Arts. Essays in Memory of Richard Bales*, ed. by Nigel Harkness and Marion Schmid (Oxford, Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 1-13 (p. 2).

in Mieke Bal's *Images littéraires, ou comment lire visuellement Proust* (1997), Áine Larkin's *Proust Writing Photography: Fixing the Fugitive in A la recherche du temps perdu* (2011) and Katja Haustein's *Regarding Lost Time: Photography, Identity and Affect in Proust, Benjamin and Barthes* (2012), while *Thinking Cinema With Proust*, Patrick ffrench's study of cinematic processes in the *Recherche*, is forthcoming with Legenda, projected to be published in 2018.

Some of these studies mention the avant-garde in passing, but the implication is often that Proust's modernity plays out very differently from theirs.[6] And indeed, his work does not possess the same iconoclastic radicalism: it is impossible to separate Proust from the past, even as we acknowledge his vitality and his affinity for the present and the future. Danius's analysis sets out to prove that even after 1906, when Proust's long period of engagement with the works of John Ruskin is thought to have come to an end, the author was 'at once more Ruskinian and more modernist than has been thought'.[7] Elsewhere, Leonard has argued that 'Proust's techniques of visual representation […] exhibit a tension between Turneresque impressionistic effects and "architectural" considerations of structure and depth. Thus we might call Proust a "Post-Impressionist" writer'.[8] In this regard, her analysis echoes that of Taeko Uenishi, who detects 'une étroite ressemblance entre les tableaux de Cézanne et l'écriture de Proust. Car, notre interprétation de la tendance picturale de Proust est de la situer sur la voie allant de l'impressionnisme vers le cubisme, et c'est ce chemin que Cézanne a suivi ou plutôt développé.'[9] Proust, then, is 'characteristically "in-between"', as Harkness and Schmid put it.[10] This sets him at odds with the avant-garde, Antoine Compagnon suggests in *Proust entre deux siècles*:

> Certains franchissent, ou croient franchir, un seuil en regardant vers l'avant – ce sont ceux qu'on appelle, ou qui s'appellent, les avant-gardes –, d'autres en regardant en arrière, d'autres encore ne le franchissent pas. Et Proust? Il traversa peut-être l'avant-guerre à reculons, comme on recule pour mieux

---

[6] On Proust and Futurism, Carter remarks: 'Proust was as intent at representing the dynamics of life as were the Futurists, but his vision was universal and comprehensive, unlike that of the Futurists, who in their iconoclastic zeal rejected the past and traditional art, failing to see how its documentary aspect, its persistent energy and beauty, could be revitalized and made to serve contemporary needs.' (William Carter, *The Proustian Quest* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992), p. 91.)
[7] Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 130.
[8] Diane R. Leonard, 'Proust and Virginia Woolf, Ruskin and Roger Fry: Modernist Visual Dynamics', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 18 (September 1981), 333-343, p. 338.
[9] Taeko Uenishi, *Le style de Proust et la peinture* (Paris: SEDES, 1988), p. 88.
[10] Harkness and Schmid, p. 4.

> sauter, à moins qu'il n'ait éliminé l'idée de seuil, refusant, comme Pascal, de croire que la recherche de la vérité pût se faire par une seule voie: 'On ne montre pas sa grandeur pour être à une extrémité, lit-on dans les *Pensées*, mais bien en touchant les deux à la fois et remplissant tout l'entre-deux.'[11]

This fundamental 'in-betweenness' plays out in an ambivalent relationship towards the avant-gardes, whom Proust seems to have regarded with both interest and scepticism. A moment in *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* attests to his awareness of the new trends in the visual arts, but seems at the same time subtly to undermine avant-garde claims to unprecedented radicalism:

> Sans doute, il est aisé de s'imaginer, dans une illusion analogue à celle qui uniformise toutes choses à l'horizon, que toutes les révolutions qui ont eu lieu jusqu'ici dans la peinture ou la musique respectaient tout de même certains règles et que ce qui est immédiatement devant nous, impressionisme, recherche de dissonance, emploi exclusif de la gamme chinoise, cubisme, futurisme diffère outrageusement de ce qui a précédé. C'est que ce qui a précédé, on le considère sans tenir compte qu'une longue assimilation l'a converti pour nous en une matière variée sans doute, mais somme toute homogène, où Hugo voisine avec Molière.[12] (I, 522-553)

This reads as a subtle attempt to burst the bubble of those avant-gardists whose 'prétention à aller toujours plus loin, plus haut et plus fort' led them to rank the artistic progress they themselves were driving as 'more progressive' than the cultural revolutions of the past.[13] The Futurists, who had been extremely active in the years preceding the publication of *A l'ombre*, giving a well-publicised exhibition in 1912 at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, inevitably spring to mind here. They were given to feverish declarations of their own modernity, using their manifestos both to assert the innovation and originality of their work, and to declare war on museums, nudes, art critics, linear perspective, the terms 'harmony' and 'good taste', and in their own

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[11] Antoine Compagnon, *Proust entre deux siècles* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989), p. 26.
[12] Cubism is mentioned on two other occasions in the *Recherche*, but neither tell us a great deal about Proust's attitude towards the movement, other than his awareness of its existence. In *La Prisonnière*, the Baron de Charlus comments on his incomprehension of certain younger gay men with the 'ton […] d'un disciple de Claude Monet [parlant] des cubistes' (III, 811), while in *Le Temps retrouvé*, the narrator remarks on the phenomenon of former dancers who 'vivaient dans un appartement rempli de peintures cubistes, un peintre cubiste ne travaillant que pour elles et elles ne vivant que pour lui' (IV, 520).
[13] Compagnon, p. 33.

words, 'the fanatical worship of all that is old and worm-eaten'.[14] As a contributor to *Le Figaro*, Proust is likely to have read the poet F. T. Marinetti's 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', published on the front page in 1909; Hugues Azérad imagines him reading it, sipping his café au lait, and 'laughing into his sleeve'.[15] Nicole Savy has also tracked a mocking reference to Marinetti in a pastiche of Jean Cocteau that Proust wrote in 1915, which ends with 'une phrase énigmatique sur le risque de rencontrer le caricaturiste Abel Faivre "ou ce qui serait pire encore Marinetti"'.[16] It is safe to suppose that the Futurists would not have thought highly of Proust either, if they thought of him at all; the attention paid in Proust's novel to the cultural heritage and to the workings of bourgeois and aristocratic society would doubtless have written him off as 'old and worm-eaten' in their eyes, regardless of any more modern impulses in his work.

Proust's relations with the Cubists, Dadaists, and Surrealists are both more involved and more ambiguous. In an article on Proust and Cubism, Luc Fraisse cites an account of 1976 by a friend of Proust's, Louis Gautier-Vignal, who recalls that after a visit to a home in which three paintings by Picasso were displayed, Proust '[les] avait jugé "insignifiantes"'.[17] Yet an earlier declaration by the same friend, given at a conference in 1948, proclaims the opposite: 'dans cette page,' writes Fraisse, 'les toiles de Picasso sont "d'extraordinaires compositions cubistes blanches et bleues", et Proust à la sortie "fut éblouissant"'.[18] Proust himself seems to have professed his sympathy for the new art movements, as, for example, in a letter of June 1919 to Cocteau. 'Que nous pensions de même tout le temps sur l'art de l'Époque,' he writes, 'si vous avez vraiment lu *Swann* et rien que ce que vous avez lu de *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, le prouve.'[19] Savy takes this as evidence for his endorsement, given that 'la nature de la preuve' is 'ce roman auquel Proust tenait plus qu'à tout' – this, she argues, 'interdit de lire cette phrase comme une amabilité d'épistolier: c'est une déclaration claire et sans réserve d'appartenance à l'esthétique la plus contemporaine' (59). Proust would also gush over Picasso's portrait of Cocteau in his

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[14] Umberto Boccioni and others, 'Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto' [1910], in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. by Umbro Apollonio, trans. by Robert Brain and others (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), pp. 27-31 (p. 27).
[15] Hugues Azérad, 'Paris and the avant-garde', in *Marcel Proust in Context*, ed. by Adam Watt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 59-66 (p. 59).
[16] Nicole Savy, 'Jeune roman, jeune peinture', in *Marcel Proust: l'écriture et les arts*, ed. by Jean-Yves Tadié (Paris: Gallimard/Réunion des musées nationaux, 1999), pp. 55-65 (p. 63).
[17] Via Luc Fraisse, 'Il y a plusieurs manières d'être avant-garde: Proust et le cubisme', *Peinture et Littérature au XXe Siècle*, ed. by Pascal Dethurens (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2007, pp. 173-187 (p. 177).
[18] Fraisse, p. 177.
[19] Proust, *Correspondance*, ed. by Philip Kolb, 21 vols (Paris: PLON, 1990), XVIII, p. 267.

preface to Jacques-Émile Blanche's *Propos de peintres*, also of 1919: 'certainement […] Jacques Blanche rendrait justice au grand, à l'admirable Picasso, lequel a précisément concentré tous les traits de Cocteau en une image d'une rigidité si noble qu'à côté d'elle se dégradent un peu dans mon souvenir les plus charmants Carpaccio de Venise' (*CSB*, 580). This is praise indeed. Yet neither of the two pencil portraits Picasso completed of Cocteau (one of 1916, the other of 1917; it is unclear to which Proust is referring here) are particularly cubistic – indeed, by Picasso's standards they are relatively mimetic. Fraisse goes so far as to argue that Proust's admiration is more likely to be a 'hommage simplement mondain' than an 'admiration réellement esthétique'.[20] This conclusion is supported by an anecdote recounted by Proust's long-term servant, Céleste Albaret, in 1973, in which the author returns to his apartment late at night after a visit to Picasso's studio:

> M. Proust m'en a fait le récit en rentrant:
> 'C'est un peintre espagnol qui s'est mis à faire ce qu'on appelle du cubisme.'
> Il m'a décrit un peu à quoi ressemblaient les peintures. Je lui ai fait remarquer que cela devait faire de drôles de museaux. Il a ri, puis il a dit:
> 'Je dois reconnaître que je n'y ai pas compris grand-chose.'
> Visiblement, il ne s'en souciait pas. Il n'a jamais reparlé de cette peinture.'[21]

As for Picasso himself, the only clue as to his opinion of Proust is an anecdote recounted by Jean Hugo, an artist and the great-grandson of Victor Hugo. At a gathering in 1921, in which 'Proust ne parlait qu'aux ducs', Picasso turns to Hugo and says 'regardez-le […] il est sur le motif'.[22] Picasso's use of this expression, referring to the *plein air* painting championed by the Impressionists, does not read as an endorsement of Proust's modernity; rather, in Fraisse's words, it attributes to Proust 'une attitude de peintre que récusent, aux sens courant, les artistes modernes'.[23]

Proust's relationship with the Dadaists and Surrealists is more ambiguous still. On the surface, it seems fairly hostile: Louis Aragon labelled him a 'snob

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[20] Fraisse, p. 179. For her part, Juliette Monnin-Hornung questions Proust's sincerity in praising Picasso: 'cette comparaison du portrait de Cocteau avec de "charmants" Carpaccio, étonne et fait douter de la sincérité du compliment adressé à Picasso.' (*Proust et la peinture* (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz and Lille: Librairie Giard, 1951), p. 18.)
[21] Céleste Albaret, *Monsieur Proust*, ed. by Georges Belmont (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 1973), p. 278.
[22] Jean Hugo, *Avant d'oublier, 1918-1931* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1976), p. 127.
[23] Fraisse, p. 176.

laborieux' in a 1920 issue of the Dada journal *Littérature*,[24] and in 1922 a Dada tract was distributed around Paris, the back cover of which had arranged the names of leading contemporary artists and writers in such a way as to 'séparer le bon grain […] de l'ivraie', with Proust's name appearing among those of the 'honnis'.[25] Two years later, André Breton would mention Proust in a footnote in the first Surrealist manifesto, giving his work as an example of the kind of literature his new movement was to react against.[26] Yet this condemnation of Proust was not unequivocal. In fact, Dada was the only avant-garde current to which he had a definitive professional connection, Breton and Philippe Soupault having invited him to contribute a passage from *Le Côté de Guermantes* to *Littérature* in 1920. This move by the Dadaists seems to support a remark made by Jacques Rivière, the director of the *Nouvelle Revue française*, in a letter to Proust of the same year: 'vous ai-je dit […] qu'André Breton, le Dada en chef […] m'a déclaré pour vous une admiration intense, fondée justement sur les trésors poétiques qu'il a découverts dans votre œuvre?'[27] For his part, Proust wrote to Philippe Soupault that he was 'fort honoré d'être ainsi imprimé dans une Revue où vous écrivez tous deux'.[28] Franc Schuerewegen, who gives an exhaustive account of the connections between Proust and Dada in an article of 2007, takes the invitation as proof of Breton's admiration for Proust, at least during the period in question.[29] Even so, doubts remain: for one thing, the episode was never actually published in *Littérature*, for reasons that are not entirely clear. For another, Sanouillet observes that the frequency of the journal's publication meant that the task of finding material to publish in it was no small task, and that Breton and his colleagues 'firent appel […] à tout ce que Paris comptait de littérateurs de quelque importance, pourvu qu'ils restassent en deçà d'une certaine ligne moderne'.[30] Neither does Schuerewegen's conviction take into account the possibility of any intended irony on the part of the Dadaists, whose journal was 'délibérément anti-littéraire', according to Jacques

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[24] Via Franc Schuerewegen, 'Proust est-il dadaïste? (à propos d'une mystère encore non élucidé de l'histoire littéraire)', *Marcel Proust Aujourd'hui*, 8 (2007), 137-160, p. 147.
[25] Michel Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, 4th edn (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2005), pp. 297-298.
[26] 'L'intraitable manie qui consiste à ramener l'inconnu au connu, au classable, berce les cerveaux. Le désir d'analyse l'emporte sur les sentiments. Il en résulte des exposés de longueur qui ne tirent leur force persuasive que de leur étrangeté même, et n'en imposent au lecteur que par l'appel à un vocabulaire abstrait, d'ailleurs assez mal défini.' (André Breton, *Manifestes du surréalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1924), p. 19.)
[27] *Correspondance*, XIX, p. 337.
[28] Ibid., p. 474.
[29] See Schuerewegen, p. 139.
[30] Sanouillet, p. 89.

Bersani. 'Dans son titre même,' he writes, 'on ne voit qu'ironie et dérision.'[31] The possibility remains, then, that the request was at best a way of filling space, and at worst a joke on a fusty old author, twenty years their senior, and so detached from their movement that he could not write the word *Dada* without putting it in quotation marks.[32]

No definitive conclusions can be reached, therefore, regarding Proust and the avant-garde's respective opinions of one another. But a number of critics have looked past this real-life ambivalence, focusing instead on avant-garde affinities in the novel itself. In Proust's lifetime, there were whispers of a Cubist tendency in his writing: in an article on *Du Côté de chez Swann*, published in 1914 in *L'Écho de Paris*, the painter Jacques-Émile Blanche remarked that '[Proust] regarde les êtres, d'en haut ou d'en bas, en raccourci ou plafonnant; ils les voit sous des angles singuliers, je dirais presque qu'il suggère la quatrième dimension des cubistes'.[33] Jacques Rivière would eventually come to a similar conclusion, although it took him some time longer. 'Une chose […] qui m'est apparue pour la première fois,' he wrote in a letter to Proust in July 1922, having recently reread *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, 'c'est votre relation avec le mouvement cubiste, et plus profondément votre profonde immersion dans la réalité esthétique contemporaine: je m'expliquerai un jour.'[34] At a lecture on Proust's work in 1923, Rivière declared himself in disagreement with the critic José Ortega y Gasset, who had argued for an Impressionist reading of Proust. Rivière's response was as follows: 'j'avoue ne pas être très sensible à cette analogue. J'en vois une au contraire, et très frappante, entre la manière de Proust et le cubisme.'[35] Virginia Woolf also made the following bold assertion in an essay of 1925, three years after Proust's death: 'were all modern paintings to be destroyed, a critic of the twenty-fifth century

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[31] Jacques Bersani, 'Proust et Dada: Deux lettres inédites de Marcel Proust à Philippe Soupault et à André Breton', *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, 65 (April-June 1965), 260-268, p. 264.

[32] In a letter to the critic Jacques Boulenger, Proust writes: 'sans me pâmer comme les "Dadas" sur mes pages relatives à la surdité (que je trouve, malgré leur éloges, très médiocres), néanmoins elles sont vraies.' (*Correspondance*, XIX, p. 580.) These 'pages relatives à la surdité' occur when the narrator visits Saint-Loup at Doncières, and describes a series of what Bersani calls 'illusions auditives': for example, a sound of ticking, belonging to a watch he cannot see, seems continually to change location until he eventually locates the watch visually, at which point it ceases to move. This, it seems, was the passage that Breton and Soupault hoped to publish in *Littérature*. Bersani offers an alternative – and more pleasing – explanation for their interest in it: 'il s'agit moins ici de Dada que des goûts personnels de Breton et de Soupault, qui les pousseront bientôt à dépasser Dada.' (p. 265.) The passage, he suggests, describes a sort of 'marvellous' reality that could not have failed to appeal to the two soon-to-be Surrealists: 'Proust est bien près d'opérer la fusion de l'objectif et du subjectif, de la réalité et du rêve, il touche à ce "point suprême" vers lequel tendra obstinément le surréalisme.' (p. 267.)

[33] Via Keller, 'L'Impressionisme', p. 64.

[34] *Correspondance*, XXI, p. 376.

[35] Via Keller, 'L'Impressionnisme', p. 65.

would be able to deduce from the works of Proust alone the existence of Matisse, Cézanne, Derain and Picasso.'[36]

In the second half of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, a number of critics have taken up where these contemporary commentators left off. Uenishi devotes a chapter of her study to 'l'affinité cubiste de l'écriture proustienne', in which she cites a number of passages throughout the novel that seem to embody properties typical of Cubist paintings. For example, Proust's description of the sky between the towers of the Trocadero as 'une gradation verticale de bleus glaciers' is cubistic, in her view, because it suggests the space between the two objects is as substantial as the objects themselves ('le ciel a une épaisseur');[37] elsewhere, his suggestion of fusion between objects recalls the sense of reciprocity between the fragmented elements of a Cubist painting.[38] Other studies have pinpointed a more specific collection of scenes that read like literary renderings of an avant-garde aesthetic, as in the case of Paola Placella Sommella's *Marcel Proust e i movimenti pittorici d'avanguardia*, and Luzius Keller's 'Proust au-delà de l'impressionisme'. Keller refers to this group of scenes as the 'Collection Marcel Proust'; unsurprisingly, it includes the episode in which the narrator witnesses the Martinville belltowers moving about on the horizon, the avant-garde nature of which has been commented on numerous times.[39] It also includes the episode in which he dashes about an overnight train trying to piece together a 'tableau continu' from a the fragmentary views of the sunrise afforded by the train windows, as well as his attempt to kiss Albertine, which reveals her endless physical variations ('c'est dix Albertines que je vis' (II, 660)), and the passages that describe his friend Saint-Loup as moving in a particularly 'futuristic' fashion (in the first, Saint-Loup punches a man who propositions him on the street;[40]

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[36] From *The Moment and Other Essays*, via Leonard, 'Dynamics', p. 333.
[37] Uenishi, p. 92.
[38] See Uenishi, pp. 89-92.
[39] As Paola Placella Sommella asserts, the movement of the belltowers and the multiple aspects that are revealed by it distances the scene from Impressionism, 'announcing new pictorial directions' ['nuovi indirizzi pittorici'] (*Marcel Proust e i movimenti pittorici d'avanguardia* (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1982), p 22). Keller echoes her argument, pinpointing an affinity with Futurism: 'les cahots de la voiture,' he argues, '[…] sonnent pour nous comme un dernier écho de l'exposition des peintres futuristes italiens chez Bernheim-Jeune, puisqu'ils rappellent Cahots de Fiacre de Carrà.' ('L'Impressionisme', p. 70.) For Georges Matoré, it recalls Cubism, demonstrating 'comme certaines toiles cubistes où le mouvement était suggéré, une simultanéité des points de vue rendue possible par la vitesse à laquelle se déplace un observateur' (*L'Espace humain* (Paris: La Colombe, Éditions du Vieux Colombier, 1962), p. 206). The Cubistic nature of the episode has also been noted much more recently, in Adam Watt's *The Cambridge Introduction to Proust*: 'when we read this passage primed with a knowledge of trends in visual art in the period, it seems that Proust's prose is seeking similar ends to those of Cézanne in his later work and of the Cubist painters that came after him.' ((Cambridge, et al: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 28.)
[40] 'Tout à coup […] je vis des corps ovoïdes prendre avec une rapidité vertigineuse toutes les positions qui leur permettaient de composer, devant Saint-Loup, une instable constellation […] ils me semblèrent

in the second, he emerges from what will be revealed as a homosexual brothel, the narrator remarking on 'la disproportion extraordinaire entre le nombre de points différents par où passa son corps et le petit nombre de secondes pendant lesquelles cette sortie […] s'exécuta' (IV, 389)).[41] In his article, 'Proust as a Cubist', Claude Gandelman looks to Proust's own sketches in his correspondence and in the margins of his manuscript, which also seem to bear the influence of modern art movements: one 'represents a personage composed of squares and trapezoids', while a drawing of a moving boat, sent to Proust's one-time lover Reynaldo Hahn, is depicted at various stages of its movement, in the manner of Etienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge's images of bodies in motion and the Cubist and Futurist paintings they inspired.[42] For Gandelman, this drawing is the 'exact equivalent' of the descriptions of Saint-Loup in movement.[43]

Other critics have commented on similarities between avant-garde practice and the way Proust writes and structures his novel. In 1975, J. Theodore Johnson Jr. responded scathingly to those 'critics and commentators [who] give us a "Marcel" remembering things past and a Proust who looks back to gothic architecture and the Pre-Raphaelites for his inspiration'.[44] He argues that Proust's novel is analogous to a collage from Cubism's synthetic phase, the text as a whole being made up of many different kinds of texts: as well as 'pastiches, *repoussoirs*, meditations and essays' there are 'dialogues, words picked up from a conversation, maxims, sayings, exempla, paraboles, legends, *bons mots*, jokes, etymologies, histories, theories […], parts of songs, a chorus from an opera, a telegram transposed, an article from *Le Figaro*'… Johnson's list goes on.[45] Proust, he argues, 'is doing in his texts exactly what his contemporary Picasso is doing in collages and *papiers collés*'.[46] The *Recherche* is comparable to Picasso's *Guitare et papier de musique 'Valse'* (1912-13), which references

être au moins au nombre de sept. Ce n'était pourtant que les deux poings de Saint-Loup, multipliés par leur vitesse à changer de place.' (II, 480.)

41 Reinhold Hohl is certain that this second episode is based on *Nue descendant un escalier*, which he suggests Proust could have seen in 1912, when it was exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon de la Section d'Or in Paris. Although Saint-Loup is clothed, he is morally 'naked', Hohl argues, because he has left his croix de guerre in the brothel; moreover, the following page sees the narrator deciding to climb a small set of steps up to the entrance to the building his friend has just left. Saint-Loup has indeed just *descendu un escalier*. (See Hohl, 'Marcel Proust in neuer Sicht: Kubismus und Futurismus in seinem Romanwerk', in *Neue Rundschau*, 88 (1977), 54-72 (pp. 70-71).)

42 'Proust as a Cubist', *Art History*, 2 (September 1979), 355-363, pp. 358-361.

43 Ibid., p. 361.

44 'Proust's "Impressionism" Reconsidered in the Light of the Visual Arts of the Twentieth Century', in *Twentieth Century Fiction: Essays for Germaine Brée*, ed. by George Stambolian (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1975), pp. 27-56 (p. 27).

45 Ibid., p. 50.

46 Ibid.

the nineteenth century by incorporating a scrap of sheet music for a waltz and pieces of ballroom-style wallpaper – but which then 'cuts up [the] unified paper surface previously painted by others of a different time, […] arranges the fragments, and then covers them with other papers and paint'.[47] Proust, too, 'cuts up those worlds, causes them to intersect […] and builds on this new surface'.[48] An unpublished paper by Adam Watt, given in 2013, makes a comparable argument, discussing the likeness between Proust's creative method and the mixed-media guitar sculptures Picasso produced in 1912. Proust's famously elaborate redraftings of his manuscript proofs, Watt argues, are processes of assemblage, layering, cutting, and pasting akin to that employed by Picasso in the construction of his guitars, which he made from *papiers collés*, cardboard, wire, and glue. This affinity can be also linked to the textual workings of the novel, since the non-linear, barely-navigable manuscript pages can be thought of as a 'physical manifestation of the intellectual demands made by Proust's writing'.[49]

Still, there is a gap: no book-length study of Proust's connection to the avant-garde has yet been published in French or English (Sommella's study is untranslated, and it is in any case more of an extended essay than a book, despite being published as a stand-alone volume). There are admittedly very good reasons for this. In his own recent article on the aesthetic commonalities between Proust and the avant-garde poet Pierre Reverdy, Azérad rightly asserts that 'there is simply not enough material [in the novel] to pinpoint the precise way in which Proust could be deemed to have been inspired by the avant-garde'.[50] Elsewhere, Uenishi's suggestion that the text is infused with cubistic elements has been unambiguously disparaged by Fraisse ('elle voit souvent du cubisme où il ne peut y en avoir').[51] Even in passages where the avant-garde overtones seem unambiguous, it does not necessarily follow that Proust is *endorsing* the activity of his younger contemporaries. Azérad pinpoints the scene in which Saint-Loup punches the man who propositions him, which in his view is a 'rather direct reference' to images of boxers by the Futurist painters Umberto Boccioni and Carlo Carrà. But the scene

[47] Ibid., p. 51.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Adam Watt, 'Proust, Picasso, Guitars and Glue', unpublished conference paper, March 2013.
[50] Azérad, 'Disentangling Modernism: A Common Drive Towards Aesthetics', in *Proust and the Visual*, ed. by Nathalie Aubert (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 69-94 (p. 71).
[51] Fraisse, p. 175.

> is also a clear indicator of a possible pastiche or parodic fragment: the Narrator gives us a clue a few lines later when he debunks the entire scene and the 'style' he adopted in its depiction, by reducing his vision to mere 'ornament', a trivial aesthetic flight of fancy belied by the real blood spilled on the pavement. Reality trumps aesthetics, as Proust's narrative trumps its own rendering of futurist painting – self-parody and pastiches being recurring, structuring features of the *Recherche*. If parody always implies a twist in meaning or genre, and if pastiche implies distancing via imitation of style, Proust is taking a stand against the excessive aesthetic prowess of the contemporary avant-garde, intimating that behind such gestures lurks a possible drift towards violence, heralding the unleashing of technological warfare. Perhaps Proust never forgot the futurist glorification of war that formed the apex of Marinetti's 1909 manifesto.[52]

Azérad's analysis lays out the main risk of a reactionary response to the kind of criticism that sees Proust as a *passéiste*, and which Johnson decries: that we go too far in the other direction. The bottom line is that it is simply not enough to pinpoint 'the avant-garde bits' in Proust's novel, and to conclude from their existence that Proust was 'avant-garde'. This approach might provide fodder for a short article or chapter, but a more in-depth study will need to come at the problem from a new angle.

A passing comment in Gandelman's article on Proust and Cubism offers a clue as to what this new angle might be. The comment in question is a side note to Gandelman's argument for a philosophical connection between Proust and the Cubists, via Husserlian phenomenology: he sees the multiplicity of Proust's characters, particularly Albertine, as reminiscent of Husserl's description of *profiles* or *Abschattungen*, according to which 'the things and beings of the world […] offer themselves to us only as a series of "profiles" or "shadings" whose nucleus we will never perceive. We will never see the "table-itself", but always "profiles" of table.'[53] This, Gandelman argues, is the ultimate message of both the Cubist practice of painting different facets of the object and Proust's presentation of Albertine (for example) as 'a "sea" of *profiles*'.[54] The question of epistemology, and of whether the essence of an object can ever be known or perceived, will be explored here in due

[52] 'Paris', p. 62.
[53] Gandelman, p. 359.
[54] Ibid.

course. But what is particularly intriguing about Gandelman's analysis for the purpose of this thesis more broadly is not this argument in itself, but his casual aside that Husserl's phenomenology was 'apparently as unknown to Proust as to the Cubists'.[55] Gandelman is suggesting that neither Proust nor the Cubists need actually to have *read* Husserl for there to be echoes of Husserlian thought in their work. Something similar is implied by the large body of scholarship devoted to reading Proust through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis. Proust and Freud had famously never read each other's work, despite considerable areas of overlap in their thinking – but Proust does not have to have been 'a Freudian' for such comparisons to be convincing. Nor, I would suggest, does he have to have been 'avant-garde' for his work to be read through the lens of avant-gardism – as Fraisse also suggests in his assertion that Proust 'a côtoyé le cubisme sans presque y toucher'.[56] The examples of Husserl and of Freud imply that certain ideas and currents of thinking were 'in the air', circulating through the creative and intellectual enclaves of western Europe – in journals, tracts, the popular press, and in conversation, through the salons, cafés and studios of Paris and beyond, being absorbed, taking root, and re-emerging in a variety of forms. A good example of such an idea is the theoretical 'fourth dimension', which will be considered in Chapter 3. Blanche's passing reference to the term, in the quote above, is suggestive of its ubiquity: it appears in Proust's novel, as well as in the writings of Umberto Boccioni, Marcel Duchamp, and Guillaume Apollinaire. As Linda Dalrymple Henderson's pathbreaking work has shown, it was also used liberally in scientific, mathematical, philosophical, and spiritual circles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, without there being any real consensus as to what it actually meant – often it was used to refer to the possible existence of an additional spatial dimension, while for others it referred to time, before eventually being reappropriated and redefined by Einsteinian relativity and its theory of four-dimensional space-time.[57]

As well as conceptual inquiries and scientific (or pseudo-scientific) theories, artists, writers, and thinkers at this time were inevitably influenced by an ongoing, tangible transformation of everyday life: the period spanning the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a moment of cultural, technological, and scientific revolution equally as transformative as the digital revolution of the late twentieth

[55] Gandelman, p. 361.
[56] Fraisse, p. 185.
[57] See Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art*, 2nd edn (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013).

and early twenty-first. New inventions and discoveries, from the moving image to the car, brought about new ways of perceiving, experiencing, and understanding the world, and thus, inevitably, of engaging with it artistically.[58]

Bringing Proust and the avant-garde into dialogue around a broader pool of ideas and cultural-historical developments inevitably reveals instances of overlap in their thinking, precisely because their thinking was shaped against the same cultural backdrop, and coloured by the *air du temps*. In this way, I aim to situate my analysis at the crossroads between the two sub-categories of Proust criticism already discussed, one of which considers Proust in the context of social and cultural modernity, but does not go so far as to include the avant-garde in this context, and one of which relates Proust to the avant-garde, but without sufficiently considering the influence on both strands of the broader changes wrought by modernity. I do not consider it a particular hindrance that Proust had minimal dealings with the pioneers of the avant-garde, that they may have despised or been indifferent to his work, or that he was generally perceived as a frivolous *mondain* rather than a bohemian revolutionary. Details like these, I am suggesting, should in no way preclude a more implicit, deeply-rooted 'avant-garde impulse' in his work.

What is more, the singularity of the terms 'avant-garde' and 'Proust' – suggesting a pair of homogeneous, opposable units, each comprising a uniform set of goals, methods, and principles – belies, on the one hand, the richness and pluralism of a novel written over sixteen years, in seven volumes, and subjected to numerous redraftings, and on the other, the fact that the avant-garde was a fractious and antagonistic grouping structured around 'rivalries, denunciations, alliances, betrayals and requests for favours', in Azérad's words.[59] Indeed, the avant-garde was not a circle of allies so much as a network of headstrong individuals and factions whose disapproval of Proust was not necessarily any more deeply-set than their disapproval of each other. To suggest that Proust had nothing in common with any of these individuals or groups would be to make a sweeping, unhelpful generalisation; likewise, it would be short-sighted to conclude that Proust's 'non-avant-garde' passages preclude the presence of other elements that share or endorse avant-garde concerns.

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[58] For a broad account of the social and cultural changes happening at this time, see Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2003).
[59] 'Paris', p. 63.

Precisely because the avant-garde is so diverse, and because the artists I consider in this thesis do not share a unified vision, my investigation often posits ideas expressed in the *Recherche*, rather than any singular notion of 'avant-gardeness', as the factor that links them together. In many cases, elements of the novel function as the crux around which divergent currents of avant-garde activity can themselves be brought into dialogue; mapping the avant-gardes in relation to Proust, then, is also a means of mapping them in relation to each other. Moreover, reading these works through such a rich, heterogeneous work as Proust's also often enables me to draw out ideas that might otherwise have remained implicit and, in turn, to relate them more directly to a broader profusion of ideas afloat on the *air du temps*. My comparative approach reveals itself as a method both of relating avant-garde activity to more widespread cultural changes and attitudes, and of making connections and articulating differences *within* the avant-garde itself.

An exhaustive study of Proust and the avant-garde would, however, be unmanageably large, given the length of Proust's novel and the extensive reach of avant-garde activity. I limit the parameters of this investigation by focusing above all on the novel's *pictorial*, and more particularly *painterly* 'avant-garde impulse'. In this regard, I take my cue both from previous studies of Proust and the avant-garde, most of which focus on painting rather than on avant-garde writing or performance, and from the numerous investigations into the broader role of painting in Proust's work.[60] The most obvious manifestation of Proust's interest in painting is his 'musée imaginaire', which features many implicit and explicit references to real-life images that several critics have attempted to catalogue. (Thomas Baldwin refers to this tendency as 'art-spotting';[61] Eric Karpeles's *Paintings in Proust: A Visual Companion to 'In Search of Lost Time'* is a case in point.) Yet the 'musée imaginaire' does not include any outright references to or descriptions of Cubist, Futurist, or Surrealist paintings. Studies like those by Sommella and Keller, while they have their limitations, nonetheless offer an alternative approach to tracking avant-garde pictoriality in Proust's work, less restrictive than that which sees the *Recherche* as 'pictorial' only

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[60] In addition to works already cited by Sophie Bertho, Juliette Monnin-Hornung, and Taeko Uenishi, see J. M. Cocking, 'Proust and Painting', in *Proust: Collected Essays on the Writer and His Art* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 130-163; Eric Karpeles, *Paintings in Proust: A Visual Companion to In Search of Lost Time* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2008); Gabrielle Townsend, *Proust's Imaginary Museum: Reproductions and Reproduction in* A la recherche du temps perdu (Oxford, Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 2008); and Kazuyoshi Yoshikawa, *Proust et l'art pictural* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010).

[61] Thomas Baldwin, *The Picture as Spectre in Diderot, Proust and Deleuze* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2011), p. 4.

insofar as actual pictures – whether real or imagined – are explicitly referenced. By engaging with the avant-garde 'collection Marcel Proust', they are arguing for an ideological relation to avant-garde practice, according to which the narrator perceives the world in a manner comparable to the way it is depicted in Cubist and Futurist painting, as if the visible world has undergone a sort of avant-garde aestheticisation.

In fact, aestheticising the visible world is a habit of the narrator's. 'Déjà à Combray,' writes David Mendelson, 'nous le surprenons à transformer tel ou tel paysage qui lui est cher en un objet d'art dépourvu de matérialité, presque irréel.'[62] As Baldwin argues:

> [Proust] does not simply make reference (either directly or indirectly) to pictures by artists as varied as Bonnard, Botticelli, Breughel, Degas, Delacroix, Giotto, Manet, Monet, Moreau, Renoir, Robert, Turner, Vermeer, Watteau and Whistler, but imagines certain objects wholly or partly as things in pictures that are not coherently attributable to any artist. The contents of these pictures are, in fact, two-dimensional objects under ekphrastic description that appear in paintings that are purely the creation of Proust's text. […] These quasi-pictures can be highly unstable, changing their form suddenly in the course of a description of what at first sight seems to be a single object.[63]

One such object, which is described in *Sodome et Gomorrhe* and which Baldwin analyses extensively, is the 'jet d'eau d'Hubert Robert' that the narrator goes to see in the Guermantes' garden. Hubert Robert was known as a painter, not a designer of fountains, and it is not entirely clear whether the narrator is referring to an *actual* fountain that Hubert Robert may have liked to paint, or a *representation* of a fountain in a Hubert Robert painting: the description, Baldwin writes, 'slips and slides between the two'.[64] The narrator remarks that from a distance 'on avait l'impression de l'art plutôt que la sensation de l'eau' – an impression that is compounded in the text by the curiously geometrical, immobile manner in which this ('moving') water

[62] David Mendelson, *Le Verre et les objets de verre dans l'univers imaginaire de Marcel Proust* ([Paris]: José Corti, 1968), p. 129.
[63] Thomas Baldwin, 'Proust, a Fountain and Some Pink Marble', *French Studies*, 59 (2005), 481-493, p. 134.
[64] Ibid., p. 482.

is described: it is, among other things, 'durci', 'linéaire', 'infrangible', and 'immuable' (III, 56-57). Yet shortly after these quasi-pictorial descriptions, the fountain's materiality is restored by a breeze that carries the stream off course and leaves Mme d'Arpajon soaked through.

**Fig. 1:** Georges Braque, *Broc et violon*, 1910

What makes this passage particularly interesting is Baldwin's contention that the geometricality of the 'water', combined with the fact that the droplets seem to be tearing each other apart ('des gouttes sans force retombaient de la colonne d'eau en croisant au passage leurs sœurs montantes et parfois, déchirées' (III, 56)), give the overall effect of a cubistic collage rather than the meticulous mimesis of a sculpted

Hubert Robert landscape. This opens up the possibility that 'Proust was attempting to produce a description that "looked" – read – like a version of a painting by Hubert Robert that had fallen under the influence of the early Cubism of Braque or Picasso'.[65] Baldwin demonstrates that this is chronologically possible: Proust drastically reworked the original description, which appeared in an article of 1899, to include these 'geometrical, rectilinear or collage-like effects', and it is possible that he did so under the influence of analytic Cubism, which emerged in 1909. What this means is that as well as an actual fountain, with real water in it, the text seems also to be describing 'at least two types of painting – the one viewed as more or less transparent and fully iconic, the other fragmented and opaque and tending to wear its picture plane on its "literal" surface'.[66]

This, I would suggest, is a richer evocation of the Cubist tendency within the *Recherche* than those that stop at pinpointing objects or actions that are described 'cubistically'. The passage in question is not just a textual transposition of cubistic aesthetic effects, but also a means of engaging with a central debate in modernist pictoriality, which will be tackled head-on in Chapter 2: the question of whether art should function as a quasi-transparent 'portal' to a represented scene, or whether it should tend towards opacity by asserting itself as an object in its own right (i.e. a canvas with paint on it). This is a perennial debate concerning all art forms. But it takes on particular currency in a modernist pictorial context, as painting, already divorced from realist mimesis by the innovations of the Impressionists, began moving towards abstraction. Georges Braque engaged playfully with this debate in his *Broc et violon* of 1910 (fig. 1), pushing the image to its representative limits by fragmenting and distorting it in characteristically Cubist fashion, but ironically painting a figurative nail at the top of the canvas, creating the optical illusion that the image has been pinned to the wall like a poster. Braque thus uses the techniques of mimesis to draw attention to the fact that this painting is not mimetic at all – that it is, above all, just an arrangement of colours and forms on a flat surface. The Orphism (also called Orphic Cubism) of Robert Delaunay, among others, would go further, stripping painting of its representative function altogether and recasting it as an investigation of pure colour. Some among the Surrealists, on the other hand, would later move in a different direction, reappropriating linear perspective in order to

[65] Ibid., pp. 483-484.
[66] Ibid., p. 484.

draw attention away from the manner of representation and towards the surrealistic nature of the represented scenes themselves.

This debate has interesting implications for the relation between the observing subject and the observed work of art, and for the thematic concerns of this thesis more broadly. The 'transparent' work of art, we might argue, invites the viewer 'in' to the virtual world of the representation, while the 'opaque' one enforces a state of outsidership, thwarting any attempt on the part of the viewer to look past or through the surface of the canvas. But it is more complex than that, of course: we could also argue that the viewer is *more* of an outsider when looking at a transparent painting, since what is depicted is a virtual world she has no hope of entering, while an opaque painting asserts itself as an object that shares her space. In the same vein, modernist movements rejecting transparency were nonetheless arguing for the immersive potential of their work: in *Du 'Cubisme'*, for example, Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger define Cubist pictorial space as 'un passage sensible entre deux espaces subjectifs',[67] while the Futurists write on numerous occasions of their desire to 'place the spectator at the centre of the painting'.[68] All these aims have echoes of the narrator's eventual conviction that art is the only means by which 'nous pouvons sortir de nous, savoir ce que voit un autre de cet univers qui n'est le même que le notre' (IV, 474).

This complex interaction between transparency and opacity in painting, according to which images are understood as both 'open' or 'closed' to the viewer, is one manifestation of a broader dichotomy that will be my main area of investigation in what follows. Baldwin's analysis suggests that in his description of the Hubert Robert fountain, Proust situates himself in an equivocal middle ground between the two camps, using paintings that function as figureheads for each side of the debate (one mimetic, the other abstract) as props to aid the text's own ambiguous slippage between the two. What I will suggest in this thesis is that this tension does not only govern a mode of aesthetic engagement with paintings, but a mode of epistemological, phenomenological, and psychological engagement with the world more generally. The narrator's story is in many ways a succession of attempts to

[67] Gleizes and Metzinger, *Du 'Cubisme'* (Sisteron: Éditions Présence, 1980).
[68] See, for example, Umberto Boccioni, *Futurist Painting and Sculpture (Plastic Dynamism)* [1914], trans. by Richard Shane Agin and Maria Elena Versari (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2016): 'for us, the painting is no longer an exterior scene, a stage on which the event occurs. […] It's an emotive, architectonic environment that creates the sensation and envelops the spectator.' (p. 133.)

relate to objects (not just works of art but also trees, belltowers, parent figures, lovers, etc) as if they were 'transparent' – that is to say, as if he could 'immerse' himself in them, and thus access their most essential qualities. At the same time, he carries around a knowledge that such a privileged relation is impossible. 'Quand je voyais un objet extérieur,' he remarks in 'Combray', 'la conscience que je le voyais restait entre moi et lui, le bordait d'un mince liséré spirituel qui m'empêchait de jamais toucher directement sa matière' (I, 83). Proust, argues Baldwin, 'describes consciousness as if it were a kind of hindrance to perception, that is to say, the condition of a distance between subject and object […] The object acquires a kind of impenetrable surface – a spiritual "edging".'[69] The narrator's habit of 'aestheticising' the world reinforces this sense of distance: 'in referring to objects or scenes […] as paintings, Proust's Narrator makes a distinction between the worlds inhabited by the spectator (the Narrator himself) and by the objects and scenes in the "external" world.'[70]

How, then, does the perceiving, acting subject navigate this conflict? Chapter 1 considers this question with reference to Henri Bergson's theories of 'intuition' and 'analysis' as alternative processes for acquiring knowledge of the world, and investigates the extent to which we remain external to the objects that surround us, and the extent to which we can 'enter' them. It focuses particularly on the perceptive faculty of the artist and on the relationship it enables between artist and world, asking how this is influenced and challenged by ongoing developments in photographic practice. The artists in question are Proust's fictional painter, Elstir; his narrator-as-nascent-author, whose writing faculty is activated at the sight of the Martinville belltowers moving on the horizon; and numerous real-life artists of the Cubist and Futurist movements. Cubism and Futurism figure heavily in this thesis, partly because a precedent has been set for comparing them with Proust: the comments made by Jacques Rivière and Jacques-Émile Blanche, cited above, are an open invitation to look more closely for a Cubist tendency in the *Recherche*, while existing articles and the 'collection Marcel Proust' provide a number of 'leads' or 'entry points' that assist in assessing the topography of Proustian 'Cubo-Futurism'. Moreover, Proust visibly shares a number of thematic interests with his Cubist and Futurist contemporaries, notably a belief in the plurality of vision and identity and a

[69] 'Fountain', p. 136.
[70] Ibid.

fascination with the technologies of speed. In Chapter 1, I take the two movements as collectives that are often philosophically at odds, considering individual paintings, as well as theoretical writings authored both individually and collaboratively, less on their own terms than as contributions to broader artistic, intellectual, and epistemological projects. With varying levels of detail, I discuss the work of Giacamo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Albert Gleizes, Juan Gris, Jean Metzinger, Pablo Picasso, Luigi Russolo, and Gino Severini. As an outspoken theorist and the principle author of the main manifestos of Futurist painting, as well as a prolific practitioner, Boccioni emerges as a particularly important figure in my analysis.

Chapter 2 focuses specifically on the art object itself, investigating the extent to which the viewer of an image or the reader of a text is immersed in or distanced from the work with which they are engaged. It does this by interrogating the metaphor of the work of art as a 'window on the world', and its relation to modernist aesthetic goals. It looks in particular at Elstir's fictional paintings, the quasi-gallery of images that the narrator sees in and through his hotel room window at Balbec, and the actual paintings of Robert Delaunay and René Magritte, both of whom use the idea of the window as a means of questioning processes of vision and of representation. Delaunay and Magritte were nominally associated with the Cubist and Surrealist movements, respectively, but both were comparative loners: Martin Jay notes that Magritte's official association with Surrealism lasted only three years, from 1927 to 1930, and that 'he ultimately came to regret his connection', while Delaunay's work was dubbed 'Orphist' by Guillaume Apollinaire, a term, Virginia Spate tells us, that he tried to 'limit […] to his own kind of painting'.[71] In contrast to Chapter 1, then, Chapter 2 is concerned with artists whose *œuvre* is relatively self-contained.[72]

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[71] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), p. 246; Virginia Spate, *Orphism: The evolution of non-figurative painting in Paris 1910-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1979), p. 1.

[72] My engagement with the Surrealist movement in this thesis is unconventional in that it skirts around the core Dada-and-Surrealism narrative – according to which the first segues into the second by way of automatic writing, collage, and an interest in the chance encounter – in favour of an investigation of two more peripheral figures (my inclusion of the second, Dorothea Tanning, is accounted for below). I have chosen to exclude Dada altogether – partly because it has its origins in writing and performance, rather than in the visual arts, with oil-on-canvas painting taking something of a back seat, and partly because its inclusion would require a shift to a more political discourse than the scope of my investigation allows. I have also left out Surrealist 'automatic' practices of drawing and painting, because non-figurative practices of visual representation are already amply explored in my analysis of the near-abstraction of analytic Cubism, and Robert Delaunay's Orphist investigation of colour. Instead, I take Surrealism as an opportunity to consider a different approach to representation: that is to say, the return to a linear-perspectival, figurative style.

Chapter 3 investigates the influence of mechanised transport technologies both on perceptions of space and on relations between people. The first half considers the ways in which the train and the car (both in Proust's account and more broadly) are the instruments of an avant-garde aestheticisation of the world that allows for varying degrees of 'immersion', developing my analysis in Chapter 2 by considering the aestheticising function of the vehicle *window*. This section is not concerned with individual paintings or movements per se, so much as with the seismic shift effected by the rejection of linear perspective, and the ways in which Proust's engagement with new cultural developments might allow us to articulate a broader aesthetic coming-into-being. The second half examines the ideological barrier that Proust's text and certain avant-garde works suggest is imposed between 'practitioners' of speed – chiefly cyclists and aviators – and those who remain sedentary, or who travel by organic means. It brings Proust into dialogue with Umberto Boccioni and Jean Metzinger, both of whose works demonstrate an explicit interest in speed, and, more implicitly, in its effects on those who partake of it.

Chapter 4 continues this investigation into the barriers that demarcate individual subjects and separate them from one another. It argues that the self is defined not only by bodily but by architectural boundaries, and that these also shape the subject's relationship to other people. The first half considers the role played by internal spaces, and the walls that demarcate them, both in the narrator's project of self-definition and in that of the Surrealist painter Dorothea Tanning, as it is explored in her paintings of the 1940s. The second half draws on the same metaphors to examine the epistemological stakes of the relationships between the narrator and his lover Albertine, on the one hand, and on the other, between Tanning and her fellow Surrealist Max Ernst, as recounted in her memoir, *Between Lives: An Artist and Her World*. Both sections weave together these architectural metaphors with the psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu's theory of the *Moi-peau*, creating a framework by which to examine ways of being in the world, and of interacting with other people, that hover between states of 'insidership' and 'outsidership'.

Chapter 4 is the only chapter of the thesis, then, that focuses on a single figure from the avant-garde, rather than a selection of them. This figure in herself presents something of an anomaly among my corpus, partly because she began receiving recognition as a painter nearly two decades after Proust's death, but also because I make detailed reference to her memoir, which appeared in its final, revised version in 2001 (having first been published as *Birthday* in 1989). Tanning's inclusion is

germane for several reasons, however, and *Between Lives* serves more than one purpose. Unlike many male avant-gardists, she did not write tracts or manifestos or otherwise publish the theory behind her paintings; in that sense, then, the memoir will play a comparable role in this thesis to, say, *Du 'Cubisme'* or the Futurist manifestos, functioning as a guide that helps us navigate complex and often puzzling pictorial territory. I also use the memoir for the light it sheds on Tanning's own rich, eventful life, central to which is her relationship with another painter. In this regard, and particularly when read in combination with her paintings, it allows me to address certain questions of gender that might otherwise have fallen by the wayside. I have found it to be a particularly rich source of material through which to examine the narrator's troubling affair with Albertine in *A la recherche*. To have read this relationship in conjunction with an earlier, male-led incarnation of Surrealism, in which women featured more as sexualised models and muses than as active participants, would potentially have been problematic: such an approach would risk foregrounding the male experience of female alterity at the expense of the voices and experiences of women themselves. Tanning's work enables a more nuanced perspective because it reverberates with a sense of female empowerment: to bring her account of self-other relations into dialogue with the relationship between the jealous narrator and the beleaguered Albertine is to throw the latter into sharp relief. Tanning's inclusion is also apt from an art historical perspective: she was one of several women to become associated with Surrealism in the 1930s and 1940s (along with Leonor Fini, Lee Miller, Meret Oppenheim, Kay Sage, and others) whose lives and works have been something of a magnet for feminist art historians seeking to re-evaluate the place of women in the avant-garde, which for many years was defined by a conspicuous and decidedly un-radical androcentrism.[73] My own interest in Tanning is in line with this scholarly precedent: the inclusion of women in studies of the avant-garde is, I believe, both culturally important and intellectually enriching, and I am anxious to avoid implying, by omission, that it was an exclusively male-led phenomenon.

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[73] See, for example, Whitney Chadwick's seminal *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* ([London]: Thames and Hudson, 1985); Annette Shandler Levitt, *The Genres and Genders of Surrealism* (London: Macmillan, 1999); and *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology*, ed. by Penelope Rosemont (London: The University of Texas Press, 1998). Tanning herself, however, expresses her ambivalence towards scholarship focusing exclusively on female Surrealists in a statement provided for *Surrealism and Women*, ed. by Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli, and Gwen Raaberg (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1991): 'as someone, a human someone, who has chosen art […] this artist […] has utterly failed to understand the pigeonholing […] of gender, convinced that it has nothing to do with qualifications or goals.' (p. 228.)

I return, finally, to our picture surface. This can be figured as a self-effacing, transparent portal to the internal world of the image; as an opaque, tangible surface (and therefore barrier); or as something more unruly and less clearly defined. While Chapter 2 deals directly with these questions as they are addressed in actual images, and in writing about images, in other chapters the picture surface, in all its complexity, becomes a metaphor for the subject's engagement with the objects, scenes, and people of the external world. Ultimately, this thesis will ask whether the work of Proust and the avant-gardes conceives of the subject's interaction with the world as a function of surface or depth, immersion or distancing, insidership or outsidership, or as something else – something more troublesome, ambiguous, and intricate.

# 1. The Artist in the World: Epistemology, Optical Technologies, and the Limits of Perception

## Introduction: Technology, Bergson, and the Epistemic Crisis

I begin my investigation with an exploration of the artistic perceptive faculty, a vehicle that governs a particular mode of relation between artist and world. How, I will ask, do artists *see*? And how do their visual processes shape the ways in which they understand and express their relationship to the world around them? Within and across these broad areas of inquiry, further questions arise. To speak of a uniquely 'artistic' form of perception is to assume that the artist perceives differently to the non-artist. Should we subscribe, in that case, to what Linda Dalrymple Henderson terms the 'romantic image' of an artist with a more refined sensibility than ordinary people?[1] And if so, are we to expect a privileged epistemological relation between the artist and the world – if the artist *sees* with more clarity or depth, or in more detail, does this equate to superior clarity or depth or detail of *understanding*? These questions are both raised and answered, in complex and sometimes contradictory ways, by the figures and movements who will be my focus in this chapter: by the theory and practice of the Cubist and Futurist movements, and by Proust's exploration of painterly processes and principles via his fictional artist, Elstir. The waters of the debate are muddied by the looming phenomenon of photography, the perceptual and epistemological function of which was understood in varying ways by its admirers and detractors. Proust, the Cubists, and the Futurists cast it, alternately, as an aid to painters or a threat to their authority and a means of undermining their achievements.

My exploration of these contrasting artistic and perceptual strands will be underpinned throughout by the philosophy of Henri Bergson. Bergson was a hugely influential figure in cultural and artistic circles at this time; the Futurist painter Umberto Boccioni was a particular devotee. Except in the latter case, however, I am not concerned by the question of Bergson's influence, beyond what is implied by his significant contribution to the *air du temps*. Instead, I use his two opposing models of

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[1] Linda Dalrymple Henderson, 'X rays and the Quest for Invisible Reality in the Art of Kupka, Duchamp, and the Cubists', *Art Journal*, 47 (Winter 1988), 323-340, p. 328.

knowledge acquisition as a theoretical framework that sheds light on the epistemological projects of my chosen artists. The models in question, 'analysis' and 'intuition', are modes of relating to the world that can be defined as a state of 'outsidership' in the first case, and an ideal of 'insidership' in the second. This framework paves the way for a surprising revelation: that in this context Proust's thinking, far from being at odds with that of the avant-gardes, actually functions as a bridge between the divergent views of two avant-garde movements that seem, on the surface, to have much more in common with each other than they do with him.

In what remains of this introduction, I give an overview of a broader cultural and conceptual landscape that provides a crucial backdrop to my main analysis. The chapter will then comprise four further sections. The first focuses on Elstir, and the particular mode of vision that he explores and depicts in his painterly practice; the second, on the Futurists, and the ideal of an artistic perceptive faculty (which is not necessarily an exclusively *visual* faculty) that can be discerned from their writings. The third focuses on the Cubists, and the ways in which their own ideas about artistic perception set them at odds with the Futurists. In the fourth and final section, my definition of 'art' is broadened to include writing as well as painting, as I turn to the narrator's own early experience of artistic creation in the famed Martinville episode of *Du Côté de chez Swann*, which critics have linked to both Cubism and Futurism, as we saw in the introduction. This episode, I will argue, provides a crux around which the diverse perceptual, artistic, and epistemological strands of my investigation can be brought together, and moreover, a scenario in which the boundary between 'analysis' and 'intuition' is troubled, and perhaps even overcome.

### i. The redefinition of vision in the late nineteenth century

The primary form of perception I will discuss in this chapter will be vision. It is therefore essential to my argument to understand that the work of both Proust and his avant-garde contemporaries emerged against a backdrop of changes that had altered understandings of and attitudes towards vision and its perceived role, powers and means of functioning. Sara Danius speaks of this sea change in a lexis of urgency – as a 'crisis of the senses' or an 'epistemic crisis' – that implies disorientation and upheaval.[2] This crisis is understood as a split between 'the epistemic and the

[2] Danius, pp. 3, 21.

sensory', after which vision could not longer be thought of as a failsafe route to knowledge. The visible world and 'reality' no longer mapped seamlessly on to each other; 'seeing' no longer corresponded to 'knowing'. Proust and the avant-gardes were operating towards the end of a long process of uncoupling between individual perception and objective reality – and the split, as we shall see, was widening.

At the root of this change was a fundamental shift in vision's very definition: from a function of objective, external reality, it had come to be understood over the course of the nineteenth century as a function, above all, of human embodiment. As Jonathan Crary argues in *Techniques of the Observer*, the study of vision had shifted 'from the geometrical optics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to physiological optics, which dominated both scientific and philosophical discussion of vision in the nineteenth century'.[3] According to Martin Jay's almost contemporaneous study of the denigration of vision in the twentieth century, *Downcast Eyes*, this shift marked a decline in the hegemonic status of vision as the most important of the senses. What was once the 'privileged scopic regime' of Cartesian perspectivalism became '[a] discredited "spectatorial" epistemolog[y]'.[4] Vision could not be trusted if it was rooted above all in the fallible and unstable structures of the human sensorium, and its privileged link to knowledge was, inevitably, severed. As Crary writes:

> Even before the end of the [nineteenth] century, an extensive amount of work in science, philosophy, psychology and art involved a coming to terms in various ways with the understanding that vision, or any of the senses, could no longer claim an essential objectivity or certainty.[5]

Crary illustrates the perceived stability of the old visual order with the model of the camera obscura. 'For two centuries,' he writes, '[the camera obscura] stood as a model, in both rationalist and empiricist thought, of how observation leads to truthful inferences about the world.'[6] Later, the photographic camera was thought to

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[3] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1990), p. 16.
[4] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), p. 150.
[5] *Techniques*, p. 12.
[6] Ibid., p. 29. As Crary later explains, 'the camera obscura is congruent with [Descartes's] quest to found human knowledge on a purely objective view of the world. The aperture of the camera obscura corresponds to a single, mathematically defined point, from which the world can be logically deduced […] [it] provides a vantage point onto the world analogous to the eye of God.' (p. 48.) See Crary's second chapter (pp. 25-66) for a full account of the cultural-historical implications of the camera obscura model.

align neatly with the positivist logic that saw vision as a means of knowing and understanding reality, as Douglas R. Nickel has demonstrated. William Henry Fox Talbot, one of photography's early pioneers, thought of the camera as a superior version of the human eye – 'vision made perfect', as Nickel puts it.[7] Talbot and his contemporaries, he writes, 'believed that the more distinctly the world was viewed, appraised, and catalogued, the more deeply its wondrous complexity might be understood […] an epistemological logic that instinctively related knowledge to sight had little difficulty assimilating the ocular medium of photography into its culture as a new, mechanically improved version of human vision.'[8]

But Nickel pinpoints three key moments in the history of photography which, as doubts took hold about the epistemological function of vision, compounded the split between vision and knowledge. The first of these was the output of the photographer Peter Henry Emerson, working in the 1880s and 1890s. A proponent of the doctrine of photography as an art form rather than a purely mechanical means of documenting reality, Emerson believed that photography should remain true to the functioning of the human eye rather than attempting to perfect it. Since the eye was subject to all kinds of flaws that problematised its ability to clearly perceive reality, so too should photography avoid trying to portray the world 'accurately'. This meant doing away with the sharp focus and intricate detail of his contemporaries in favour of an aesthetics of visual indeterminacy, in which the less important elements of the scene blurred together, in softer focus. By according aesthetic value to visual 'error' and uncertainty, Emerson's work 'undermin[ed] the photograph's transparency and mimetic force and, with it, its privileged epistemological relation to exterior reality'.[9] Moreover, it shifted the locus of perceptual truth from a quasi-objective, quasi-mechanical eye to a subjective, fallible observer.[10]

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[7] Douglas R. Nickel, 'Photography and Invisibility' in *The Artist and the Camera: Degas to Picasso*, ed. by Dorothy Kosinski (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 35.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Nickel, p. 7.

[10] This is not to suggest, however, that artistic forms of photography, championed by Emerson and others, actually overtook photography in its role as a means of appraisal and categorisation. In *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: MacMillan Education, 1988), John Tagg documents a series of technical developments in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (the invention of the Kodak camera being chief among them) that made photographs reproducible on a large scale. This had inevitable consequences for photography as an artistic and aesthetic practice: as Tagg writes, 'what Walter Benjamin called the "cult" value of the picture was effectively abolished when photographs became so common as to be unremarkable; when they were items of passing interest with no residual value' (p. 56). Rather, photography's new ubiquity meant it was now 'open to a whole range of scientific and technical applications', and 'supplied a ready instrumentation to a number of reformed

Nickel does not discuss it, but still photography also played a role in undermining vision's privileged relation to knowledge within the popular field of stereoscopy. The stereoscope created the illusion of depth by presenting a pair of two-dimensional images – often photographs – which merged into a single three-dimensional image when viewed through the lenses of the device. This highlighted the physicality and subjectivity of vision, since the dimension of depth in this case was not an external, spatial truth, but was created by and existed solely within the eye of the viewer. As Jay has it, 'by removing the verification of touch […] the stereoscope called into question the assumed congruence between the geometry of the world and the natural geometry of the mind's eye.'[11] While Emerson's photographic innovations highlighted the eye's fallibility and tendency to error, the stereoscope highlighted its capacity to recreate as illusion the seemingly stable structures of the external world.

Nickel does, however, discuss the development of motion photography, beginning with Eadweard Muybridge's famous series of images of a galloping horse, produced in Palo Alto, California, in 1877 and 1878 (fig. 2), and continuing in France with Etienne-Jules Marey's more precise process of chronophotography (fig. 3), which captured the successive stages of a subject's movement on a single photographic plate. This process of stilling and fixing bodies in motion made visible those subtle and fleeting stages of movement that happened too quickly to be perceived by the naked eye. By making a concrete visual record of processes that were otherwise imperceptible, movement photography could not help but demonstrate the limits of bodily vision. In doing so Muybridge and Marey's images redefined vision in terms of what it was not, and what it could not do, and inevitably, therefore, played a role in undermining its supposed infallibility. This is in spite of the fact that Marey, as we shall see, thought of his invention as a means of aiding and augmenting sight – of standing in for its inadequacies – rather than as a blow to its authority.

The third moment that Nickel cites is the discovery of the X-ray by Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen in 1895, which went further than motion photography in its emphasis on a reality that escaped the limits of human perception. 'Even more than motion photography,' he asserts,

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or emerging medical, legal and municipal apparatuses in which photographs functioned as a means of record and a source of evidence' (p. 60).

[11] Jay, p. 152.

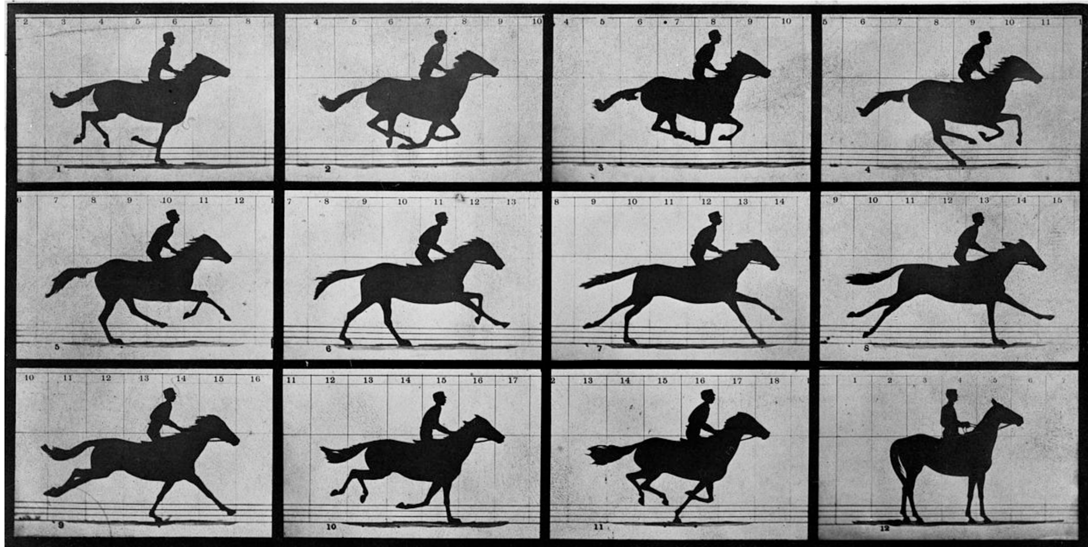

**Fig. 2:** Eadweard Muybridge, *The Horse in Motion*, 1878

**Fig. 3:** Etienne-Jules Marey, Image of a pelican in flight, ca. 1882

> X-ray photography (and radioactivity in general) was understood to disclose a new reality outside the realm of the visible. Articles in mass circulation periodicals carried titles like 'Photographing the Unseen', 'The Invisible World around Us', and 'The World beyond Our Senses'.[12]

Implied – though not developed – in Nickel's argument is the fact that the X-ray was not just part of a series of photographic developments that undermined positivism and raised doubts about the epistemological function of vision, but also of a series of broader scientific developments that had the same effect. Its discovery in 1895 had

[12] Nickel, p. 39.

been preceded by Heinrich Hertz's identification of electromagnetic waves in 1888, which paved the way for wireless telegraphy, and was swiftly followed by Henri Becquerel's discovery of radioactivity in 1896 and J. J. Thompson's identification of the electron in 1897. Collectively, these developments underlined the limitations of the human eye by confirming the existence of invisible realms of activity that lay beyond its reach. As Marie Curie declared in relation to radioactivity in 1904, 'once more we are forced to recognise how limited is our direct perception of the world around us.'[13] These changes had implications for the role of the artist, as Henderson articulates:

> With reality so radically redefined by X-rays and radioactivity, avant-garde artists faced a serious challenge to the romantic image of the artist as possessing sensibilities more highly developed than those of the average individual. Could the modern artist, like the photosensitive plate struck by X-rays, reveal an invisible reality?[14]

This goes straight to the structuring questions of this chapter. Artists, after all, are human beings: does anything exempt their perceptive capabilities from the weakness and inadequacy that now defines human vision more broadly? Can they and should they compete with these new, mechanical forms of perception, and how, if at all, should they engage with the unseen realities now revealed or known to exist? Contrasting approaches to these challenges are adopted in the Cubist and Futurist movements, as we shall soon see.

### ii. Bergsonian epistemology: analysis vs. intuition

For Nickel, the X-ray is emblematic of 'the shift away from Victorian positivism to the antimaterialism and antiocularcentrism of Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud'.[15] For these thinkers, he asserts, 'reality lay, not on the surface of things – the domain of the photographic – but in the structures of time, experience, and memory buried beneath, accessible only through penetration'.[16] In mentioning Bergson, Nickel implicates the philosopher in the split between the epistemic and the sensory,

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[13] 'Radium and Radioactivity' [1904], via Henderson, 'Editor's Introduction: I. Writing Modern Art and Science – An Overview; II. Cubism, Futurism, and Ether Physics in the Early Twentieth Century', *Science in Context*, 17 (December 2004), 423-466, p. 447.
[14] Henderson, 'X rays', p. 328.
[15] Nickel, p. 39.
[16] Ibid.

suggesting his ideas might be a product of or a reaction to the so-called crisis of vision. This, however, is something of a simplification. Bergson explains in 'Introduction à la métaphysique' of 1903 that metaphysics defines two ways of acquiring knowledge: that which comes through a process of analysis, and that which comes through an act of intuition. Our default approach is the analytic one, according to which we accumulate views and perspectives of an object from without, from an external point of view. This approach is descriptive and relative, and it has its place: we rely on it when we go about our regular, day-to-day business. But its influence also extends to philosophy, to which it is poorly suited: it does not aid the philosopher in his or her attempts to understand the world profoundly and completely. Significantly, Bergson uses photography to illustrate his point, arguing that even if relative views are accumulated *ad infinitum*, they will no more amount to a complete, essential representation than a series of photographs that attempts to recompose a city. In contrast, an act of intuition involves 'entering' into the object itself (Bergson admits that this does not come naturally); it produces absolute knowledge comparable to the intuitive, absolute knowledge that human beings have of themselves. An object experienced intuitively in its absolute state simply *is*, and in this sense the absolute is synonymous with perfection ('l'absolu est parfait en ce qu'il est parfaitement ce qu'il est').[17] An object seen analytically, on the other hand, can only exist *according to* the medium through which it is seen, and will always remain imperfect when compared to the original ('une représentation prise d'un certain point de vue, […] [reste] toujours [imparfaite] en comparaison de l'objet sur lequel la vue a été prise').[18] The ultimate purpose of intuition is to perceive what Bergson considers to be the basic state of reality: time and change as continuous and fluid. Analysis, on the other hand, tries to extract static, isolated fragments from this temporal flux, or *durée*, meaning the essence of reality is destined always to slip from its grasp.

As Marta Braun explains in her study of Marey's life and work, the latter saw the role of his machine as a means of overcoming the shortcomings of the human eye. Marey, she writes, 'suggested not that reality was unknowable, but that human perception was limited. Only by substituting machines for the senses would we gain

[17] Bergson, 'Introduction à la métaphysique', in *Œuvres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), p. 1395.
[18] Ibid.

scientific knowledge.'[19] But for Bergson, chronophotography did not offer a solution to vision's inadequacies; it was itself inadequate precisely because it too closely resembled our everyday, practical, analytic experience of vision. As Braun writes:

> For Bergson reality, or time, could never be known by being made visible; any attempt to do so limited true knowledge, or intuition. Hence, in his view, the senses were deficient by the very fact of their being too much like a camera: they automatically stopped and fixed objects that flowed into their realm of action.[20]

Bergson's view invites an alternative assessment of the so-called 'epistemic crisis'. As Mark Antliff observes, 'Bergson singles out vision as the faculty most closely tied to our utilitarian needs and therefore a perceptual tool adapted to the "relative" knowledge discernible by our intellect.'[21] In other words, vision is an analytic means of acquiring knowledge from the outside: it cannot therefore be a failsafe route to knowledge precisely because *analysis* is not a failsafe route to knowledge. The recasting of vision as a function of embodiment compounds the crisis not only because it suggests vision is unreliable, but also because it casts the perceiver as an outsider, separated from reality by a mediating body that reveals the world only as relative and incomplete. But if our approach to knowledge were to try and intuit it, the notion of a crisis would fall away.

### iii. Epistemological stability vs. epistemological precarity

In this chapter, I will consider the opposition of intuition and analysis as part of a broader dualist model, which consists of two diverging epistemological and aesthetic currents with a broad alliance of values on each side: unity, flux, and a move towards 'wholeness' – even the absolute – on one, and fragmentation, dispersal, and a focus on the perspectival and the relative on the other. The latter finds value in an 'analytic' approach, celebrating the inadequacies of the human sensorium, while the former implies a quasi-intuitive ability to overcome these inadequacies and to rise above the fragmentation and dispersal implied in the latter. I will seek to demonstrate in what follows that the Cubists and Futurists belong to separate camps, while Proust's Elstir,

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[19] Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 280.
[20] Ibid.
[21] 'The Fourth Dimension and Futurism: A Politicized Space', *The Art Bulletin*, 82 (2000), 720-733, p. 722.

and the early literary endeavours of his narrator, trouble the boundary between the two.

Both of these approaches oppose the camera obscura model of perceptual and epistemic stability. Indeed, they can be grouped together on the same side of an earlier dualist model, defined by Crary in *Suspensions of Perception*, his follow-up to *Techniques of the Observer*. He considers a shift in values in the late nineteenth century, after which realism ceased to be governed solely by mimesis and instead navigated 'a tenuous relation between perceptual synthesis and dissociation'.[22] Among his case studies is Édouard Manet's *Dans la serre*, of 1879, which has been written off as a return to a more conservative, conventional realism on Manet's part, an attempt to garner more widespread critical acceptance in the light of several Salon rejections in the 1870s. Yet in Crary's reading, the painting gives substance to 'an essential conflict within the perceptual logic of modernity, in which two powerful tendencies are at work' – the first, 'a binding together of vision, an obsessive holding together of perception to maintain the viability of a functional real world', and the second, 'a dynamic of psychic and economic exchange, of equivalence and substitution, of flux and dispersal'.[23] He sees in the painting 'an attempt to reconstitute a cohesive visual field, in whose disassembly Manet had already prominently participated'; it is 'an impossible enterprise of fastening together and grounding narrative contents that inherently resisted unification or immobilisation'.[24] A number of motifs within the painting imply enclosure, restraint, and organised containment (the 'corseted, belted, braceleted, gloved and beringed' figure of the woman, for example, whose form is echoed in the posts of the bench on which she sits).[25] Yet out of this attempt at order emerges 'a disjunct, compressed and space-drained field', an impossible overcrowding of a space that 'seems to buckle and ripple at certain points'.[26] This is the second tendency, 'threaten[ing] to unmoor the apparently stable positions and terms that Manet seems to have effortlessly arranged'.[27]

The painting, by this reasoning, is a palpable suppression of forces that would later erupt in avant-garde painting, in which the perceptual field is 'unmoored' not with reluctant inevitability, but as a matter of principle. Inherent in the avant-garde

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[22] Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1999), p. 92.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., pp. 92-93.
[25] Ibid., p. 92.
[26] Ibid., p. 93.
[27] Ibid., p. 92.

paintings I consider here is a desire, not to explore the tension between an older, more stable visual order and an emergent, disruptive one, but to do away altogether with the unifying perceptive norms and constancies of the former. The conflicting currents I describe above can be understood as differing manifestations of this same tendency: while I juxtapose flux with dispersal, for example, for Crary they are part of the same impulse. Ultimately, however, what Crary's model amounts to is an opposition between certainty and uncertainty, stability and precarity. And this, I will argue, is an opposition that endures into modernism: in some quarters a desire for certainty remains, even as perception is unbound and unmoored. In this schema, flux is not so much an escape from a rigid, positivist system of perceptual constancies, but a move towards a higher unity and holism that affords the possibility of intuitive, absolute knowledge. The aforementioned dualist model, with its alliances of values grouped broadly around analysis and intuition, ultimately maps on to an opposition between an approach that finds inherent value in unknowing, in epistemological precarity, and, on the other hand, a pursuit of the knowledge and certainty that – despite the uncoupling of the epistemic and the sensory – may yet be attainable. This chapter, then, will explore the extent to which its subjects are content with instability as a state in and of itself, and the extent to which they seek to reanchor it as an essential value in a new ontological understanding of the world.

## I. Elstir

### i. Elstirean 'precognitive vision'

The works of Elstir, though fictional, are nonetheless exemplary of a particular form of artistic perception and practice that took root in the nineteenth century, partly in response to the epistemic crisis, and which visually and conceptually separated seeing from knowing by championing a 'pure' form of vision, as opposed to a mode of vision informed by pre-existing epistemological structures. The central principle of Elstir's aesthetics, which I call 'precognitive vision', is the notion of a split between the pure act of vision and the processes of recognition that inform and structure it. The narrator discovers this principle during his visit to Balbec in *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, when he visits Elstir's studio and inspects the large seascapes the latter has produced during his stay in the town. I quote at length:

> Naturellement, ce qu'il avait dans son atelier, ce n'était guère que des marines prises ici, à Balbec. Mais j'y pouvais discerner que le charme de chacune consistait en une sorte de métamorphose des choses représentées, analogue à celle qu'en poésie on nomme métaphore et que si Dieu le Père avait créé les choses en les nommant, c'est en leur ôtant leur nom, ou en leur en donnant un autre qu'Elstir les recréait. Les noms qui désignent les choses répondent toujours à une notion de l'intelligence, étrangère à nos impressions véritables et qui nous force à éliminer d'elles tout ce qui ne se rapporte pas à cette notion.
>
> Parfois à ma fenêtre, dans l'hôtel de Balbec […] il m'était arrivé grâce à un effet de soleil, de prendre une partie plus sombre de la mer pour une côte éloignée, ou de regarder avec joie une zone bleue et fluide sans savoir si elle appartenait à la mer ou au ciel. Bien vite mon intelligence rétablissait entre les éléments la séparation que mon impression avait abolie. [...] Mais les rares moments où l'on voit la nature telle qu'elle est, poétiquement, c'était de ceux-là qu'était faite l'œuvre d'Elstir. Une de ses métaphores les plus fréquentes dans les marines qu'il avait près de lui en ce moment était justement celle qui comparant la terre à la mer, supprimait entre elles toute démarcation. [...]
>
> C'est par exemple à une métaphore de ce genre – dans un tableau représentant le port de Carquethuit […] – qu'Elstir avait préparé l'esprit du spectateur en n'employant pour la petite ville que des termes marins, et que des termes urbains pour la mer. (II, 191-192)

The narrator's key preoccupation in looking at these images – particularly the *Port de Carquethuit,* the subject of a highly detailed ekphrastic description that spans several pages – is Elstir's visual articulation of the idea that the act of looking is not merely a faculty of sight, but also of the intellect and, crucially for our purposes, of prior knowledge. When we look, our intelligence always intervenes to separate objects from each other, to distinguish and demarcate, and to fit the things we see into the categories we 'know' them to belong to. Sometimes, however, we experience a fleeting, precognitive, pre-linguistic form of seeing in the moments before these categories crystallise, when the boundaries between objects are blurred and rearranged. These boundaries are soon restored by the intervention of the intellect,

which demarcates the seen objects according to its knowledge of the names attributed to them. But it is their initial state of fluid instability that forms the subject of Elstir's work, and his depiction of this state awakens the narrator to his own experience of it.

It seems certain that this type of vision, or something akin to it, informed the aesthetic developments of real-life pioneers of post-realist aesthetics – James Abbott McNeill Whistler, for example, or Claude Monet. Indeed, Iris Schaefer, Caroline von Saint-George, and Katja Lewerentz define the 'impression' of Impression*ism* in precisely these terms – as 'the image formed on the retina, before it is transmitted along the optic nerve to the brain to be interpreted'.[28] But as Danius argues, it is perhaps most explicitly at play in the late work of J. M. W. Turner, and most articulately defined in the writings of his ardent defender, John Ruskin.[29] Danius and others have cited a well-known anecdote, originally set down by Ruskin in 1872, in which Turner declares his affiliation to an aesthetic that separates vision from knowledge. When a naval officer comments on the lack of port-holes in a drawing Turner is making of a harbour, Turner explains that he has drawn no port-holes because he cannot see any. The naval officer retorts that he nonetheless *knows* that the port-holes are there. '"I know that well enough,"' replies Turner, '"but my business is to draw what I see, and not what I know is there."'[30] Ruskin had also advocated a comparable type of vision nearly twenty years earlier, in 1857, without mentioning Turner:

> The whole technical power of our painting depends on our recovery of what may be called the *innocence of the eye*; that is to say, of a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify, – as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight.[31]

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[28] Schaefer, Saint-George, and Lewerentz, *Painting Light: The Hidden Techniques of the Impressionists* (Milan: Skiro, 2008), p. 23.

[29] See Danius, pp. 110-111. In her article 'Le Port de Carquethuit and Metaphor', Gabrielle Townsend gives an overview of the painters that various critics have suggested as models for Elstir: as well as Monet and Whistler, Degas, Hokusaï, Renoir, Harrison, Helleu, Vuillard, and Wilson Steer have been suggested. Like Danius, however, she concludes that Turner is the most important of all these real-life references (in *'When familiar meanings dissolve…': Essays in French Studies in Memory of Malcolm Bowie*, ed. by Gill Rye and Naomi Segal, (Oxford, Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 193-204 (pp. 194-195)).

[30] John Ruskin, *The Eagle's Nest*, in *The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London and New York: George Allen, 1906), XXII, pp. 111-287 (210).

[31] *The Elements of Drawing*, in *The Works of John Ruskin* (1904), XV, pp. 1-228 (27).

Proust's admiration for Ruskin is well known. His interest began in 1899, and he went on to write an obituary for the critic in *Le Figaro* in 1900, and then to translate two of his books, *The Bible of Amiens*, in 1904, and *Sesame and Lilies*, in 1906. That Proust quoted the Turner anecdote in both his essay 'John Ruskin' and the preface to his translation of Ruskin's *The Bible of Amiens* suggests a longstanding interest in the artistic philosophy of perceptual innocence that finds its culmination in the portrayal of Elstir.[32] *Inventing* a painter and a body of paintings that embody this philosophy is, moreover, a watertight way of endorsing it, since paintings that do not exist in any material sense cannot be uncoupled from the enthusiastic conclusions of the narrative in which they are situated. (That is to say, the reader of the *Recherche* cannot disagree with the narrator's assessment of Elstir's paintings as the reader of a critical essay by Proust might disagree with *his* assessment of *Turner's*.)[33]

### ii. Bergsonian 'perceptive expansion'

In her study *Bergson et Proust*, Joyce Mégay considers the similarities between Ruskin's approach to aesthetics and that of Bergson, remarking that many of their ideas are identical. 'En ce qui concerne l'esthétique,' she writes, 'ils appartenaient tous deux à la même famille d'esprits.'[34] And indeed, in 'La Perception du changement', of 1911, Bergson describes a type of artistic vision that aligns intriguingly with the 'innocent' perception championed by Proust and Ruskin, expounding on its philosophical value and proposing it as a model that could enable philosophers to surmount the obstacles that have hindered their ability to reach a true understanding of the world. His argument in the essay arises from a point that in his view is self-evident: that if we could perceive everything with our senses and our consciousness, we would have no need for either reason or concepts. The limitations of our perceptive faculties are the *raison d'être* of philosophy itself, since we conceptualise only as a means of filling the gaps in our perception; the role of conception is to 'combler les intervalles entre les données des sens ou de la conscience et, par là, unifier et systématiser notre connaissance des choses'.[35] What we call

[32] In Leonard's argument, 'it was Ruskin's writings on Turner which offered [Proust] a literary example of representing optical effects in virtual prose poems of impressionism', and which thus provided inspiration for Proust's own 'well-known set pieces of impressionism' ('Modernist Visual Dynamics', p. 335).
[33] I do not dwell here on the crossover between text and image in Proust's portrayal of Elstir, because it will be considered in more detail in Chapter 2.
[34] Joyce N. Mégay, *Bergson et Proust: Essai de mise au point de la question de l'influence de Bergson sur Proust* (Paris: Libraire Philsophique J. Vrin, 1976), p. 134.
[35] 'La Perception du changement', in *Œuvres*, pp. 1365-1385 (p. 1369).

knowledge comes from the careful combination of pure perception and the subsequent conceptualisation of what is perceived. But this is a far from ideal state of affairs. Although Bergson does not use the word, this method of knowledge acquisition is clearly analytic, and it cannot therefore lead us to a complete understanding of the world. The solution to this problem is to 'revenir à la perception, obtenir qu'elle se dilate et s'étende'.[36] Rather than dealing with concepts, we should work instead at enlarging our powers of perception. Arriving at an understanding of reality is not so much a question of transcending the human sensorium, as has commonly been thought in the field of metaphysics, but of expanding it. If we were able intentionally to expand our perceptive faculty, 'nous aurions une philosophie à laquelle on ne pourrait en opposer d'autres, car elle n'aurait rien laissé en dehors d'elle que d'autres doctrines pussent ramasser: elle aurait tout pris'.[37] This, we can conclude, would be an intuitive model of knowledge acquisition. Bergson admits that such an endeavour sounds impossible. How can we ask our perceptive faculties to see *more* than they already see? But here he holds up a category of people for whom such a practice is commonplace and indeed necessary: artists.

The average, non-artistic brain, Bergson says, seems to have been constructed to avoid perceiving those elements of the world that do not correspond to practical and material need. It deliberately delimits its focus of attention, makes 'un effort constant […] pour limiter son horizon, pour se détourner de ce qu'il a un intérêt matériel à ne pas voir'.[38] As Proust also asserts, ordinary vision classifies and categorises objects in advance so that we barely need to look at the object – 'il nous suffit de savoir à quelle catégorie il appartient.'[39] This is a normal, necessary means of navigating the practical demands of everyday life. 'Avant de philosopher, il faut vivre,' Bergson writes, 'et la vie exige que nous mettions des œillères.'[40] But artists are not restrained by these demands. Inexplicably, they are born without that seemingly unbreakable link between the perceptive faculty and the faculty to act; when they look at an object, they see it for what it is and not in terms of its relation to their own actions. They perceive freely, *sans œillères*, and in doing so, they perceive what the rest of us do not. Elstir could easily be one such artist, were he a real person.

[36] Ibid., p. 1369.
[37] Ibid., p. 1370.
[38] Ibid., p. 1372.
[39] Ibid., p. 1373.
[40] Ibid., p. 1372.

To clarify my claim in the introduction to this chapter that vision is a form of analysis, it is important to note that two forms of vision are at play here: the first, analytic and conceptualised, is underpinned by preconceived social and linguistic categories – it is akin to the cognitive experience that follows the precognitive one depicted in Elstir's paintings. The second, which Bergson defines here, is more akin to the precognitive experience: a pure, expanded, uninstrumentalised form of vision, which provides a model for philosophical intuition. The comparison between Bergson's expanded perception and Elstir's precognitive vision is strengthened by the fact that Turner is one of the two artists that Bergson mentions by name (the other is Corot). In fact, Elstirean vision draws closer to intuition than even Bergson implies. Like Ruskin, Bergson suggests a certain innocence on the part of the artist – that artistic perception is an accident of birth, in contrast to philosophical intuition, which demands a great effort.[41] Yet Elstir's evocation of precognitive vision does not come easily. He does not paint during the precognitive state itself (this would be impossible, since it only lasts a few moments) but deliberately cultivates an analogous perceptive state in which what he sees is divorced from what he knows. This is a particularly impressive feat, the narrator tells us, for a cultured man such as Elstir, who knows a great deal. The lengths he goes to accord with Crary's argument that this type of vision is 'achieved at great cost', and that Ruskin is therefore misguided in calling it 'innocence'.[42]

Elstirean vision also leads to an awareness of a form of *durée*; that is to say, to vision itself as a durational, developing process, dependent on the self and its own constant state of change and development. Likewise, the depiction of *spatial* flux and becoming, through the suppression of all demarcation between the land and the sea – the sea *becomes* the land and vice versa – provides a visual analogue for Bergsonian *durational* flux and becoming. In this regard, the paintings realise Bergson's claim that a 'perception immédiate et désintéressé' would perceive reality 'comme un perpétuel devenir'.[43] 'Perception divorced from knowledge' is therefore only one definition of precognitive vision; we might also think of it as a type of perception that leads to new *forms* of knowledge, and which leads both artist and viewer away from conceptual, analytic 'connaissance actuelle' and towards the more intuitive realm of

[41] 'Notre esprit peut […] s'installer dans la réalité mobile […] la saisir intuitivement. Il faut pour cela qu'il se violente, qu'il renverse le sens de l'opération par laquelle il pense habituellement.' ('Introduction', p. 1421-1422.)
[42] *Techniques*, pp. 95-96.
[43] *L'Évolution créatrice*, in *Œuvres*, pp. 487-802 (pp. 725-6).

'connaissance virtuelle', from which we normally remain blinkered.[44] This is a curious corruption of the idea that vision or perception more broadly cannot lead to knowledge: perception *can* lead to knowledge if we think of both terms as intuitive, rather than as logical and pragmatic. Precognitive vision, we might conclude, actually enables a privileged epistemological relation to reality, and this is reinforced by the narrator's claim that what Elstir paints is 'la nature telle qu'elle est'.[45]

Yet alongside this intuitive element sits an analytic one that undercuts it. As I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, intuition is a state of flux, in which boundaries fall away, while analysis is a state of fragmentation, in which insurmountable boundaries are imposed, and true knowledge and understanding (in Bergson's view) remain out of reach. Precognitive vision and its disruption of visual categories seem to produce both flux and fragmentation in equal measure. In certain parts of the paintings, boundaries have been imposed where no boundaries should be – so that in the *Port de Carquethuit*, for example, the lack of a clear demarcation between the sea and the land is countered by the separateness of different parts of the sea. 'Entre ces parties [de la mer],' the narrator observes, 'il y avait autant de différence qu'entre l'une d'elles et l'église sortant des eaux, et les bateaux derrière la ville.' (II, 193-194) In one area of the painting, the boundary is suppressed between two things that are separate, while in another, boundaries appear within something that we think of as being whole. As if to illustrate the coexistence of these two modes, one of the paintings depicts a river – a motif emblematic of *durée*, of reality-as-flux – seen from an angle that breaks it up into discontinuous, isolated fragments ('pris d'un point de vue tel qu'il apparaissait entièrement disloqué, étalé ici en lac, aminci là en filet, rompu ailleurs par l'interposition d'une colline couronnée de bois' (II, 195)). The fluid, durational, mobile quality of the river is stripped away in a manner not dissimilar to chronophotography's transformation of the moving body. This is one of a number of instances in which the painter's chosen point of view leads to a reshuffling of the landscape, and I shall consider this in more depth in the section on Cubism, later in this chapter. It seems pertinent to mention here, though, that the distorting, fragmenting role of perspective corresponds less to the narrator's claim that Elstir paints reality 'telle qu'elle est' than to his remark, later in the episode, that Elstir does

[44] 'Perception', p. 1372.

[45] 'Les rares moments où l'on voit la nature telle qu'elle est, poétiquement, c'était de ceux-là qu'était faite l'œuvre d'Elstir' (II, 192).

not paint according to what he knows, but 'selon ces illusions optiques dont notre vision première est faite' (II, 193-195).

The idea that Elstir paints both of these states at once – 'la nature telle qu'elle est' and 'ces illusions optiques' – gives pause for thought. Proust, writes Christopher Prendergast, 'has put us in an intellectually uninhabitable place. Elstir paints one of the rare moments when we see nature as she really is, yet what he paints is not nature as she really is but nature through a prism of illusion. How can this be?'[46] The coexistence of these two mutually exclusive subjects implies an unresolved tension between the idea that Elstir enjoys an intuitive connection to reality, which he expresses in his paintings, and the idea that his depictions are of relative, perspectival, subjective illusions. For Ruskin, the value lies in the optical illusion, as is suggested in the passage that follows his definition of the 'innocence of the eye'. Discussing a patch of grass that appears yellow in the sunlight, he reasons:

> If we had been born blind, and were suddenly endowed with sight on a piece of grass thus lighted […] it would appear to us that part of the grass was green, and part a dusty yellow […] and, if there were primroses near, we should think that the sunlighted grass was another mass of plants of the same sulphur-yellow colour. We should try to gather some of them, and then find that the colour went away from the grass when we stood between it and the sun, but not from the primroses; and by a series of experiments we should find out that the sun was really the cause of the colour in the one, – not in the other.[47]

This hypothetical scenario details a logical process of discovery by which the innocent – or ignorant – eye gradually learns to separate its initial visual experience from its subsequent understanding of reality. The illusion is celebrated – indeed, it is fundamental to Ruskin's artistic ideal – but it is still indisputably an illusion, a deviation from what is really the case. By blurring the distinction between illusion and reality, then, Proust diverges from his mentor. His strategic use of the word 'poétiquement' in the narrator's description of Elstir's practice ('les rares moments où l'on voit la nature telle qu'elle est, *poétiquement*, c'était de ceux-là qu'était faite

[46] Prendergast, *Mirages and Mad Beliefs: Proust the Skeptic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 123.
[47] *The Elements of Drawing*, pp. 27-28.

l'œuvre d'Elstir') suggests that the 'poétique' might be a domain in which these contradictions cease to be contradictions. Moreover, when the narrator arrives at the studio, he likens it to 'le laboratoire d'une sorte de nouvelle création du monde', and Elstir himself to God (II, 191). Perhaps we might then surmise that the painter is deploying his techniques of representation to create a new world, with new conditions of possibility, in which paradoxes such as this can be resolved – where illusion and reality are not mutually exclusive after all.[48]

### iii. The artistic eye as 'photographic'

A comparable state of tension between illusion and reality exists in the field of photography. Whether or not photography gives us a set of 'illusions optiques' or assists us in perceiving 'la réalité telle qu'elle est' depends on the use to which it is put: the former may be in play when the photographs in question have a primarily aesthetic role (as in the case of stereoscopy, or Emerson's artistic images), while the goal of photography in its indexical, investigative function is to show us something of the latter. It is intriguing, then, to note that precognitive vision shares many qualities with photography. As Gabrielle Townsend remarks, 'such a vision is essentially photographic, in that it records objectively, without manipulation',[49] while elements of Bergson's definition of artistic perceptive expansion could apply equally well to the camera: like artists, the camera 'ne [perçoit] pas en vue d'agir; il [perçoit] pour percevoir – pour rien […] [il] [naît] [*détaché*]'.[50] (Bergson himself does not make this connection – unsurprisingly, perhaps, given his use of photography to illustrate the notion of analysis.) The painter detaches vision from the logical, pragmatic part of the brain, à la Elstir, while the camera has no such faculty to detach itself from; the mode of seeing that results in both cases is comparable.

In her discussion of the Elstir episode, Danius implies that this commonality between photographic processes and Elstirean visual processes is also rendered physically. She remarks on the strikingly photographic set-up of the painter's studio, which is dark except for one small window at the end: 'Elstir's studio is literally and figuratively represented as a camera obscura, complete with an aperture.'[51] This, she

[48] Elstir's use of the space of representation to transcend two contradictory states functions as a sort of proto-Surrealist act of resolution, anticipating André Breton's descriptions of the surreal as a space in which ordinary contradictions can be resolved. In the first Surrealist manifesto, for example, he writes: 'je crois à la résolution future de ces deux états, en apparence si contradictoires, que sont le rêve et la réalité, en une sorte de réalité absolue, de *surréalité*, si l'on peut ainsi dire' (*Manifestes*, p. 24).
[49] 'Port de Carquethuit', pp. 199.
[50] Ibid., p. 1373.
[51] Danius, p. 108.

implies, provides a fitting metaphor for Elstir's eye, backing up her claim with an analysis of the narrator's discussion of photography in the latter half of the episode. 'The painter's eye as camera obscura?' she muses. 'The metaphor acquires a peculiar resonance, as the episode also includes a lengthy reflection upon the rivalry between painting and photography.'[52] Oddly, she does not make a distinction between the camera obscura and the camera – an oversight, although not an uninteresting one. For Crary, as we have seen, the camera obscura is emblematic of an older, more stable visual order. If it were to provide a model for Elstir's project, as Danius suggests, then it seems fitting that he would seek to portray reality or nature 'telle qu'elle est'; his aesthetics would work within a wider system that takes the existence of a stable, objective reality as a given. But this would only fit with a photographic model if we were to understand photography as an exclusively realist, indexical medium that aims to depict the world 'as it is'. There would be no place in this scenario for an interest in optical illusion – still less for an untidy crossover between the latter and 'la nature telle qu'elle est'.

The narrator, meanwhile, implicitly disowns the camera obscura model: his own discussion of photography, which follows his description of the *Port de Carquethuit*, makes it clear that his interest lies in its Emersonian capacity for optical illusion. His description is not a particularly favourable one; the implication is that photography has undermined the achievements of painting by appropriating and making them commonplace, and the narrator seems to wish to defend territory that belonged to painting – specifically Elstir's painting – before photography usurped its place. Elstir's eye does not resemble a camera; the camera resembles Elstir's eye. But whichever came first, the equivalence between the two is plain, and at the heart of their resemblance is their ability to distort and reshuffle the spatial relations of the object and scenes they depict. He writes:

> Depuis les débuts d'Elstir, nous avons connus ce qu'on appelle 'd'admirables' photographies de paysages et de villes. Si on cherche à préciser ce que les amateurs désignent dans ce cas par cette épithète, on verra qu'elle s'applique d'ordinaire à quelque image singulière d'une chose connue, image différente de celles que nous avons l'habitude de voir [...] Par exemple, telle de ces photographies 'magnifiques' illustrera une loi de la perspective, nous montrera telle cathédrale que nous avons l'habitude de voir au milieu de la

[52] Ibid., p. 108-109.

ville, prise au contraire d'un point choisi d'où elle aura l'air trente fois plus haute que les maisons et faisant éperon au bord du fleuve *d'où elle est en réalité distante*. Or, l'effort d'Elstir de ne pas exposer les choses telles qu'il savait qu'elles étaient, mais selon *ces illusions optiques* dont notre vision première est faite, l'avait précisément amené à mettre en lumière certaines de ces lois de perspective, plus frappantes alors, car l'art était le premier à les dévoiler. (II, 194; my emphasis)

The italicised sections demonstrate the narrator's subtle elevation of visual error to an important aesthetic principle. What these supposedly admirable photographs show is akin to what Elstir has achieved in his painting: perspective is distorted so that what is depicted is uncoupled from the reality to which it refers. This assessment will be germane for the forthcoming section on Cubism, where I consider a comparable reference to photography made later on in the *Recherche*, which questions the very status of this reality, thus opening up the possibility that photography's privileging of optical illusion may in fact bring it *closer* to 'la nature telle qu'elle est'.

## II. Futurism

Elstir's commitment to *both* optical illusion *and* reality-as-it-is positions him at the crux of the two diverging epistemological and aesthetic currents that I defined in my introduction. Cubism and Futurism, however, are more firmly wedded to specific positions within the dichotomy. The investigation that follows will explore these positions, and the epistemological implications that result from them. Do the Cubists and Futurists endorse Bergson's belief in the superiority of intuition over analysis, or work against it? And how does photography, in its various forms, shape their attitudes and direct their practice?

Unlike that of Elstir, the Futurist painters' attitude to perception is difficult to pin down. In many respects this is unsurprising, given that we are not talking here about the beliefs of a single 'painter', definitively set down in writing by a single author, but the often contradictory opinions of a considerably less tidy grouping of opinionated individuals. There is no definitive description of what it means to perceive the world 'futuristically'; although the collective aims of the Futurist

painters are broadly outlined in several co-signed manifestos, these largely express the beliefs of their unofficial leader, Boccioni, while elsewhere, others in the movement wrote manifestos of their own that did not necessarily align seamlessly with the declarations of their colleagues. When these writings are taken together, however, a broader position can be deduced: several strands emerge that suggest a general tendency towards the values of wholeness and flux, with regard to both the workings of perception itself and the understandings it affords of the external world.

### i. Futurism and 'holistic' perception

Various examples of Futurist theory, not just those written by Boccioni, hint at the painters' espousal of what I term a *holistic* perceptive faculty. Their visual capacities, for example, are described as further-reaching than usual, exceeding the scope of the camera or linear persepective. Their manifesto 'The Exhibitors to the Public' suggests that the Futurist eye transcends the usual limits of vision:

> In painting a person on a balcony, seen from inside the room, we do not limit the scene to what the square frame of the window renders visible; but we try to render the sum total of visual sensations which the person on the balcony has experienced [...] You must render [...] what we have on the right, on the left, and behind us, and not merely the small square of life artificially compressed, as it were, by the wings of a stage.[53]

Although jointly signed, the manifesto is authored primarily by Boccioni, and the description above clearly alludes to his own painting *The Street Enters the House*, of 1911, in which a woman leans over the railing of a balcony and looks onto the street below. The ground rises up towards the balcony, while the buildings on either side topple into the frame, distorting the perspective so that it appears to look at once downwards, straight ahead, and to each side. The catalogue description of this painting for an exhibition held at London's Sackville Gallery in 1912 states explicitly that these visual distortions set the painting apart from photography; the painter 'does not limit himself to what he sees in the square frame of the window as would a simple photographer'.[54] What they seem to be striving for is 'perceptive expansion'

[53] 'Exhibitors', p. 47.
[54] 'Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters' in *Nuovi Archivi del Futurismo: Cataloghi di esposizioni*, ed. by Enrico Crispolti (Rome: De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2010), p. 30.

of another, more literal sort – that is to say, the actual, physical broadening of the visual field.

Yet vision is only one part of the equation. Other elements of the Futurists' theory make it clear that their paintings respond not only to visual experience, but also to sensory and subjective experience more broadly. Joshua Taylor's suggestion that *The Street Enters the House* evokes an excess of aural as well as visual stimuli ('it is like opening a window on a noisy city') recalls a manifesto by the painter Carlo Carrà.[55] 'Before the nineteenth century, painting was a silent art,' Carrà declares – but now, he says, Futurist attempts to depict elements of sound and smell as well as vision are broadening painting's perceptual remit. He attributes aural and olfactory properties to the fundamental components of painting, and calls on painters to use 'reds, rrrrreds, the rrrrrreddest rrrrrrreds that shouuuuuuut' and 'greens, that can never be greener, greeeeeeeeeeeens, that screeeeeeam'.[56] He credits Boccioni, Gino Severini, Luigi Russolo, and, naturally, himself with successfully incorporating aural and olfactory experience into their work. But it is Russolo whose work displays the most obvious allegiance to the synesthetic principle, as in *Perfume*, of 1910, in which a thick and palpable scent, depicted with repeated streaks of colour in a manner reminiscent of Divisionism, spirals around the head of the central figure, which is thrown back as if inhaling deeply.

Perhaps it is only one step further to demand that painting, in addition to multisensory experience, also encompass other elements of subjective experience, namely affect and memory. Boccioni's 1911 triptych, *States of Mind*, explores the emotions of those leaving on a train and those left behind. In 'The Exhibitors to the Public', once again basing his theoretical proclamations on a thinly-veiled reference to one of his own paintings, he explains the technicalities of depicting emotion as explored in the triptych, putting forward a theory for how different forms and lines might represent particular emotions.[57] He also hints at the importance of memory in painting in his declaration that 'the picture must be the synthesis of *what one remembers* and of *what one sees*',[58] while in his book, *Futurist Painting and Sculpture*, he argues more assertively for the role of memory in painting, declaring the Futurists' intention to 'unite in the same painting the plastic values that struck us yesterday or

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[55] Joshua C. Taylor, *Futurism* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1961), p. 45.
[56] 'The Painting of Sounds, Noises and Smells' [1913], in *Futurist Manifestos*, pp. 111-115 (pp. 111-112).
[57] 'Exhibitors', p. 47.
[58] Ibid.

a year ago and those that pushed us to take up the brush […] today and get to work'.[59] Boccioni was joined in this interest by his colleague and friend, Gino Severini, who made an explicit attempt to depict memory in his painting of 1911, *Memories of Travel*, a synthesis of remembered moments of a train journey, and declaring in an unpublished manifesto in 1913 that 'memory […] will act in the work of art as an element of artistic intensification […] as sole *raison d'être* of an artistic creation'.[60] To consider this emphasis on memory in tandem with that placed by Boccioni on emotion, and by Carrà and Russolo on synesthesia, is to piece together a composite theory in which painting is the product of a 'total' artistic sensorium that responds to both internal and external stimuli. The ideal Futurist painter, then, would be able to channel the experiences of the senses, of memory, and of emotion onto the visual medium of the canvas.

### ii. Intuition and perceptive expansion

The Futurists' ambitions for a 'total' artistic perceptive faculty (and they do on more than one occasion refer to their work as 'total painting')[61] seems in many ways at odds with Elstir's precognitive vision. Elstir's technique, after all, is a reduction of vision; he strips away prior knowledge and intellectual experience until only the pure visual impression remains, while the Futurists reject the purely visual in favour of the more broadly sensory, which is in turn bound up with the psychological and the emotive. Boccioni declares that painting must synthesise vision and memory, while Elstir separates seeing from remembered visual categories. On the one hand, an aesthetics of reduction; on the other, an aesthetics of accumulation. Yet both of these modes, I would argue, are differing forms of Bergsonian perceptive expansion. Neither is practical on an everyday level; the role of the artist in both cases is to remove the restrictive conceptual structures, or 'œillères', imposed by practical need, and to see freely, without constraint. In one case, this leads to a paring-down of vision, and in the other, to an inflation of it. But in both, the artist sees outside of the conceptual, 'analytic' frameworks imposed on the rest of us, with inevitable consequences for what is required of and offered to the viewer. As the Technical Manifesto declares, 'in order to conceive and understand the novel beauties of a

[59] *Futurist Painting*, p. 139.
[60] Gino Severini, 'The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism – Futurist Manifesto' [1913], in *Futurist Manifesto*s, pp. 120-125 (p.121).
[61] See Severini, 'Lettre sur le futurisme' [1913] in *Écrits sur l'art* (Paris: Cercle d'art, 1987), p. 35.

Futurist picture […] the eye must be freed from its veil of atavism and culture.'[62] In Bergson's words, 'c'est donc bien une vision plus directe de la réalité que nous trouvons dans les différents arts.'[63]

The links between the Futurist notion of perception and Bergsonian perceptive expansion are strengthened by the fact that the Futurists, inspired by Bergson, considered their art to have an 'intuitive' function. 'It is by his intuition that [the painter] is penetrating nowadays into life, the soul, the activity of things,' writes Severini in the catalogue for a solo exhibition held at London's Marlborough Gallery in 1913.[64] Elsewhere, he discusses his notion of 'plastic analogy', which he defines as the artistic equivalent of the technique of poetic analogy, as described by Marinetti, in which one object is represented by another that appears on the surface to be entirely unrelated to it.[65] Linking these elements are their 'qualitative radiations', which are perceived intuitively by what Severini terms the 'artistic sensibility'. He evidently means something specific by the latter term; the opaque (and sometimes illogical) nature of his prose, however, means its precise definition remains elusive. But it is nonetheless clear that in Severini's view this sensibility affords a privileged connection between the internal, subjective reality of the artist as an individual, and the external realities of the objects he depicts. Artistic emotions, he writes, 'are not only related to a particular emotional background, but united to the whole universe'.[66] The artist appears to function as a sort intuitive receptor of 'qualitative radiations', which emanate from objects like radio waves.

For Boccioni – a dedicated Bergsonian – the notion of intuition was a central concern of his aesthetics, as his writings frequently imply. In *Futurist Painting and Sculpture*, for example, he declares that 'we Futurists are *in the object* and we experience its developmental concept'.[67] Like Severini, intuition for Boccioni was a means of linking subjective, emotive experience to the realities of the external world: the Futurist, he claims, 'create[s] a sort of emotive ambience, seeking by intuition the sympathies and the links which exist between the exterior (concrete) scene and the

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[62] 'Technical Manifesto', p. 29.
[63] 'Perception', p. 1373.
[64] 'Gino Severini's Exhibition' in *Nuovi Archivi del Futurismo*, p. 52.
[65] Severini cites Marinetti's 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature', which defines 'analogy' as 'the immense love which brings together distant objects which are on the surface different and hostile' – a distorted form of metaphor in which the elements brought together appear to share no likeness at all. In painting, such an analogy is to be rendered by using forms and colours apparently unrelated to the object depicted: 'the sensation aroused in us by a real object of which we know the square shape and blue colour can be expressed artistically through its formal and chromatic complementaries, i.e. round shapes and yellow colours.' (See 'Plastic Analogies', p.121.)
[66] 'Plastic Analogies', p. 121.
[67] *Futurist Painting*, p. 103; my emphasis.

interior (abstract) emotion'.[68] In Brian Petrie's argument, it is the idea of intuition that distinguishes Boccioni's emphasis on emotion from a purely Symbolist investigation of subjectivity, since 'to subscribe to Bergsonian intuition is to accept that this form of subjective experience offers ontological insight'.[69]

What is said to be revealed by these links between exterior and interior realities, and what must therefore be represented, is 'the *dynamic sensation*, that is to say, the particular rhythm of each object, its inclination, its movement, or, more exactly, its interior force'.[70] This, without doubt, refers to the intuitively detected, absolute reality of Bergsonian *durée*. What I infer from this is that the Futurist ideal of holistic perception should make of the artist a hypersensitive locus of Bergsonian intuition, able to rise above the limitations of ordinary, analytic perception and, through intuitive sympathy, to gain ontological awareness of the external world, specifically an awareness of its inherent flux, and of the dynamic, durational existence of the objects in it.

### iii. The role of scientific discovery

It is perhaps in this light that we should view Boccioni's adoption of the X-ray as a metaphor for Futurist perception. In the Technical Manifesto, he asks:

> Who can still believe in the opacity of bodies, since our sharpened and multiplied sensitiveness has already penetrated the obscure manifestations of the medium? Why should we forget in our creations the doubled power of our sight, capable of giving results analogous to those of the X-rays?[71]

His questions imply that Futurist perception is not just panoramic or holistic; it is also penetrative – capable, like the X-ray, of seeing beyond, behind, under, through. Since the Futurists clearly did not have X-ray vision in any real sense, this equivalence might be understood as a metaphor for what is actually a Bergsonian, *intuitive* ability to 'pierce' surface barriers and 'enter into' the objects of their perception.

Yet the X-ray, through its chronological proximity to discoveries such as radioactivity and electromagnetism, also raises questions about the role of scientific

[68] 'Exhibitors', p. 50.
[69] 'Boccioni and Bergson', *The Burlington Magazine*, 116 (March 1974), 140-147, p. 142.
[70] 'Exhibitors', p. 47.
[71] 'Technical Manifesto', p. 28.

discovery in Boccioni's artistic theory. It is important to note, in fact, that Boccioni's interest in the notion of the inherent flux of the external world would have been encouraged not only by his readings of Bergson, but also by his fascination with the sciences, which predated his interest in the philosopher. 'How, when and where can I study all that chemistry and physics?' he asks in a diary entry of 1907, some years before his study of Bergson began in earnest.[72] Boccioni implies in *Futurist Painting and Sculpture* that intuition and modern science have played an equal role in shaping the development of modern art:

> Today [...] the artist rises to the essential element of creation. Artistic intuition has elevated him to new heights; and science, with steam, electricity, combustible fuels, Hertzian waves, and all of the research in biology and chemistry, has transformed the world [...] With scientific discoveries, a new sensibility has emerged that the artist already expresses and that the masses refuse to recognize.[73]

Far from undermining the artistic perceptive faculty, as Linda Dalrymple Henderson suggests it might, modern science has redefined it. The artist *does* '[possess] sensibilities more highly developed than those of the average individual', or the 'masses' that Boccioni so disparages, but the marker of this superiority is the ability to understand and integrate the implications of these new discoveries into the perceptive faculty – to see the world anew in the light of modern scientific understanding. What emerges here is an attempt to assimilate a personal, individual perceptive faculty with an ontological focus on the reality of the external world. The X-ray – as a new scientific discovery that challenges understandings of reality by directly enhancing human perception – provides the perfect metaphor for such an attempt.

In another article, 'Cubism, Futurism, and Ether Physics in the Early Twentieth Century', Henderson makes a convincing case for the influence of contemporary scientific theories and discoveries on Boccioni's aesthetic theory. Certain of these, I would suggest, might give an insight into the kinds of realities the Futurists' supposed X-ray vision might be able to 'see', and suggest, moreover, that

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[72] Via Henderson, 'Editor's Introduction', p. 445. Brian Petrie concludes that Boccioni was likely to have read some of Bergson's writings by 1910, but that his serious study of the philosopher only began in 1911-1912 ('Boccioni and Bergson', p. 142).
[73] *Futurist Painting*, p. 70.

qualities of wholeness and fluidity apply not only to the perceptive capabilities of the ideal Futurist artist, but carry over into understandings of the external world that he seeks to represent. One was the theory of the luminiferous ether, an invisible substance thought to fill the whole of space, and through which light waves were believed to move. Although its identity and composition were unknown, it was thought to permeate not only space but matter too, which was said to sit in it 'as a sponge lies soaked in water'.[74] The theory was particularly significant for Boccioni in its suggestion that space and matter were not radically separate entities, as they appear – rather, they could be imagined to exist on a continuum, possessing varying degrees of substantiality. Space, filled with an ethereal substance, could be understood as an intangible form of matter, and matter as nothing more than a densely compacted form of space. Such an understanding would have been bolstered by the phenomenon of radioactivity. As radioactive substances emitted alpha, beta, and gamma 'rays', their chemical composition changed, releasing energy. In Henderson's words, this implied 'a vibrating realm of atomic matter in the process of transformation', in contrast to the traditional understanding of matter as a stable entity. The popular science writer Gustave Le Bon went further, arguing in 1905 that this realm of atomic motion was more widespread than thought, and that radioactive substances merely demonstrated to a particularly high degree a phenomenon that occurred in all substances: 'l'aptitude de la matière à se désagréger en émettant des effluves de particules [...], animées d'une vitesse de l'ordre de celle de la lumière et capables de traverser les substances matérielles, est universelle.' This disintegrating matter, he proposed, gradually returned to the ether, from which it was thought to have originated.[75]

Le Bon was a friend of Bergson, and it is possible that the latter was referring in part to this theory when he declared that the movement of an object 'n'est en réalité qu'un mouvement de mouvements'.[76] Indeed, as Henderson points out, several of Bergson's ideas 'stand as counterparts to Le Bon's popularization of universal radioactivity'[77] – his declaration in *Matière et mémoire*, for example, that 'toute division de la matière en corps indépendants aux contours absolument déterminés est une division artificielle', which Boccioni quotes in an article of 1913.[78] Elsewhere

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[74] Robert Kennedy Duncan, *The New Knowledge* [1905], via Henderson, 'Editor's Introduction', p. 451.
[75] Gustave Le Bon, *L'Évolution de la matière*, 12th edn (Paris: Flammarion, 1917), pp. 10-11.
[76] 'Perception', p. 1383.
[77] 'Editor's Introduction', p. 449.
[78] *Matière et mémoire*, in *Œuvres*, pp. 161-379 (p. 332); 'The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting', in *Futurist Manifestos*, pp. 88-90 (p. 89).

in the same article, Boccioni writes:

> Sculpture must try and model the atmosphere [...] For me this atmosphere is like a material substance which exists between objects, distorting plastic values. [...] Areas between one object and another are not merely empty spaces but continuing materials of different intensities [...] This is why in our paintings we do not have objects and empty spaces but only a greater or lesser intensity and solidity of space.[79]

The Technical Manifesto also refers to the same idea, stating that 'our bodies penetrate the sofas upon which we sit, and the sofas penetrate our bodies'.[80]

Two paintings from 1912, *Horizontal Volumes* and *Matter* [*Materià*] (fig. 4), appear to offer an aesthetic rendering of the idea of space and matter as fluid, mobile, and interconnected. Christine Poggi writes that *Matter* 'posit[s] a continuity on the level of molecular structure between the human body and the objects of the world'.[81] Both paintings appear to be explorations of the idea that matter and space exist on a continuum, and that perceived spatial boundaries must be arbitrary – not rigid and immutable, but mutually permeable. Henderson remarks on the 'tapestry of discrete brushstrokes' in the latter painting, 'with which [Boccioni] deliberately sought to convey the dematerialization of matter'.[82] In both paintings the central figure is not clearly distinct from the surrounding space, but blends with it, while what would otherwise be treated as 'background' is given visual prominence and materiality, its interpenetrating planes and shafts of light slicing into the human body and distorting its features. As well as the theories of the ether and radioactivity, it seems likely that these aesthetic features reference the X-ray itself, which not only calls into question the stability and solidity of physical, material boundaries, but provides visual evidence for their permeability. Indeed, the aforementioned shafts of light might be read as a reference to the idea of the X-ray as a new form of 'light', which does not reflect off objects, but enters into them. Both paintings, as exercises in undermining the sanctity of physical categories and the boundaries that demarcate them, can be likened to Elstir's seascapes. Yet Elstir's depictions are concerned with fluidity as a

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[79] 'Plastic Foundations', pp. 88-89.
[80] 'Technical Manifesto, p. 28.
[81] Christine Poggi, *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 165.
[82] 'Editor's Introduction', p. 450.

**Fig. 4**: Umberto Boccioni, *Matter [Materià]*, 1912

phenomenon that plays out on the visible surface of the world – not, like Boccioni's, with fluidity as an inherent, ontological feature of the reality that lies *beyond* those surfaces. Elstirean flux is ultimately the product of a way of seeing, while in Boccioni's work the emphasis is shifted firmly from an external world riven with 'illusions optiques' to the external world as it *is*, 'la nature telle qu'elle est'. If Elstir's studio is a 'laboratory' in which the world is created *anew* (II, 190), Boccioni's must be a laboratory in which the underlying truths of the *existing* world are sought.[83]

[83] Gérard Genette's analysis in *Figures III* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972) suggests that a quality of *affective* rather than ontological fusion is expressed at various points in Proust's text. For example, contrasting similes are applied to two very similar churches as an expression of the respective landscapes in which they are situated: the towers of Saint-André-des-champs are compared to ears of corn in a reflection of the rustic, earthy quality of their location in Méséglise, while those of Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu are compared to two fish because the church is near the sea. Indeed, one of the qualities of the sea seems to be to infuse itself into the land, and not just in Elstir's paintings: the narrator's hotel room

But while for Elstir there is a clear, causal link between a particular (precognitive) visual mode and an understanding of the external world as fluid and continuous, the links between Futurist holistic perception and a Futurist ontology of flux are harder to discern. We have seen that the Futurists considered the union of internal and external realities as fundamental to their art, and themselves as uniquely placed to facilitate such a union. But this belief does not in itself offer a convincing explanation for *how* they might be made privy to scientific, ontological realities. The irony here, of course, is that Boccioni clearly came to his understanding of the world as fluid and continuous through a decidedly analytic process of reading and study, seemingly of scientific theory and certainly of Bergson's writings. But those same writings also champion the role of intuition in reaching such an understanding of the world: in *Matière et mémoire*, Bergson argues that the question again comes down to a conflict of visual modes. We habitually see objects as clearly defined from each other for the same reason that we do *not* see intuitively, as artists do: because such a mode of seeing would be incompatible with our practical need to go about our business. He writes:

> Comment morcelons-nous la continuité primitivement aperçue de l'étendue matérielle en autant de corps, dont chacun aurait sa substance et son individualité? […] Ce n'est pas là une donnée de l'intuition immédiate; mais ce n'est pas davantage une exigence de la science, car la science, au contraire, se propose de retrouver les articulations naturelles d'un univers que nous avons découpé artificiellement. […] À côté de la conscience et de la science, il y a la vie. Au-dessous des principes de la spéculation, si soigneusement analysés par les philosophes, il y a ces tendances dont on a négligé l'étude et qui s'expliquent simplement par la nécessité où nous sommes de vivre, c'est-à-dire, en réalité, d'agir.[84]

We might conclude, then, that an understanding of the world as fluid and continuous is a natural product of a uniquely artistic tendency towards perceptive expansion – an ability to see the world for what it is rather than in relation to practical and material need. But another reason also presents itself. The notion of an ethereal

in Balbec, for example, is 'substantiellement marinisée par la présence [des] parois luisantes et comme ruisselantes d'eau' (Genette, p. 51). Elsewhere, pretty young peasant girls appear to the narrator to be organically fused to their surroundings ('la terre et les êtres, je ne les séparais pas' (I, 155)).
[84] *Matière et mémoire*, p. 333.

substance that pervades space and permeates matter implies a physical, if ordinarily imperceptible link between objects and spaces that appear to have nothing to do with each other. According to this understanding, then, the Futurist artist must exist on the same fluid continuum as all the other objects of the world. What is to say, then, that inherent truths cannot be communicated via this ether, a medium of transmission to which the Futurist perceptive faculty is, perhaps, particularly sensitive? Could the ether be the means of connection that Boccioni seeks 'between the exterior (concrete) scene and the interior (abstract) emotion'? It is possible, against this cultural backdrop, that an aesthetic interest in sensory experience might also equate to an interest in the ether – for example, in a manner that recalls Russolo's depiction of an ethereal cloud of perfume, Emile Durkheim claimed in 1912 that sensations of smell, taste, and sight 'express the properties of particular materials or movements of the ether that […] have their origin in the bodies we perceive as being fragrant, tasty, or colorful'.[85] Likewise, the ether as a means of communication would provide a concrete medium for Severini's otherwise rather woolly conception of the 'qualitative radiations' that emanate from objects. An 'ethereally sensitive' individual might enter by default into a dynamic of intuitive sensitivity with objects in the world, given that they all inhabit the same ethereal 'soup'.

### iv. Boccioni's denigration of photography

The ultimate conclusion to be drawn from these arguments is that a privileged epistemological connection to reality is central to the Futurists' – and particularly Boccioni's – understanding of what it means to be an artist. Seeing on its own may not equal knowing, but *perception*, in its varied forms, affords the artist a fluid, intuitive connection to ontological truths. The Futurists' declared aim to 'put the spectator in the centre of the picture' implies, firstly, that the relationship between their paintings and those who view them is underpinned by a state of continuity consistent with their ontological understanding, and secondly, that the painting itself functions as a sort of portal by which the viewer can access the truths it depicts.[86] In the light of these ambitious aims, it is perhaps no surprise that Boccioni dismissed 'surface' photography as limited and inadequate, as we saw at the beginning of this section. The photograph is demarcated by a 'square frame', as Boccioni points out

[85] Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* [1912], trans. by Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. 229.
[86] 'Technical Manifesto, p. 28.

**Fig. 5:** Giacamo Balla, *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, 1912

scornfully, and is separated from the viewer by the same barrier that the Futurists sought to overcome in their painting. In its indexical quality, it posits as 'truth' a version of the world that Boccioni 'knows' to be illusion. The limited 'eye' of the camera itself does not have peripheral or X-ray vision, and certainly does not hear, smell, feel, or remember, while the chronophotographic and cinematographic cameras subdivide movement analytically, in a manner opposed to the indivisible flux of *durée*. As Boccioni writes, 'any accusations that we are merely being "cinematographic" make us laugh – they are just vulgar idiocies.'[87]

Yet this declaration sits uncomfortably with a marked tendency in Futurist practice to channel the aesthetics of chronophotography. Balla's *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* (fig. 5), *Movement of a Violinist* and *Girl Running on a Balcony* (all of 1912), are particularly apt examples, while the female figure in Russolo's *Plastic Synthesis of Movements of a Woman* (1912), the horse's feet in Carrà's *The Red Horseman* (1913) and the dancing woman in Severini's *Blue Dancer* (1912) also owe a visible debt to Marey.

Moreover, the Futurists had a photographer in their midst, Anton Giulio Bragaglia, who developed a practice of movement photography that he called

[87] 'Plastic Foundations', p. 89.

photodynamism – similar to chronophotography, except that the movement appeared as a continuous blur rather than a series of individual positions (see fig. 6). For this reason Bragaglia claimed his practice was superior to Marey's, providing a more detailed study of movement:

> Chronophotography could be compared with a clock on the face of which only the quarter-hours are marked, cinematography to one on which the minutes too are indicated, and Photodynamism to a third on which are marked not only the seconds, but also the intermovemental fractions existing in the passages between seconds. This becomes an almost infinitesimal calculation of movement.[88]

Boccioni's relationship with Bragaglia was contentious, and it is easy to see why. Bragaglia does not reject chronophotography because it is analytic rather than intuitive, but rather because it is not *true* analysis, unlike photodynamism, which 'analyses movement in its details'. This alone would surely have been enough to elicit Boccioni's scorn, but Bragaglia goes further, suggesting that photodynamism should function as a sort of prop or aid to the painter:

> In the composition of a painting the optical effects observed by the artist are not enough. A precise analytical knowledge of the essential properties of the effect, and of its causes, are essential. The artist may know how to synthesize such analyses, but within such a synthesis the skeleton, the precise and almost invisible analytical elements, must exist. These can only be rendered visible by the scientific aspects of Photodynamism.[89]

It is clear that the proud and volatile Boccioni would have been affronted by the suggestion that he might have need of photography to assist him in realising his artistic aims. The indignity would have been compounded by Bragaglia's (mis)understanding of analysis, which goes directly against Bergson's definition of it: analytic decomposition, in Bragaglia's view, is a building block on the way to true understanding. Such was Boccioni's distaste that he attempted to oust Bragaglia from the movement, and in 1913, refused outright to exhibit alongside him. He makes his

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[88] Bragaglia, 'Futurist Photodynamism' [1911], in *Futurist Manifestos*, pp. 38-45 (p. 40).
[89] Ibid., p. 41.

**Fig. 6:** Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *Waving*, 1911

disdain clear in a letter to Giuseppe Sprovieri, owner of the Futurist gallery in Rome:

> [Photodynamism] is a presumptuous uselessness that damages our aspiration to liberate art from the *schematic* or *successive* reproduction of stasis and motion. [...] To me [Bragaglia's] little book [*Futurist Photodynamism*] seemed simply monstrous, and to our friends also. The pompousness and the infatuation with the nonexistent was grotesque.[90]

His dismissal, of course, comes in large part from the fact that he sees photography as limited and inadequate. But there is also something of the paranoid in his attitude to Bragaglia; he is both so aggressive in his disparagement and elsewhere so self-aggrandising in his assessment of Futurist painting as to suggest he recognises photography as a threat, fearing its potential to undermine his own art, as Proust's narrator suggests it has undermined Elstir's. Yet Boccioni himself had a certain degree of dependence on photographic means. Hints of chronophotographic repetition can be detected here and there in his work – in the ghost-like faces in *Those Who Go* (1911), for example, or the muscular forms in *Dynamism of a Soccer Player* (1913). For Marta Braun, 'Boccioni's desire to be free of "schematic or successive reproduction" is a telling indication that he felt encumbered and frustrated by it at

[90] Via Braun, p. 310.

the time.'[91] He had been criticised, she remarks, for paintings that bore too close a resemblance to photography, and his response 'was to immediately illegitimate any assistance photography gave to the solution of purely pictorial problems, to deny any influence it might have, and to insist on the originality of the painters' investigations'. Bragaglia posed a threat because:

> [He] worked outside the system of those arts that Futurism – in spite of declaring itself partisan to all things modern – had revalidated: the old hierarchy of painting, sculpture, and architecture. If photography or any reproductive mechanical technique could produce dynamic sensation, then there would be serious consequences for the traditional arts.[92]

To this I would add that Bragaglia's medium posed an existential threat to Boccioni's fundamental definition of an artist. We saw in the introduction to this chapter that photography played a key role in undermining the epistemological capacity of human vision. The risk of allowing photography into the Futurist fold, then, was not only that it might devalue painting as a medium, but that it might undermine the painter's own privileged perceptual relationship to the world around him, challenging the supposed epistemological superiority of the Futurist perceptive faculty. With this in mind, we might be tempted to reconsider Boccioni's use of the X-ray metaphor, which stops short of praising the X-ray itself but claims capabilities *analogous* to it. Perhaps it is not, in fact, an example of Boccioni's engagement with modern science, but simply part of his attempt to defend the supremacy of the artistic sensorium in the face of rival visual trends. Boccioni seeks to preserve his version of what Henderson calls the 'romantic notion' of the privileged artistic sensibility. Ultimately, however, this notion is threatened not, as she suggests, by the existence of imperceptible phenomena, but by a competing, mechanical 'eye' that upstages the Futurists' privileged relation to reality even as it misinterprets and falsifies that reality.

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[91] Braun, p. 310.
[92] Ibid.

# III. Cubism: Analysis and (Un)knowing

Futurism and Cubism, though not dissimilar on an aesthetic level, are philosophically at odds. Cubism for Boccioni often provided an example of how *not* to do art, a convenient benchmark against which he could define his own project. Cubism, in his view, was too static and too calculated; moreover, it made no attempt to reach a higher unity between the painter and the world. 'Any attempt to lay down the law in a situation where there is a gap between external and internal realities is a highly dangerous practice,' he wrote in 1913, 'as the cold image-making of some of the Cubists proves.'[93] Of course, it is highly plausible that Boccioni had a vested interest in discrediting Cubism, as he did photography, given the Cubists' prominence on the modern art scene and recognition as innovators.[94] Yet their conflict can also be explained to some degree by the fact that the two movements occupy opposing epistemological and perceptual strands. Where Futurism aspires to unity, holism, and intuition, Cubism sits primarily in the domain of fragmentation, dispersal, and analysis.

## i. Flux: photography, the X-ray, *passage*

Before turning to a discussion of Cubist fragmentation, however, I want to consider the sense in which Cubism, too, can be considered a pursuit of 'wholeness'. Indeed, it would be an oversight to consider the movement solely in terms of its processes of rupture and its breaking up of objects into disjointed facets, when equally important in the Cubist method is the blending and blurring of those facets – a technique reminiscent of and usually attributed to the influence of Cézannean *passage*. But Linda Dalrymple Henderson and Paul Hayes Tucker have suggested that this technique may have owed much to photographic technologies, as well as to Cézanne – respectively, to the X-ray and to still photography. Henderson observes that the Cubists did not explicitly mention X-ray technology in their writings, as Boccioni did (although she remarks that Gleizes and Metzinger discuss the related but more obscure phenomenon of 'Fraunhofer lines' in *Du 'Cubisme'* – perhaps, she suggests,

[93] 'Plastic Foundations', p. 90.

[94] To my knowledge, the only occasion on which he declares himself in agreement with a Cubist is in his article of 1913, 'Futurist Dynamism and French Painting' (in *Futurist Manifestos*, pp. 107-110), when he references an essay by Fernand Léger of the same year ('Les Origines de la peinture et sa valeur représentative', *Montjoie!*, 29 May and 14-29 June 1913). But his approval, such as it is, is only granted because he considers Léger to have trespassed onto Futurist territory, expressing an idea that the Futurists have *already* expressed themselves.

an attempt at scientific one-upmanship of their Futurist rivals) – but that it would nevertheless have been natural for them to have taken an interest in such a visually groundbreaking and culturally popular phenomenon. At the very least, it would have been impossible for them to be unaware of X-ray's reception and impact, given that Röntgen's publication of his discovery in late 1895 had 'triggered the most immediate and widespread reaction to any scientific discovery before the explosion of the first atomic bomb in 1945',[95] and that it figured as a point of popular obsession in the years that followed, generating huge numbers of articles as well as songs, cartoons, poems, and public displays. Picasso himself was a keen amateur photographer, and X-rays at this time were frequently described as 'photography of the invisible'. A query in one of his sketchbooks of 1917 – 'a t'on [sic] mis un prisme devant la lumière des rayons x [?]' – demonstrates at least a passing aesthetic engagement with the phenomenon.[96]

As Henderson acknowledges, it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions about possible cultural sources for Picasso's aesthetic developments, since unlike many of his contemporaries he did not write manifestos or otherwise theorise in writing. Nevertheless, the cultural prominence of the X-ray, as well as discoveries contemporaneous with it, such as radioactivity and electromagnetism, offer a possible answer to the question that she believes has not been satisfactorily answered by scholarship on Cubism: '*why* would Picasso and Braque so stubbornly deny the solidity and boundaries of forms, causing their sitters to dissolve into the surrounding space?'[97] She considers Picasso's 1910 portrait of his dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, to exemplify this tendency: in a manner comparable to Boccioni's portrait of his mother in *Matter*, the body of the sitter and the space in which it sits are indistinct. The painting is dominated by the same 'transparency and fluidity' as in X-ray photography – 'a shift the sitter himself described as "pierc[ing] the closed form" or "skin"'.[98] For Henderson, this is an example from a series of paintings from 1910-1912 that 'give physical form to Bergson's philosophy of continuity and to the popular notion of universal radioactivity propounded by Le Bon, in particular'.[99]

Henderson discusses Picasso and Boccioni in tandem, and when their work is considered in the light of X-ray technology and contemporary science, there may

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[95] Henderson, 'X Rays', p. 324.
[96] Henderson, 'Editor's Introduction', p. 334.
[97] Ibid., p. 447.
[98] Ibid., p. 448.
[99] Henderson, 'X Rays', p. 335.

indeed be much to compare. But there the similarities end. In an earlier argument, Paul Hayes Tucker – backed up by more anecdotal evidence than Henderson – suggests that Picasso's *passage* may have been influenced by the same medium that Boccioni disparaged: still photography. In an article of 1982, Tucker recounts that in 1909 Picasso spent a productive few months in Horta de San Juan in Catalonia, during which time, according to John Golding, 'the [Cubist] style at last crystallized in a succession of masterly analytical canvases'.[100] Picasso had a camera with him during this time and took numerous photos of the landscape as well as painting it. The two surviving photographs of Horta show a view of the town seen from an elevated perspective, a view Picasso also painted in nascent Cubist style. Certain elements of the photographs blur into each other: Tucker pinpoints houses whose walls are not clearly delineated, bleached by exposure to the point of blending into the surrounding space. The result is visual indeterminacy, an inability to detect the boundaries that should set those elements out as separate. Tucker attributes this effect to the photographic technique (or error) of halation, or blurring – an 'older counterpart' of Cézannean *passage*.[101] A photography manual of 1906 describes one effect of halation as follows:

> Whenever a brightly illuminated surface is crossed by dark lines, like those of branches of trees against the sky, the silver deposits representing the image of the bright surface spread into the dark spaces and if the lines are thin they may be obliterated entirely.[102]

An earlier manual, of 1871, warned that such effects might cause 'roofs of houses [...] instead of being bordered by a well-defined line, [to] shade off as it were into the sky'.[103] This is significant for several reasons. For one thing, the obliteration of demarcating lines and the resultant blending together of elements otherwise thought to be separate does not only recall Cézannean *passage*: it is also a perfect description of the technique Proust's narrator so admires when he inspects Elstir's seascapes at Balbec. Picasso's blending of planes tends not to be associated with pre-Cézannean painters because it is only one part of the Cubist aesthetic, which is otherwise defined

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[100] Via Tucker, 'Picasso, Photography, and the Development of Cubism', *The Art Bulletin*, 64 (June 1982), 288-299, p. 288. I will consider the significance of the word 'analytical' in due course.
[101] Tucker, p. 293.
[102] Louis Derr, *Photography for Students of Physics and Chemistry* [1906], via Tucker, p. 293.
[103] M. Carey Lea, *A Manual of Photography, Intended as a Textbook for Beginners and a Book of Reference for Advanced Photographers* [1871], via Tucker, p. 294.

by its breaking up of perspective – a more radical technique that had no precedent before Cézanne. Nevertheless, in so far as the principle of blending and blurring can be isolated from its aesthetic context, it can be traced back through Monet and Whistler to Turner's late manner, and to Ruskin's notion of visual 'innocence', which, as we have seen, informed the character of Elstir and the style of painting his work represents. (Of course, we have also seen processes of blurring and blending at work in Boccioni's paintings, but Picasso's aversion to theoretical declarations or allegiances stalls any attempt we might make to definitively relate this to an ontology, which enables us, in turn, to align him more closely with Elstir.) The case for the 'proto-Cubism' of this type of vision and its aesthetic rendering is strengthened by the fact that it is essentially photographic in its detachment and de-instrumentalisation, as I argue in Section I, and therefore by the possibility that the influence of an *actual* set of photographs led to the development of a comparable technique in Cubism.

### ii. Rupture: photography, perspective, relativism

Picasso's apparent interest in halation accords aesthetic value to what is technically an error – a move in the spirit of Peter Henry Emerson that allies him more closely to Elstir's depiction of 'ces *illusions optiques* dont notre vision première est faite', rather than his depiction of 'la nature telle qu'elle est'. It is here, I think, that we reach the limits of the Cubist pursuit of 'wholeness', unity, or continuity. No analysis of Cubism can ignore the principles of rupture and fragmentation that its breaking up of perspective entails, and the notion of 'error' and the possibility for 'correctness' come to the fore here. In deviating from linear perspective, the Cubists reject its hegemonic definition of the 'correct' way to view a scene. For that reason, it is significant that Elstir's paintings can be described as 'proto-Cubist' not only for their elimination of the demarcations between elements, but also in their use of perspectival rupture. As I mentioned briefly above, the narrator describes a number of instances in which the painter's chosen perspective fragments and distorts what is portrayed: in the *Port de Carquethuit*, for example, 'la mer elle-même ne montait pas régulièrement, mais suivait les accidents de la grève, que *la perspective déchiquetait* encore davantage'; he notices 'les coques […] que *la perspective faisait s'enjamber* les unes sur les autres' (II, 193). The fact that *perspective* that is responsible for these distortions sets Elstir on a path towards Cubism. Rather than positioning himself in such a manner that the most rational, Euclidean vision of a scene presents itself to

the eye, Elstir – like the camera that emulates his style – chooses points of view from which the landscape appears irrationally distorted. Indeed, the very coexistence of flux and fragmentation (precognitive vision, as we have seen, seems to produce both elements in equal measure) anticipates Cubism's combination of Cézannean *passage* with the perspectival rupture for which it is renowned.

This cannot yet be called Cubism, since neither Elstir nor the camera combine multiple perspectives on a singular plane. Yet in casting perspective as a distorting force, they both reject the hegemonic rationality of linear perspective and its implication of 'correctness'. Once again, Picasso's interest in photography strengthens the argument for Elstir's aesthetic link with Cubism. The photographs of Horta do not respect the rules of Renaissance perspective: Tucker notes that in the first of the two photographs, the lines of certain roofs '[deviate] from the Renaissance norm' by appearing to diverge away from the viewer, rather than converge. He also notes that the distinction between the foreground, middle ground, and background is blurred, which he attributes in part to the fact that the town is situated on a plateau, but also to another photographic error.[104] The same contemporary photography manual offers a damning explanation for such effects:

> If the different planes of distance are not well made out in a photograph, that is, if they do not appear to occupy the same relative position in the photograph which belongs to them in nature, the fault may arise from the use of a lens too short or too long. [...] When this compression of space occurs, it will yield prints that no one cares to look at a second time, prints in which the foreground lies flat upon the middle distance, and both on the extreme distance which, instead of striking the eye at once with a unity of effect, have to be looked at attentively before the relations of the different parts explain themselves – in a word, prints which are a reproach to photography.[105]

We have already established that Picasso would have been likely to take an aesthetic interest in precisely these sorts of visual 'errors'. So too did Proust, as we have also seen: the 'admirable' photographs that the narrator compares to Elstir's work might show a cathedral as being close to a river, 'd'où elle est *en réalité* distante'. And as we

[104] Tucker, p. 294.
[105] Derr, via Tucker, pp. 294-295.

have seen, Elstir himself, in painting '[d]es illusions optiques', also elevates visual error to an aesthetic principle.

The implication, then, is that Elstir and photography deviate from what is 'correct', whether deliberately or not, but with valuable aesthetic effects in either case. Yet later, the narrator will discuss photography in a manner that seems to question this very notion of 'correctness'. When he goes to kiss Albertine on the cheek, he finds that as he approaches her, her appearance changes in accordance with his own movement:

> D'abord au fur et à mesure que ma bouche commença à s'approcher des joues que mes regards lui avaient proposé d'embrasser, ceux-ci se déplaçant virent des joues nouvelles; le cou, aperçu de plus près et comme à la loupe, montra, dans ses gros grains, une robustesse qui modifia le caractère de la figure. (II, 659-660)

The narrator compares this to photography, in a description much like the previous one:

> Les dernières applications de la photographie – qui couchent aux pieds d'une cathédrale toutes les maisons qui nous parurent si souvent, de près, presque aussi hautes que les tours, font successivement manœuvrer comme un régiment, par files, en ordre dispersé, en masses serrées, les mêmes monuments, rapprochent l'une contre l'autre les deux colonnes de la Piazzetta tout à l'heure si distantes […] – je ne vois que cela qui puisse, autant que le baiser, faire surgir de ce que nous croyions une chose à aspect défini, *les cent autres choses qu'elle est tout aussi bien, puisque chacune est relative à une perspective non moins légitime.* (II, 660; my emphasis)

Here, the perspectival variations are not a result of visual error or a deviation from an accepted visual norm; all are equally legitimate, demonstrating another aspect of the object or scene no less 'true' than that we are used to and which we thought to be 'definitive'. Photography is no longer simply a usurper of a painterly aesthetics; instead, it is tied with kissing as the most successful means of demonstrating the inherent multiplicity and relativism of the visible world. This offers us a possible means of resolving the apparent paradox in Elstir's dual engagement with 'la nature

telle qu'elle est' and 'les illusions optiques': if relativism is an underlying principle of reality, then optical illusions are simply an element in that reality, rather than a misinterpretation of it.

The experience of kissing Albertine is Elstirean in as much as the narrator *sees* her without *knowing* her; but it is also un-Elstirean, because this state of visual ignorance is not a valuable aesthetic principle but a problem to be overcome, and one that the kiss is intended to rectify; the narrator wants to obtain 'connaissance par les lèvres' (II, 659).[106] We might reasonably expect that the actual moment of the kiss, when the narrator finally makes contact with the object of his perception, will work as a sort of climactic moment of truth, in which all the visions of Albertine through which he has passed are synthesised into a unified whole. But in Mieke Bal's words, 'le baiser lui-même […] se présente plutôt comme une série d'agrandissements en cascade, qui […] finit par dissoudre l'image dans l'invisibilité.'[107] By the time he physically touches Albertine, his eyes are too close to see her and his nose is too squashed to smell her; bizarrely, it is only from this sudden sensory blackout that he knows he is kissing her at all. The Albertine at the centre of these accumulated perceptions is negated and becomes a void; she exists only as the 'dix Albertines' (II, 660) that he perceived as he moved towards her cheek. Her reality, for him, can only be as an accumulation of perspectives. The parallels with Bergsonian analysis here are clear; indeed, Bergson's description of analysis and its failings maps onto the scene perfectly: 'dans son désir éternellement inassouvi d'embrasser l'objet autour duquel elle est condamnée à tourner, l'analyse multiplie sans fin les points de vue pour compléter la représentation toujours incomplète.'[108] It is a strange coincidence that Bergson defines analysis as a failure to 'embrasser l'objet', using the word *embrasser* in its sense of 'to comprehend' or 'to encompass', when *embrasser* in its more common sense – 'to kiss' – is precisely what the narrator *does* do to Albertine. And

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[106] Perhaps the crucial difference here is that unlike Elstir, who suppresses knowledge he *already* has, the narrator seeks knowledge he does *not* have. Albertine figures in a desiring epistemology: she is unknowable, and therefore desirable, but would cease to be desirable if ever the narrator were to attain the knowledge he craves. This pattern recurs frequently throughout the novel and is not necessarily rooted in *sexual* desire: in Leo Bersani's argument, 'it seems that the idea of the real is so inextricably linked with the idea of the unknown that inaccessibility is the sign by which Marcel recognizes something worth knowing or possessing. As a result, the actual contact with Balbec, or with Berma's style of acting, or with the Guermantes circle, by the very fact of being an actual contact, destroys that sign of the unreachable which, for the narrator, adheres necessarily to truth.' (*Marcel Proust: The Fictions of Life and Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013 [second edition]), p. 28.) Chapter 4 will deal in more depth with the narrator's epistemological relation to Albertine as an object of desire.

[107] Bal, *Images littéraires, ou comment lire Proust visuellement* (Montreal and Toulouse: XYZ Éditeur and Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1997), p. 193.

[108] 'Métaphysique', p. 1396.

yet, since he is only aware he is doing so because of the sudden sensory blackout it induces, he arguably fails at this too. He finds, in any case, that his lips are not privy to knowledge of Albertine any more than his eyes: 'les lèvres […] doivent se contenter […] de vaguer à la surface et de se heurter à la clôture de la joue impénétrable et désirée.' (II, 659) The narrator's use of photography as a means of illustrating the kiss calls to mind Bergson's use of photography as a means of describing analysis. The kiss no more provides intuitive knowledge of Albertine than the photographs provide intuitive knowledge of the town they portray. Thus, if the camera in its *functioning* relates, as I have already argued, to the artistic perceptive expansion Bergson describes, and which serves as a model for intuition, the *results* it produces align it much more closely with analysis. This, of course, fits with Boccioni's view; the crucial difference, however, is that the narrator's assessment of photography implies that its analytic function is one of its merits – since it brings us closer to an understanding of the world as plural and relative – rather than evidence for its inadequacy.

### iii. Conception as 'unknowing'

The parallels between this passage and Cubism are also clear. The narrator's movement in relation to Albertine and his accumulation of perspectives of her recalls the Cubist method as it is traditionally – if somewhat reductively – defined, according to which the fragmented facets on the canvas have been transcribed from a process of movement in relation to the object. That the Cubist method also aligns with Bergsonian analysis is implied in John Golding's description of Picasso's early Cubist canvases as 'analytical' and, most obviously of all, by the name attributed to the first stage of the movement: Analytic Cubism. Just as Bergson's definition of analysis is a perfect description of the narrator's attempt to kiss Albertine, so too could it be thought of as a critique of Cubism. Furthermore, Bergsonian analysis is ultimately an intellectual process, and Cubism is ultimately an intellectual method: if the camera, which sees without knowing, plays a role in the development of Cubism, it is as a stepping stone to a more cerebral aesthetic that distances the movement from Elstir's precognitive, 'innocent' perception. The cerebral aspect of Cubism is indicated by Picasso's famous declaration that 'I paint things as I think them, not as I see them',[109] as well as by other remarks by other painters and critics:

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[109] Ramón Gomez de la Serna, 'Completa y verídica historia de Picasso y el cubismo', via Henderson, 'Editor's Introduction', p. 447.

in *Les Peintres cubistes*, Guillaume Apollinaire declares that Cubist paintings are 'des œuvres plus cérébrales que sensuelles';[110] in *Du 'Cubisme'*, the painters Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger write that the nineteenth-century painter Gustave Courbet 'ne soupçonna pas que le monde visible ne devient le monde réel que par l'opération de la pensée';[111] in an appendix written later, Metzinger adds: 'regarder le modèle ne suffit plus, il faut que le peintre le pense'.[112]

It is the intellectualism of the Cubist approach that renders Cubist perception the precise opposite of artistic perception as Bergson defines it. Far from being a last resort that impoverishes perception, conception is itself the means of expanding perception and of rectifying its inadequacies, as the critic and supporter of Cubism, Maurice Raynal, asserted in *Gil Blas* in 1912:

> Nous ne voyons jamais, en effet, un objet dans toutes ses dimensions à la fois. C'est donc là une lacune de notre vue qu'il importe de combler. Or la conception nous en donne le moyen. La conception nous fait percevoir l'objet sous toutes ses formes, et elle nous fait percevoir même des objets que nous ne pourrions pas voir.[113]

Thus, the year after Bergson had asserted in 'La Perception du changement' that the expansion of perception as practised by visual artists could serve as a model for a more effective way of doing philosophy, a proponent of Cubism was suggesting that perception, artistic or otherwise, did not go far enough, and that it must be expanded by thought and intellectual activity. In this account, what makes artistic perception different to ordinary perception is precisely its use of conception to expand and deepen it. (Of course, a philosophically- and scientifically- orientated movement like Futurism could hardly be free of the influence of the intellectual either, but the Cubists are open about their intellectualism in a way that the Futurists are not.)

But what form did such a conception take? To what conclusions did it lead? Henderson has persuasively argued that the Cubists, like many artists of their era, sustained an interest in the idea of an invisible fourth dimension that coexisted with the three known ones; she reads a inference to this idea in Raynal's remark about

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[110] Guillaume Apollinaire, *Les Peintres cubistes* [1913], ed. by L. C. Breunig and J.-Cl. Chevalier (Paris: Hermann, 1965), p. 53.
[111] Gleizes and Metzinger, p. 38.
[112] Ibid., p. 81.
[113] Maurice Raynal, 'Conception et Vision', *Gil Blas*, 29 August 1912, p. 5.

‘objets que nous ne pourrions pas voir’.[114] Speculation of this kind, she argues, was encouraged by discoveries like the X-ray and radioactivity, which, as we have seen, drew attention to the existence of imperceptible realities. As she asserts, ‘the existence of invisible realms just beyond the reach of the human eye was no longer a matter of mystical or philosophical speculation; it had been established empirically by science.’[115] Or to adopt Danius’s terminology, the disparity between what could be seen and what could be known was now undeniable. Why should there *not* be further dimensions beyond those that could be perceived by the human sensorium? If the Cubist method does imply engagement with such theories, then, the conceptual aspect of their approach is speculative, questioning – it relates to that which may or may not exist, and thus to what *cannot* be known.

But on the other hand, Cubist conception also relates to that which is *already* known. As Thomas Vargish and Delo E. Mook write, ‘Picasso and Braque attempted

**Fig. 7:** Juan Gris, *Nature morte à la nappe à carreaux*, 1915

[114] *The Fourth Dimension*, p. 180.
[115] ‘Editor’s Introduction’, p. 447.

to represent nature, or the object, as it exists in the mind's eye, in what we know about its visual reality.'[116] The accumulation of perspectives on an object – what Herbert Read has called a 'memory-image'[117] – are seemingly a realisation of Boccioni's declaration that 'the picture must be the synthesis of what one remembers and what one sees'. But Cubist paintings do not consist solely of remembered aspects of the object; often, they include associative elements, signs, and symbols that indirectly reference notions and concepts outside of the image. In Picasso's *The Aficionado*, which portrays a bullfighting fanatic, a decidedly phallic form in the bottom right-hand corner can be read as a reference to the overt masculinity of bullfighting culture, while the fragments of a guitar (a frequent motif in Picasso's work) imply Spanishness. Comparable motifs are at play in *Nature morte à la nappe à carreaux* (fig. 7) of 1915, by Juan Gris, another Spaniard in Paris. The outline of a guitar once again lends the scene an element of the Hispanic, while the accumulation of cups and wineglasses in the centre of the canvas form an abstracted bull's head, a teacup standing in for its eye. A wine bottle is adorned with the word 'eau' – presumably a fragment of the word 'château' or 'Beaujolais', but also calling to mind the word 'taureau', as well as providing a wry comment on the importance of red wine in French culture. A glass of wine reinforces these undertones of 'Frenchness', while another bottle has a label in English. The newspaper on the table completes the group of signs that bring the wider concerns of national and world culture into the enclosed domain of the interior. There is a linguistic quality to paintings like these; Christopher Green describes them as 'systems of signs to be read'.[118]

This is certainly not Elstirean seeing without knowing, but neither is it the rational, collective knowledge that underpins realism – that which the naval officer expected to find in Turner's painting – which re-presents the seen world as it is already known and understood, and which is required to attend to the object in its detail, so that it appears to function in the painting as it would in reality. And, as should by now be clear, this is not the absolute knowledge of Bergsonian intuition, either. Crucially, these fragments of knowledge do not form a whole; they exist only as hints, as inferences, and as unanswered questions. The interest lies not in any sense of completion, but in the breaking apart. Like the narrator's successive visions of

[116] *Inside Modernism*, p. 64.
[117] Via Vargish and Mook, p. 35.
[118] Christopher Green, *Juan Gris* (London: Whitechapel, 1992), p. 34.

Albertine, they exist only as pieces that cannot be put together or completed. For Boccioni, Cubism fails because it is analytic: the Cubist method,

> with its splitting of the object and the projection of the object's parts […] is […] only the translation onto the canvas's flat surface of those planes of the object, which, because of the object's accidental, perspectival position, we're unable to see. It's a rational procedure that relies on a relative situation and not on an act of absolute intuition.[119]

Yet in stark contrast to Boccioni's search for an intuitive absolute, Gleizes and Metzinger imply in *Du 'Cubisme'* that one of Cubism's epistemological subtexts is the *impossibility* of attaining true or absolute knowledge of an object. They are dismissive of critics who suggest that Cubism has replaced a 'false' – ie. perspectival – model of reality of the object with a 'correct' one; the presentation of an object can be neither correct nor false because the object exists *only* as relative perspectives, rather than as an essential or absolute form. We can only *know* an object as an image in our own minds:

> Raisonnablement nous ne pouvons avoir de certitude qu'à l'égard de l'image [que les objets] produisent dans notre esprit. Aussi nous étonne-t-il que des critiques bien intentionnés expliquent la différence remarquable entre les formes attribuées à la nature et celles de la peinture actuelle, par la volonté de représenter les choses non telle qu'elles paraissent mais telles qu'elles sont. Comment sont-elles? D'après eux l'objet posséderait une forme absolue, essentielle, et ce serait pour la délivrer que nous supprimerions le clair-obscur et la perspective traditionnels. Quelle simplicité! Un objet n'a pas de forme absolue. Il en a autant qu'il y a de plans dans la domaine de la signification.[120]

To a charge of turning uselessly about the object with no hope of reconstructing it, Gleizes and Metzinger might respond that they are not attempting to reconstruct it at all – that turning about the object is not a mistaken means to an end but an end in itself. Far from being an oversight, as Boccioni concludes, it is precisely the point. If the Cubists *were* inspired by the X-ray, then, it seems likely that their interest

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[119] *Futurist Painting*, pp. 115-116.
[120] Gleizes and Metzinger, pp. 62-63.

stemmed not from its potential as a metaphor for a superior, penetrative form of artistic perception, but from the fact that it provided visible evidence for the inadequacy and relativity of human perception in general. The artist in this scenario is situated on the same epistemological trajectory as Elstir. The Cubist perceptive faculty may be supplemented by an intellectual dimension, yet this dimension seems both to affirm and surpass the premise of the epistemic crisis: perception is an inadequate route to knowledge precisely because true or absolute knowledge is itself impossible.

## IV. The Narrator-as-Artist: Martinville

The famous *clochers de Martinville* episode in *Du Côté de chez Swann* provides us with a way of bringing together the various lines of inquiry that have made up my argument so far. In what remains of this chapter, I aim to demonstrate that the episode encompasses and yet also surpasses Bergson's division between analysis and intuition, and that it contains elements of all the visual trends that we have considered. Four photographic modes are in play (chronophotographic, X-ray, still, and stereoscopic), and it recalls Cubism, Futurism, and precognitive vision by turns, synthesising a number of painterly perspectives into an end result that stands entirely on its own.

In this episode, the young narrator is riding home to Combray in Dr Percepied's carriage, when he sees three bell towers – two belonging to the church at Martinville, the other, much further away, to the church at Vieuxvicq – that appear to be moving back and forth on the horizon as the carriage speeds down the winding country lanes, merging together, changing places, and disappearing and reappearing. Believing them to be some distance away, the narrator is astonished when the carriage screeches to a halt in front of Martinville church, as if the building has thrown itself in their path. The sight of the moving bell towers gives the narrator 'un plaisir irraisonné', a feeling that has in the past been awakened at random by other sights, sounds and smells ('un toit, un reflet de soleil sur une pierre, l'odeur d'un chemin'), and by a sense that they contain some essential truth within or behind them (I, 176). Yet the nature and identity of these 'essences' has always eluded him. This time he determines to pin down the truth behind the impression, and with an application of attention this truth appears to him, spontaneously, 'sous le forme de

mots', and he recounts the episode on paper, then and there in the carriage (I, 179). The resulting prose passage, quoted in full in the main narrative, rids him so effectively of the towers ('comme si j'avais été moi-même une poule et si je venais de pondre un oeuf') that he begins to sing with joy (I, 180).

### i. Analysis or intuition?

The episode highlights the embodied nature of vision, discussed in the introduction to this chapter, since the speeding carriage drastically alters the eye's relationship to its object by acting upon the whole body, of which the eye is a part: vision is grounded in the relativism of the corporal, conditional on the body's present mode of being. The experience is cubistic in its relativism (as analyses by Sommella, Matoré, and Watt, considered in the thesis introduction, imply), the more so because the narrator's movement around the objects he sees distorts the spatial relations of those objects. These similarities with Cubism suggest that the episode can be placed comfortably in the domain of analysis. In an *intuitive* experience, Bergson writes, 'ce que j'éprouverai ne dépendra ni du point de vue que je pourrais adopter sur l'objet, puisque je serai dans l'objet lui-même, ni des symboles par lesquels je pourrais le traduire, puisque j'aurai renoncé à toute traduction pour posséder l'original'.[121] The opposite is true of the Martinville episode. The experience is the direct result of the point of view the narrator adopts on the object, which causes the towers to 'elude the grasp of [his] perception, offering themselves only through a constant changing of aspects elicited by his movements'.[122] The ultimate moment of realisation comes not because he somehow manages to transport himself 'dans l'objet lui-même', but because the objects open themselves up and reveal their truth to him ('leurs lignes et leurs surfaces ensoleillées, comme si elles avaient été une sorte d'écorce, se déchirèrent, un peu de ce qui m'était caché en elles m'apparût' (I, 178)). Moreover, the experience reaches its resolution only when the narrator can determine the 'symbols' required to 'translate' it; it is precisely this act of representation that gives it value and meaning. Intellectualism is implied not just in the representation but in the experience itself: the application of attention that is required if the narrator is to go 'au bout de [s]on impression' is described as 'un effort de la pensée', and when the truth of the towers begins to reveal itself, it is as 'une pensée qui n'existait pas

121 'Métaphysique', pp. 1393-1394.
122 Leonard, p. 337.

pour moi l'instant avant, qui se formula en mots dans ma tête' (I, 178). As Martin Jay has it, intuition is, by contrast, 'a *prelinguistic* grasp of fluid, creative, vital reality'; language for Bergson, 'rather than being an alternative to visual perception, shares with it a weakness for atemporal abstractions'.[123] (That Bergson's ideas were themselves conveyed via language is a paradox that Jay highlights and of which Bergson himself was aware.)[124]

But it is not quite that simple. The word 'pensée' in this context is used more as a non-specific shorthand for mental activity than in the Bergsonian sense of analytic intellection. The 'thinking' that the narrator undertakes is not an accumulation of analytic conclusions that combine to create something that looks like 'truth', but a means of cultivating the conditions by which such a truth can break out of the towers that contain it and erupt into his consciousness of its own accord. 'Thinking' in this context means staying focused in order to deepen the impression, without allowing himself to be distracted by the petty, habitual concerns that risk driving it from his mind. It is a sort of 'effortful non-effort' that recalls the state cultivated by Elstir when he paints precognitive vision, or by the narrator when trying to pin down the source of an involuntary memory.[125] Put like this, it seems more appropriate to say that the truth of the towers is revealed by an *intuitive* effort, 'qui se violente'.

### ii. Intuition and motion

The argument for the intuitive quality of the experience is given another dimension by the fact that the narrator sees the towers in a decidedly Elstirean manner. Danius argues that new technologies of speed such as the train and the car function, in Proust, as optical devices that encourage an 'innocent', Elstirean, or Ruskinian way of seeing.[126] For the novice traveller, perception precedes cognition: speed creates a

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[123] Jay, p. 200; my emphasis.

[124] 'Bergson was well aware of this paradox and tried to find an artistically evocative way of expressing himself that would minimize the damage' (Jay, p. 200).

[125] In the famous *madeleine* passage, for example, the narrator describes his effort to create a mental state in which the hidden memory can reveal itself: 'pour que rien ne brise l'élan dont il va tâcher de la ressaisir, j'écarte tout obstacle, toute idée étrangère, j'abrite mes oreilles et mon attention contre les bruits de la chambre voisine. Mais sentant mon esprit qui se fatigue sans réussir, je le force au contraire à prendre cette distraction que je lui refusais, à penser à autre chose, à se refaire avant une tentative suprême. Puis une deuxième fois, je fais le vide devant lui, je remets en face de lui la saveur encore récente de cette première gorgée et je sens tressaillir en moi quelque chose qui se déplace.' (I, 45.)

[126] This is notwithstanding Ruskin's hostility to mechanised movement. In *Modern Painters*, he argues that 'a quiet walk along not more than ten or twelve miles of road a day, is the most amusing of all travelling; and all travelling becomes dull in exact proportion to its rapidity' (*Modern Painters*, 5 vols (Orpington and London: George Allen, 1897), III, p. 311). This sets Ruskin apart from Turner, whose

disconnect between the prior knowledge that structures her understanding of the seen world, and the way it actually appears to her from the vehicle. Rendering the subject visually ignorant, technologies of speed enforce the Elstirean principle of 'seeing over knowing'. Yet although Danius stresses that the Martinville episode is based almost word-for-word on Proust's earlier text, 'Journées en automobile', of 1907, and that the carriage in the episode can effectively be understood as a car in disguise, she does not include it among her examples of occasions on which technologies of speed privilege the seen over the known. This is surprising: although it takes place well before the narrator's instructive visit to Elstir's studio, and although the latter is not mentioned, the episode heralds the importance of the 'seeing over knowing' principle, highlighting its centrality by setting it up as the impetus for the first piece of prose the narrator has managed to produce since his resolution to become a writer. The narrator *knows*, of course, that the 'movement' of the towers is an optical illusion caused by his own relative speed, as his retrospective account suggests:

> Les clochers de Martinville, […] que le mouvement de notre voiture et les lacets du chemin *avaient l'air* de faire changer de place, puis celui de Vieuxvicq qui, séparé d'eux par une colline et une vallée, […] *semblait* pourtant tout voisin d'eux. (I, 177-178, my emphasis)

In this version, the towers only *appear* to move. Yet in the spontaneous piece of writing, they simply move, apparently of their own volition:

> 'Seuls, s'élevant du niveau de la plaine et comme perdus en rase campagne, montaient vers le ciel les deux clochers de Martinville. Bientôt nous en vîmes trois: *venant se placer en face d'eux par une volte hardie*, un clocher retardataire, celui de Vieuxvicq, les avait rejoints. […] Puis le clocher de Martinville *s'écarta, pris ses distances*, et les clochers de Martinville restèrent seuls […] Nous avions été si longs à nous rapprocher d'eux, que je pensais au temps qu'il faudrait encore pour les atteindre quand, tout d'un coup, la voiture ayant tourné, elle nous déposa à leurs pieds; et *ils s'étaient jetés si rudement au-devant d'elle*, qu'on n'eut que le temps d'arrêter pour ne pas se heurter au

1844 painting of a train, *Rain, Steam and Speed*, suggests an interest in the artistic potential of mechanised transport.

> porche. Nous poursuivîmes notre route; nous avions déjà quitté Martinville depuis un peu de temps et le village après nous avoir accompagnés quelques secondes avait disparu, que restés seuls à l'horizon *à nous regarder fuir*, ses clochers et celui de Vieuxvicq *agitaient encore en signe d'adieu leur cimes ensoleillées*.' (I, 179, my emphasis)

In each of the italicised examples, one or more of the bell towers is the active agent of the verb, the instigator of its own act of motion. The towers' autonomy to move themselves, and the changeability of their relative positions and of the distances between them, are unquestioned. It is, then, the raw data of the narrator's initial visual impression rather than his knowledge of its cause that provides the basis for the piece, since for him, travelling along a road at such a speed is an experience without precedent. His inevitable 'perceptual innocence' provides the conditions for what he will describe in the Elstir episode as 'ces illusions optiques dont notre vision première est faite', precluding a rational and logical understanding of what is seen; laws like that which states that the towers are not really moving are not necessarily self-evident to the uneducated eye, little used to witnessing the effects of speed on a landscape. In Bergsonian terms, it is the narrator's immediate *intuition* that tells him that the towers are moving; it is only in his retrospective, conceptual appraisal that he refutes this possibility. Thus, for the narrator, the experience of travelling at speed functions as a form of perceptive expansion – a means of detaching vision from practical necessity and prior knowledge, akin to Elstir's self-induced precognitive state.

It would be short-sighted, then, to write off the Martinville experience as an optical illusion and nothing more. I would argue, in fact, that all three of these visual modes – seeing from a speeding vehicle, Bergsonian perceptive expansion, and Elstirean precognitive vision – function within an alternative sensory epistemology in which vision leads to new forms of knowledge as a direct result of its separation from preconceived epistemological structures. They respond to a new logic in which '[l]es illusions optiques' are themselves the means by which reality can be perceived 'telle qu'elle est'. But what form might this new knowledge take? We know that the towers contain and lay bare some kind of essential truth, but it does not require a particularly astute reader to remark that the narrator's piece of writing, purported to have pinned down this mysterious essence, is in fact little more than a second description of the phenomenon, not markedly different to the retrospective

description that we have just read in the main narrative. No new information is presented; no great revelations are forthcoming. This in itself might be understood as evidence for the intuitive nature of the experience, given Bergson's assertion that intuitive knowledge is, by its very nature, inarticulable: 'nous appelons ici intuition la *sympathie* par laquelle on se transporte à l'intérieur d'un objet pour coïncider avec ce qu'il a d'unique et *par conséquent d'inexprimable*.'[127] But the passage is in fact revelatory at its most basic level of enunciation: namely, in the fact that it recounts the sight of the belltowers *in motion*. The narrator is not just moving in relation to what he sees; the objects are *themselves* in movement, elements in a phenomenon of which movement is both the cause and the effect. Danius remarks that the steeples on the horizon are metonymic of the churches;[128] so, too, I would add, are the churches metonymic of the parishes they represent. And so, if we read between the lines, it is not only the church but also Martinville *itself* that comes running towards the carriage – not only the steeples that move, but also the villages that contain them. The narrator has already hinted at this in his quoted piece of writing, observing that 'le village, *après nous avoir accompagné quelque secondes* avait disparu' (I, 179; my emphasis).

Seen through a Bergsonian lens, the movement of the towers and of the space that contains them takes on metaphysical implications. In 'Introduction à la métaphysique', Bergson uses movement in space as an analogy for *durée*.[129] In 'La Perception du changement' – the same essay in which he defines his idea of artistic perceptive expansion – he argues that movement is an inherent, basic principle of reality. The implication is that if artistic perception is to provide a model for philosophical intuition, the fruit of such intuition would be an understanding or perception of reality as movement, as flux, as duration. And if the notion of perceptive expansion maps neatly onto the Elstirean or Ruskinian idea of visual 'innocence', it follows that the latter idea should also lead the way to an ontological understanding that takes movement and duration as its foundational principle.

Significantly, Bergson's argument in the essay is elucidated with the metaphor of a speeding train:

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[127] 'Métaphysique', p. 1395 (second emphasis mine).

[128] Danius, p. 132: 'The motorized spectator […] presents [the *clochers*] as synecdoches, as part of a not-yet-revealed whole – as steeples, not churches.'

[129] Imagined movement in space, for Bergson, is a way of illustrating the indivisibility of *durée*: 'je puis, tout le long de ce mouvement, me représenter des arrêts possibles: c'est ce que j'appelle les positions du mobile […] Mais avec les positions, fussent-elles en nombre infini, je ne ferai pas du mouvement. Elles ne sont pas des parties du mouvement; elles sont autant de vues prises sur lui.' ('Métaphysique', p. 1413.)

> Le mouvement est la réalité même, et ce que nous appelons immobilité est un certain état de choses analogue à ce qui se produit quand deux trains marchent avec la même vitesse, dans le même sens, sur deux voies parallèles: chacun des deux trains est alors immobile pour les voyageurs assis dans l'autre.[130]

When the trains appear not to be moving, Bergson says, the passengers in each could conceivably lean out and shake each other by the hand. We must perceive the world as static if we are to perform social, everyday actions such as these. But because it is a prerequisite for our ability to act in the world, we falsely equate stasis with reality.[131] If we draw out the metaphorical scenario, we can imagine one of the two trains speeding away from the other, leaving the passengers in both to look out onto the landscape passing by the window. Without the other train to create the illusion of stasis, the passenger is aware of both her own motion and the relative motion of the landscape. In the world of the metaphor, *this* is 'reality' – the scenario in which movement can be understood as constant and universal. Is this also the essential truth revealed by the Martinville episode? The towers, by this reading, serve the same function as the speeding train. They are emblematic of a metaphysical premise – a material, visible metaphor for the Bergsonian belief in the inherent movement of all things, a paradigm for *durée*, and the symbol of a world in a continual state of flux, change and becoming.

Such a conclusion takes us towards the concerns of the Futurists. In Cubism, movement is a means to an end rather than a focus in itself (the artist may move, but the object remains in one place, as suggested by the Cubists' appropriation of those most static of genres, the portrait and the still life). But it holds a central place in the Futurists' artistic philosophy. For Boccioni in particular, as a dedicated Bergsonian, movement is an absolute and essential state of being, underpinning reality: he declares in his book that 'rest, being only an appearance or a relative state, doesn't exist. Only motion exists.'[132] The parallels with Bergson's train metaphor are clear, and are strengthened by the fact that the Futurists' belief in the ontological

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[130] 'Perception', p. 1378.
[131] A situation with the appearance of stasis 'nous semble être la situation régulière et normale, parce que c'est elle qui nous permet d'agir sur les choses et qui permet aussi aux choses d'agir sur nous […] L'"immobilité" étant ce dont notre action a besoin, nous l'érigeons en réalité, nous en faisons un absolu.' ('Perception', p. 1379.)
[132] *Futurist Painting*, p. 111.

importance of movement and dynamism is inseparable from their aspiration to an intuitive art form (the two principles that form the basis of their (or rather Boccioni's) critique of Cubism as static and analytic). In this regard the Martinville episode can be understood as an experience in the spirit of Futurism, but it would be more accurate to describe it as a linking element between Futurism and the perceptual processes that are represented in Proust's novel by Elstir, opening up the possibility for a trajectory between the two. The narrator's attempt to resolve the problem of the towers is an application of intuition, akin to artistic perceptive expansion à la Elstir, which leads to a quasi-Futurist understanding of a dynamic world-in-motion, revealing both the towers' durational existence and their place within an ontological framework of which movement is a structuring principle.

### iii. Art as a form of durée

But the towers themselves are only one element in the equation. Equally if not more important in this episode is the fact that the experience enables the creation of the narrator's first piece of writing. Its importance is underlined by the fact that it is the only time in the novel in which the narrator quotes his own work, as more than one critic has observed.[133] In her discussion of the scene, Danius remarks on its status as a thematic thread that prepares the ground for a more significant work of literature to emerge. The prose passage is mentioned in *Le Côté de Guermantes*, when the narrator remarks in passing that he has sent a version of it to *Le Figaro*, and again in *La Prisonnière*, when he laments the fact that it has still not appeared in the paper. Then, in *Albertine disparue*, the article is finally published. As Danius argues:

> the thematic thread thus binds together a course of events that begins with the Martinville episode, when the narrator produces his first piece of writing, and that ends when *Le Figaro* finally runs the article and he makes his long-desired debut. Only one thing remains: for the narrator to write a significant work of literature.[134]

At issue in the Martinville episode, then, is not only a search for an external, ontological truth, but the production of a work of art and its conditions of possibility.

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[133] Danius (p. 133) cites Keith Cohen in *Film and Fiction: The Dynamics of Exchange* (1979): 'Marcel's experience of seeing the […] steeples from a moving coach makes an indelible mark on the text, since it gives rise to the first piece of writing *within* the text attributed to Marcel himself.'
[134] Danius, p. 135.

This is another sense in which the episode links to the Bergsonian question of duration. Obviously, both the passage itself and the novel it makes possible are durational objects, as all writing is: temporal media that unfold over the processes of writing and then reading. But what is essential here is the narrator's decision to quote himself. Why does he not simply incorporate the earlier prose piece seamlessly into the later account? Why is the experience of viewing the towers described twice? What is the difference between the two that makes this doubling worthwhile? One key difference between the two accounts has already been noted: the apparent certainty of the prose piece contrasts with the implicit dismissal, in the later text, of this certainty as illusion. The fact that such a difference is discernable suggests a comment by both the narrator-author and the mature text on their origins as, respectively, a novice writer and a short, experimental piece of writing – a joint acknowledgement of their provenance akin to a person holding a youthful photograph of herself next to her older face. Certainly the framing of the earlier piece lends it something of the photographic, like a textual photograph of the narrator's past (the more so because it seems in its content to respond to an Elstirean, quasi-photographic mode of seeing). Its position next to the later account turns it into an image in a sort of temporal stereoscope, lending the 'surface' of the novel a sense of temporal dimensionality. By embedding within itself the very seed from which it has grown, the novel we are reading draws attention to the dual processes of becoming on which it is founded – both its own development and the development of a writing-self able to produce it.

I can think of few Cubist or Futurist paintings that comment on their own durational existence in this way.[135] Bergson, however, would surely have argued that such paintings are nonetheless durational by their very nature, simply because *all* paintings are. In the final chapter of *L'Évolution créatrice*, of 1907, he illustrates his notion of *durée* with a description of the process of artistic creation:

> Le peintre est devant sa toile, les couleurs sont sur la palette, le modèle pose; nous voyons tout cela, et nous connaissons aussi la manière du peintre:

[135] A possible exception is Gris's *Portrait of Pablo Picasso* (1912). The Cubist master is depicted here as a larger-than-life figure, with a corpulent confidence that belies his thirty years, and holds a palette containing concentrated versions of the four colours that dominate the painting. With its inscription, 'Hommage à Pablo Picasso', the image clearly acknowledges Gris's admiration for his fellow Spaniard, suggesting that the painted Picasso's portliness refers to gravitas and influence rather than physical size, and implying that the older painter might himself provide a condition for possibility for the painting that we see. The painting is of particular significance because it was Gris's first exhibit at the Salon des Indépendents in the spring of 1912 – a nod, then, to both the past and the future development of a painterly career.

> prévoyons-nous ce qui apparaîtra sur la toile? Nous possédons les éléments du problème; nous savons, d'une connaissance abstraite, comment il sera résolu, car le portrait ressemblera sûrement au modèle et sûrement aussi à l'artiste; mais la solution concrète apporte avec elle cette imprévisible rien qui est le tout de l'œuvre d'art. Et c'est ce rien qui prend du temps. Néant de matière, il se crée lui-même comme forme. La germination et la floraison de cette forme s'allongent en une irrétrécissable durée, qui fait corps avec elle.[136]

Although it does not use the terms themselves, this passage draws a clear distinction between processes of analysis and intuition. While an observer might be in possession of all the concrete elements of the equation, with knowledge of the subject's appearance, the colours of the paints, and the painter's usual style, she cannot hope to piece these together herself in order to predict what the painting will eventually look like. A painting cannot be produced quantitatively – analytically – in this way. Rather, it comes from something else: a qualitative, intuitive 'rien', which unfolds in duration and gives the painting its unique, essential quality. Bergson was writing before Cubism, with its analytic method, had taken off; he is clearly referring to an older, more classical era of visual art. Yet all paintings are products of a process of invention; while the Cubist method might be analytic, and while Boccioni might decry it as such, it would be unreasonable to suggest that Cubist paintings are pure calculation, and that there is nothing in them of this intuitive, durational 'rien' that makes a painting unique.

### iv. The photographic qualities of the Martinville episode

Although the Martinville episode both is and concerns itself with writing, not painting, some of the same questions are at issue. As Bergson goes on to assert, 'le temps est invention ou il n'est rien du tout'.[137] The Martinville episode is not just the *result* of a process of invention, it also *represents* a process of invention in some detail. It encompasses *durée* on the level of both form and content. Yet, as Bergson goes on to state, 'du temps-invention la physique ne peut pas tenir compte, astreinte qu'elle est à la méthode cinématographique'.[138] Cinematography or chronophotography is emblematic of the kind of scientific, quantitative approach that cannot grasp reality

[136] *L'Évolution créatrice*, p. 783.
[137] *L'Évolution créatrice*, p. 784.
[138] Ibid.

in its true durational flux. It is curious, then, that the description of the towers' movement in the prose piece gives a distinct impression of the flickering, unsteady motion of early cinema, the kinetoscope, or Muybridge's running horse, while the towers are described at first as being 'comme trois oiseaux posés sur la plaine' (I, 179) – an image that recalls one of Marey and Muybridge's favourite subjects for their studies. For Patrick ffrench, the Martinville episode is an example of what he calls Proust's 'Muybridge' or chronophotographic mode, which is in play at numerous moments of the text.[139] ffrench gives as further examples the sight of the three trees at Hudimesnil, which 'agit[ent] leurs bras désespérés' as the narrator passes by in Mme de Villeparisis's carriage (II, 79); the journey of the narrator's lips towards Albertine's cheek, discussed in Section III; and, most significantly, the two episodes involving Robert de Saint-Loup that were quoted in the introduction to this thesis. ffrench quotes Mieke Bal, who argues that 'Robert is a Muybridge character', visions of whom 'yield […] a contact sheet of rapidly taken photos of movement'.[140] Proust, writes William Carter, 'sees with the eye of a painter or sculptor who, after having studied Etienne-Jules Marey's chronophotographs […] wants to represent the human body in each of its successive positions as it moves through space'.[141]

For ffrench, Proust's chronophotographic mode is a function of epistemological enquiry: 'it is as if the decomposition of movement – what I have called Proust's Muybridge mode, operates whenever there is a secret to know, a knowledge to grasp.'[142] Like the steeples at Martinville, the trees at Hudimesnil contain a secret to be uncovered – the difference is that the narrator will not succeed in pinning it down. The narrator's attempt to kiss Albertine is one of the many attempts he will make to 'know' her; the knowledge that he desires, and which remains forever elusive, relates specifically to Albertine's sexuality and her faithfulness to him. Saint-Loup's is a secret of the same order: his chronophotographic movements are directly related to his own status as a closeted homosexual. It is only in the Martinville episode, however, that the chronophotographic mode is related directly to the successful acquisition of new forms of knowledge, both of the external world and of the narrator himself – when seeing, in accordance with Marey's vision for chronophotography, actually does lead

[139] 'Proust and the Decomposition of Movement', unpublished conference paper, given at *Eadweard Muybridge in Kingston, 1894-1904* (Kingston University, London, November 2016).
[140] Bal, 'All in the Family: Familiarity and Estrangement According to Marcel Proust', in *A Mieke Bal Reader* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 78.
[141] Carter, p. 69.
[142] 'Decomposition of Movement'.

to knowing. But to complicate matters, this chronophotographic process is associated with the sort of *intuitive* moment of realisation and invention that Bergson suggests should be entirely at odds with it; it is surprising that an intuitive process of artistic invention should call on elements of analytic chronophotography in its mode of representation.

But perhaps it is not so surprising if we consider that a reverse process, based on a different photographic model, is also at work. The X-ray is an equally if not more prominent figure in the novel; as Áine Larkin has documented, it is mentioned at various points, often functioning as a metaphor for the narrator's sudden discovery of an unexpected – and pehaps unpleasant – truth.[143] Martinville is not one of those occasions; the X-ray is not mentioned outright any more than chrono- or still photography. Nevertheless, the X-ray figures as an unspoken metaphor, with the narrator suggesting that the prose passage responds to a penetrative form of vision – an ability to see beyond and behind the towers to the essential truth they contain. 'Un peu de ce qui m'était caché en elles m'apparut' (I, 178), he remarks, and later: 'je sentais [que cette page] m'avait […] parfaitement débarassé de ces clochers et de ce qu'ils cachaient derrière eux.' (I, 180) Precisely what form this truth takes is less clear, although the possibility that it is a Bergsonian, Futurist world-in-motion has been discussed earlier in this section. This, then, is the X-ray as it figures in the Futurist account: a metaphor for a superior, intuitive mode of perception, and a means of accessing essential truths.

But in this instance, the X-ray is no more tied to intuition than chronophotography is tied to analysis. Ontological conclusions can be inferred from the passage when it is read in conjunction with Bergson and Futurism, but there is nothing in the text that explicitly ties us to such a reading. It is equally possible to conclude that the narrator does not satisfactorily define the elusive essences that he claims to have pinned down. What is revealed so clearly to the narrator is not revealed to the reader, who discovers, in Linda Gordon's words, 'that a "well-wrought style" and metaphor are, like a sieve, incapable of containing anything essential about truth or life'.[144] The only explicit 'truth' that emerges from the episode is the narrator's newfound ability to write. The importance of this development must not be underestimated, of course – but we have been promised a truth about the

[143] Larkin, 'Suspect Surfaces and Depths: Radiographic Images, Perception and Memory', in Rye and Segal, pp. 208-210.
[144] Linda Gordon, 'The Martinville Steeplechase: Charting the Course', *Style*, 22 (Fall 1988), 402-409, p. 403.

*towers*, not a truth about the narrator. For him, Leo Bersani asserts, 'the condition for knowledge is a total suppression of the difference between the self and the world', and he behaves here as if just such a suppression has occurred.[145] Yet it does not appear that way to the reader. What we are presented with is a text that gestures to something outside itself but ultimately only comments on its own act of creation.[146] In this regard it recalls an alternative understanding of the X-ray that sees the latter not as a source of wonder, a window into a previously unseen reality, but as a medium that highlights the relativity and inadequacy of human perception, and which, moreover, falls short of its perceptual and epistemological potential. Among the early, excited reactions to the discovery of the X-ray was the hope that it might prove capable of revealing the workings of the mind or the soul.[147] Such hopes were to be disappointed, of course, because the X-ray can only reveal the underlying physical structures of the body. From this perspective, it fails to realise its epistemological promise.

A comparable account of disappointment occurs in *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, when the narrator uses the X-ray metaphor to elucidate the failure of our attempts to know and understand those we desire:

> L'objet de notre inquiète investigation est plus essentiel que ces particularités de caractère, pareilles à ces petits losanges d'épiderme dont les combinaisons variées font l'originalité fleurie de la chair. Notre *radiation intuitive* les traverse et les images qu'elle nous rapporte ne sont point celles d'un visage particulier mais représentent la morne et douloureuse universalité d'un squelette. (II, 249; my emphasis)

The narrator's nod here towards the concept of intuition is a red herring. This is hardly the Bergsonian ideal; it is at best a half-hearted attempt at intuition, in which both the subject and the X-ray break through the surface of the object of their perception but fail to position themselves *inside* it, and thus to access the place where

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145 *Fictions*, p. 13.
146 In this regard it is reminiscent of certain of the paintings that will be considered in Chapter 2.
147 Henderson has remarked on Thomas Edison's 'confident assertion that x rays would ultimately unveil the activity of the human brain'; similarly, 'x rays offered contemporary occultists a scientific rationale for phenomena such as clairvoyance as well as telepathy' ('X rays', pp. 325-326). Proust gestures to this kind of thinking with Françoise's naïve understanding of the X-ray: when the narrator's mother guesses that Françoise is less than keen on her son-in-law, the latter replies, laughing: 'Madame sait tout; Madame est pire que les rayons X […] qui voient ce que vous avez dans le cœur.' (I, 53.)

the truth resides.[148] In fact, it seems more appropriate to class it as analysis, since all it provides is another perspective on the object of our perception and investigation, defamiliarising it in the process. Our predicament as readers is not dissimilar to that of the lovers the narrator talks of: the prose passage functions as a sort of textual X-ray that promises essential meaning but in fact reveals only a structuring principle; if it encapsulates the essence of the towers, this essence is not accessible to us through the act of reading. Although the passage does not defamiliarise the towers in the way the narrator's 'radiation intuitive' defamiliarises the loved woman, it effects a comparable epistemological impasse. The emergence of a writing self is a euphoric, climactic moment for a narrator plagued with doubt about his artistic abilities, but it is no great revelation for the reader, for whom these doubts are negated by the graceful prose in which they are expressed and by the many artistic observations and philosophical musings that appear alongside them. Like an X-ray photograph of a skeleton whose presence beneath the skin was never in doubt, even before it could be directly apprehended, the emergent truth of the narrator-as-artist is, for the reader, merely a direct expression of what is already known to be the case.

### v. Overcoming the analysis-intuition divide

Both of these photographic models complicate the distinction between analysis and intuition in a manner entirely in keeping with the rest of the Martinville episode, which, as we have already seen, contains both analytic and intuitive strands, setting up relative analysis as a direct means of accessing an intuitive truth about the world (according to the first part of this argument) and of setting in motion an intuitive artistic process (according to the second). It is precisely the accumulation of viewpoints of the towers that, on the one hand, reveals their durational instability and, on the other, allows the narrator to access a writing self, to mobilise the intuitive, durational 'rien' that is the foundation and the essence of any work of art. Yet this intuitive experience is filtered back to the reader as an analytic representation that fails to fully convey the truth it claims to pin down.

This is not the only example of a coexistence of analytic and intuitive elements. We are reminded of the fragmenting force of perspective in Elstir's paintings, which on one occasion breaks up the fluid continuity of a river. I have already suggested that the Cubist method is both analytic and intuitive, and this is

[148] The problematics of thinking of another person as an object of either perception or epistemological inquiry will be considered in Chapter 4.

corroborated – if perhaps unwittingly – by Metzinger's oft-quoted assertion, published in *Paris-Journal* in 1911. The Cubists, he writes, 'se sont permis de tourner autour de l'objet pour en donner, sous le contrôle de l'intelligence, une représentation concrète faite de plusieurs aspects successifs. Le tableau possédait l'espace, voilà qu'il règne aussi dans la durée.'[149] What Metzinger describes is clearly a process of analysis: the artists move around the object and call on their intelligence in order to represent it, while this representation contains elements that appear in succession, like a chronophotograph. But Metzinger also appropriates Bergson's notion of *durée* as an inherent quality of Cubist practice. For Bergson, analysis corrupts *durée*; here, the suggestion is that they coincide. Moreover, if Cubist paintings, as has been argued above, are 'systems of signs to be read', they are inevitably durational not only in their mode of creation but in their mode of representation, like texts. This is in contrast to realist or even Impressionist painting, which is not intended to *represent* durational becoming, but rather a momentary snapshot.

In fact, this notion is not as un-Bergsonian as it might seem: Bergson *himself* seems to blur the distinction between analysis and intuition in his commentary on aesthetics. In *Le Rire*, of 1901, he suggests that artists have a privileged relation to reality – an argument much in the same vein as that in 'La Perception du changement', of 1911:

> Quel est l'objet d'art? Si la réalité venait frapper directement nos sens et notre conscience, si nous pouvions entrer en communication immédiate avec les choses et avec nous-mêmes, je crois bien que l'art serait inutile, ou plutôt que nous serions tous artistes, car notre âme vibrerait alors continuellement à l'unisson de la nature.[150]

But then comes a passage that does not make it into the later piece:

> Nos yeux, aidés de notre mémoire, *découperait* dans l'espace et *fixeraient* dans le temps des tableaux inimitables. Notre regard saisirait au passage, sculptés dans le marbre vivant du corps humain, des *fragments* de statue aussi beaux

[149] Jean Metzinger, 'Cubisme et tradition' [1911], reprinted in Apollinaire, *Les Peintres cubistes*, pp. 159-161 (p. 160).
[150] *Le Rire*, in *Œuvres*, pp. 383-485 (p. 459).

que ceux de la statuaire antique.[151]

This is curious: a direct perception of reality, it seems, would lead to precisely the kind of fixing and isolating of fragments that we associate with the domain of analysis. Piecing together these fragments of Bergsonian theory seems to suggest that a painting is an inherently durational object at the same time as being an inherently analytic one: on the one hand, it fixes and isolates moments from the continuing passage of time, while on the other it is inextricably tied to the durational process of its own invention.

What prevents these arguments from contradicting one another is the implication that a painting as analytic fragment has been *extracted* from a whole; it is not used to *recompose* a whole in a misguided attempt to arrive at an intuitive understanding. Painters do not make the mistake of philosophers and attempt to go 'de la partie au tout', but instead go *du tout à la partie*, so to speak. Yet there is no suggestion that art itself can in any way channel 'le tout'; it is always only a piece of that intuitive whole. For everyone but the artist, then, works of art must surely be analytic fragments – necessarily perspectival representations that can only ever circle *around* about the objects that they depict. And yet as Bergson himself argues, the best art enables the viewer to perceive reality in a manner similar to the artist; if the artist is successful, 'nous ne pourrons nous empêcher d'apercevoir dans la réalité ce qu'il y a vu lui-même'.[152] In short, artists pave the way for a quasi-intuitive mode of perception *through* the analytic medium of their paintings. Thus, when the narrator inspects Elstir's series of seascapes – an accumulation of perspectives of the Balbec coast – he reaches a new, quasi-intuitive understanding of both the fluid nature of the visible world and the fallible, durational nature of the means by which we perceive it. In all these senses, then, art emerges as an arena in which the conflict between analysis and intuition can be resolved.

### vi. Towards a synthesis

Resolved – or surpassed? There is another way of thinking the Martinville passage, and indeed all the works of art I have considered in this chapter, which takes the view that the goal of art is not only to reveal but to create – not so much to understand what already exists, but to bring something new into existence. This view looks

[151] Ibid.; my emphasis.
[152] 'Perception', pp. 183-184.

beyond the determined opposition of analysis and intuition, since the latter does not allow for the possibility that a process of analysis, as an accumulation of isolated elements, might also function as a process of synthesis, a bringing together that produces a new whole, greater than the sum of its parts. This, surely, is what we see in Cubism: despite the division of the Cubist chronology into 'analytic' and 'synthetic' phases, in reality the analytic paintings bring together as much as they break apart. The analytic Cubist painting should perhaps be understood not as a means of accessing some form of existing truth, whether successfully or not, but as an entirely new 'truth' in and of itself: a new way of perceiving, a new way of representing, and above all, a new art object. We might also conclude that in the context of the Martinville passage, analysis has the ability not so much or not only to lead to intuition, but to form a new, synthetic object or truth. Even if the episode could be definitively classified as analysis, it would not be reducible to its analytic elements: the experience of observing the towers is defined by movement and duration, and any attempt to isolate one of the many points of view through which the narrator must have passed while looking at them from the carriage must inevitably rob it of this essential characteristic. The narrator's later memory of having seen the towers 'se peindre sur le couchant' (II, 836) suggests we might think of them as some kind of self-creating work of art – a moving representation entirely distinct from the actual towers as one might look at them from the ground. By this argument, the Martinville belltowers are neither a collection of viewpoints nor a cloak for an essential truth, but something else, something apart – an entity unto themselves.

The narrator's eventual realisation about the nature of art seems to support this. In the lengthy essay on aesthetics that precedes the Guermantes *matinée* in *Le Temps retrouvé*, he declares that artistic truth lies not in surface descriptions of the visible world, but the skilful combination of two differing elements: 'la vérité ne commencera qu'au moment où l'écrivain prendra deux objets différents, posera leur rapport […] et les enfermera dans les anneaux nécessaires d'un beau style' (IV, 468). Truth lies not in any one object or scene but in the interstices between the two elements to be compared – in the *act* of comparison itself. As Gilles Deleuze argues:

> Étant qualité d'un monde, l'essence ne se confond jamais avec un objet, mais au contraire rapproche deux objets tout à fait différents, dont on s'aperçoit justement qu'ils ont cette qualité dans le milieu révélateur. En même temps

> que l'essence s'incarne dans une matière, la qualité ultime qui la constitue s'exprime donc comme la *qualité commune* à deux objets différents.[153]

Perhaps Gordon misses the point, then, when she accuses metaphor of being 'like a sieve'. The point of metaphor is not to capture meaning, but to create it – to enable something to emerge from the space between the two elements. Therein lies the ultimate success of Elstir's paintings: his innovation is to have developed a painterly technique 'analogue à [ce] qu'en poésie, on nomme métaphore', and it is through this technique that he creates the world anew (II, 191). It is a dynamic also embodied in involuntary memory, which in Gérard Genette's words, 'constitue pour Proust le fondement même du recours à la métaphore, en vertu de cette équivalence très simple selon quoi la métaphore est à l'art ce que la réminiscence est à la vie, rapprochement de deux sensations par le "miracle d'une analogie"'.[154] Out of this process of *rapprochement* will emerge whole worlds that had ceased to exist – or rather, the narrator suggests in the madeleine scene, these worlds will be *created* by the remembering mind. 'Chercher?' he writes; 'pas seulement: créer. [L'esprit] est en face de quelque chose qui n'est pas encore et que seul il peut réaliser, puis faire entrer dans sa lumière.' (I, 45) For Genette, this process is not only 'metaphorical' but *metonymical*. After the initial, quasi-metaphorical *rapprochement*, which he terms 'le *détonateur* analogique', comes 'une sorte de réaction en chaîne qui procède, non plus par analogie, mais bien par contiguïté'.[155] Thus, from the taste of the madeleine emerges the memory of aunt Léonie's bedroom, then that of her house and garden, then of the whole of Combray and its environs. After the initial shock or explosion of the 'metaphor' comes a process of metonymic, block-by-block construction.

The creation of the Martinville prose passage is like the metaphor-metonymy process writ large. In a manner that recalls the Futurists' aspirations to unite 'external and internal realities', it is the fruit of a process of subject-object coalescence, a synthesis of the observing subject and observed object into a new equation that creates both a writer and a piece of writing. First comes the 'spark' that belongs to the metaphorical axis ('j'éprouvai tout à coup ce plaisir spécial qui ne ressemblait à

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[153] *Proust et les signes* (Paris: Quadrige/Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), p. 61.
[154] *Figures III*, p. 55.
[155] Ibid., p. 56. The idea of a 'détonateur' recalls André Breton's suggestion that Surrealist metaphor creates a poetic spark or 'lumière de l'image'. The crucial difference is that, for Breton, this light can only be produced if the metaphor consists of two 'réalités distantes' – that is to say, of elements that have nothing in common (*Manifestes*, p. 49). This in its turn recalls Marinetti's idea of 'poetic analogy', mentioned in Section II.

aucun autre' (I, 177)); then comes the process of construction analogous to metonymy, in which a text is 'built'. And as we have seen, the prose passage does not stand alone, but is inextricably bound to the writing of the novel itself. If the Martinville episode provides the conditions of possibility for the narrator's great work – perhaps the very book we are reading – then this particular act of bringing together is one from which not only a short prose passage, but an entire novel will emerge.

Perhaps, then, we also miss the point when we search in vain for the elusive 'truth' that the narrator purports to have pinned down, which seems to slip from our grasp but which is in fact hidden in plain sight. What is essential about the passage is not what it conveys but what it *is*; the 'truth' of the episode is the passage itself. This conclusion can be understood as a corruption of a familiar metaphor: an art object should not be judged on its ability to provide a *window* into reality. Rather, in Proustian terms, it is more fittingly described as an *edifice*, a building:[156] as an object in its own right, which defines its own truth.

[156] The narrator talks on several occasions of his intention to construct his novel like a cathedral ('cet écrivain […] devrait préparer son livre minutieusement […] le construire comme une église' (IV, 609-610)), which, as Leonard observes, calls to mind Proust's own shelved idea of titling parts of his book in accordance with features of churches: '"Porche I, Vitraux de l'abside, etc"' (from a letter of 1919 to the Comte Jean de Gaigneron, via 'Modernist Visual Dynamics', p. 335).

# 2. Modes of Engagement: Windows, Vision, Representation

## Introduction: Redefining the Window

Having focused in Chapter 1 on the manner in which the artist perceives and understands the external world, I turn now to the ways in which the work of art itself is perceived and understood by its viewers. I structure my argument around the figure of the window, both as metaphor and motif, using it as a means of foregrounding the debate that was outlined in the introduction: that is, the complex relationship between *immersion in* and *awareness of* a work of art.

The conclusion to Chapter 1 implied that the metaphor of the work of art as a 'window' is ill-suited to the works under discussion in this thesis, and indeed, it is inextricably tied to a particular style of and attitude towards painting that seems to set it at odds with the modernist project. Now commonplace enough to have become something of a cliché, it has its origins in painting – specifically in Leon Battista Alberti's theory of linear perspective, the treatise *On Painting* of 1435, in which the author famously recounts 'inscrib[ing] a quadrangle of right angles [on the canvas], as large as I wish, which is considered to be an open window through which I see what I want to paint'.[1] Most windows in Renaissance Italy would not have had glass in them, and, when not shuttered, would have provided a direct visual 'thoroughfare' to the space beyond.[2] Alberti's window, then, is tied to an ideal of transparency; it presumes an act of directed, unimpeded seeing. The implication is that the linear perspective system makes painting 'window-like' by rendering a scene so lifelike that it appears contiguous with the space occupied by the viewer. Rooted as it is in the mimetic and the representational, we could be forgiven for assuming that the window metaphor was 'discredited by modernist abstraction', in Martin Jay's words, and thus had no currency for the artists under discussion here.[3] And yet the window was still prominent as a *motif* in the paintings of both the Cubist and the Surrealist movements, as Christopher Green and Susan Harris Smith, respectively,

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[1] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. by John R. Spencer (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1956 and 1966), p. 43.

[2] See, for example, Cathrin Senn, *Framed Views and Dual Worlds: The Motif of the Window as a Narrative Device and Structural Metaphor in Prose Fiction* (Berlin, New York, Oxford et al.: Peter Lang, 2000), p. 28: 'Only towards the middle of the nineteenth century did glass turn from a "rare, prohibitively expensive luxury" into "a reasonably priced, readily available material."'

[3] Jay, p. 244. Jay argues that the metaphor was 'revitalised' by André Breton in *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* – a usage that will be considered in due course.

have noted.[4] Of course, a picture *of* a window must be distinguished from a metaphor that casts the picture *as* a window. But given how deeply this metaphor is embedded in Western culture, it follows that the use of the window as a motif might acknowledge, comment on, or question the very equivalence between paintings and windows that the metaphor takes for granted. What might such a usage tell us about the evolution of the metaphor in a modernist context? How might it have been reappropriated and redefined? This line of inquiry, as we shall see in the analysis that follows, interweaves in productive ways with enduring questions about the representative function of art.

### i. Manifestations of the window metaphor

In the catalogue of an exhibition entitled *A Window on the World […] Looking Through the Window of Art from the Renaissance to Today*, held in Switzerland in 2013, Daniela Ferrari observes that the window metaphor is not always used in its strictly Albertian sense. 'Alberti's thinking serves as the *incipit* for a series of metaphors and variations on the theme,' she writes, 'that […] involve both the concept of the faithful reproduction of reality […] and a more abstract and conceptual elaboration.'[5] Ferrari is referring to painting, specifically – but the window, in its various forms, also has currency in writing. 'One can write nothing readable,' declared George Orwell in 1946, 'unless one constantly struggles to efface one's own personality. Good prose is like a windowpane.'[6] In Orwell's writing, the enduring ideal of 'transparency', in which the work gives an unimpeded view on to its subject matter, inevitably takes on political undertones; although it is depicted as a function of readability, the nature of Orwell's work implies it might also pertain to the ability – indeed, the responsibility – of art to enable 'vision' in the sense of understanding. 'Good prose' is like a window because it provides its reader with a clear view and thus knowledge of the world, uninflected by the presence of the author. In his choice of metaphor, Orwell implicitly (although not necessarily deliberately) endorses a long history of ocularcentrism, according to which seeing is synonymous with understanding, and the window, as a source of light, is also a source of truth.

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[4] 'The open window was to become one of the most ubiquitous Cubist devices of the twenties,' writes Green in *Cubism and its Enemies: Modern Movements and Reaction in French Art, 1916-1928* ((New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 20). Smith's article 'The Surrealists' Windows' (1984) will be considered in some detail later in this chapter.

[5] 'A Window Opened Onto the World: Frames as Windows… Windows as Frames' in *A Window on the World. From Dürer to Mondrian and Beyond: Looking Through the Window of Art from the Renaissance to Today*, Museo Cantonale d'Arte and Museo d'Arte, Lugano (Milan: Skira, 2012), p. 273.

[6] George Orwell, *Why I Write* (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 10.

Jean-Paul Sartre takes this equation one step further in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*, published two years after Orwell's text. 'Il y a prose,' he writes, 'quand […] le mot passe à travers notre regard comme le verre au travers du soleil.'[7] Here, the political inflections of the metaphor are made explicit. Prose can and should be 'travers[ée] comme une vitre' precisely because its primary purpose is to 'dévoiler' – to reveal the world, and thus to change it.[8] Seeing is not just synonymous with understanding, as Orwell implies, but with responsibility: prose renders us incapable of ignoring the truths and injustices that it reveals.[9] In this regard, it is opposed to poetry. Poetic language functions as an object in its own right, not as a means of revealing objects in the external world. Words for the poet are 'un piège pour attraper une réalité fuyante' – a means of reflecting that reality back like a mirror, rather than unveiling it, clearly and concretely, like a window.[10] When it comes to prose, 'puisque les mots sont transparents et que le regard les traverse,' it would be absurd to 'glisser parmi eux des vitres dépolies'.[11] The implication is that just such a 'vitre dépolie' stands between the words of a poem and its reader.

While these formulations seem to continue in the tradition that sees the window as a 'faithful reproduction of reality', as Ferrari puts it, Henry James had used a 'more abstract and conceptual' version of the metaphor several decades earlier. In his preface to the New York edition of *The Portrait of a Lady*, he famously envisages the art of fiction as a house with many windows, an artist standing at each of them: 'the house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million [...] every one of which has been pierced, [...] by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will.'[12] For James, the 'windows' offer a view on to a *subjective* reality that appears different to every individual looking at it. In his usage, the metaphor sidesteps objective, non-negotiable reality, and is deployed instead to illustrate nineteenth-century artistic interests in the nuances of individual perception and in the role of subjectivity as a framework for understanding the world.

How, then, did the original window metaphor and/or its subsequent variations serve Proust and the avant-gardists who are the subject of this study? The Futurists seem (rather predictably, perhaps) to have rejected any notion that the

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[7] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1948), p. 26.
[8] Ibid., pp. 19, 28.
[9] 'La fonction de l'écrivain est de faire en sorte que nul ne puisse ignorer le monde et que nul ne s'en puisse dire innocent' (ibid., pp. 29-30).
[10] Ibid., p. 20.
[11] Ibid., p. 30.
[12] Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* [Preface] (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995), p. 7.

metaphor could still have relevance: Boccioni, quoted in Chapter 1, had declared that 'we [Futurists] do not limit the scene to what the square frame of the window renders visible';[13] Severini, in his turn, had remarked that 'a picture will no longer be the faithful reproduction of a scene, enclosed in a window frame, but the realisation of a complex view of life or of things that live in space'.[14] And indeed, there are many reasons to suppose that the metaphor had no currency in a modernist context. Modernism's aesthetic developments make for a represented space very much at odds with the visually comprehensible world we observe from a window. Moreover, the example from Orwell suggests that the window can be read as a paradigm for precisely the sort of positivist ideology that was undermined by the 'epistemic crisis' considered in Chapter 1. The discoveries of the X-ray, radioactivity, and the electron had led to the unavoidable conclusion that the human eye was privy to only a fraction of reality, which undermined the emphasis Alberti had placed on *visible* space and on representing the seen world. ('No one would deny that the painter has nothing to do with things that are not visible,' he writes; 'the painter is concerned solely with representing what can be seen.')[15] Contemporaneous with and fueled by these discoveries was a current of scientific and mathematical speculation that popularised the idea that space might not be accurately explained by Euclid's theorems, and that it might contain more dimensions than the three that meet the eye. As Linda Dalrymple Henderson's extensive investigations have suggested, and as I indicated in both the Introduction and Chapter 1, theories of non-Euclidean geometry and of the so-called 'fourth dimension' seem to have been much talked of in the artistic and intellectual circles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Henderson's work has shown that the formal innovations of modernism developed against a backdrop of ideas that, if true, undermined the version of reality assumed by linear perspective, and dismissed the window as a pitifully inaccurate paradigm for the relationship of human beings to the world around them.

Yet Henderson has suggested that the window metaphor is still applicable to modernism: the modernist work of art is a 'window' that 'looks out' upon new and unfamiliar landscapes, revealing objects and spaces that do not exist in the three-dimensional world as we know it. Discussing Juan Gris's *Nature morte devant une fenêtre ouverte: Place Ravignan*, she observes that:

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[13] 'Exhibitors', p. 47.

[14] Via Simonetta Fracquelli and Christopher Green, *Gino Severini: From Futurism to Classicism* (London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 1999), p. 5.

[15] Alberti, p. 43.

> only the curtained window in the upper left corner is painted conventionally in light and shade. However, it is dwarfed by the other ranges of light in the painting, which thus makes a powerful commentary on the changed status of the window as source of visible light and, metaphorically, truth. Gris's *Still Life* and other cubist paintings are testament to a new paradigm of reality ushered in by the discovery of X-rays and interest in the fourth dimension. Such paintings are new kinds of 'windows' – in this case, into a complex, invisible reality or higher dimensional world as imagined by the artist.[16]

In this reading, the window's status as a positivist symbol is inverted: instead of revealing, it obfuscates and confuses, giving on to a world we do not know and cannot understand. This argument is convincing in all but one respect. Like many commentators, Henderson sees the window as an aperture in a wall, or other visual barrier, that allows the subject to *look out*, giving on to a reality that would otherwise be visually closed off. This, in my view, reveals a basic flaw in the metaphor as it is commonly used, which is its singular, limited definition of the window itself. In fact windows are multi-functional, multifarious objects, and there are many terms by which we might categorise the act of seeing or seeing through one. When we look *out* of a window, the external world is revealed, certainly, but it is also fragmented, delimited by the boundaries of the frame and obscured by muntins, window-dressings, and flaws in or on the glass itself. The windows of a moving vehicle offer up a reality in flux, changing and evolving with every passing second. The act of looking *in* through a window is inextricably linked to notions of voyeurism, but also to those of show and display: an uncurtained window in a home allows a glimpse into a private, forbidden space, while a shop window showcases commodities with the express intention of enticing us inside. Additionally, a window's primary function may be other than to be seen through. A skylight permits the control of light in an interior space but cannot inform our understanding of happenings outside (other than the weather or time of day); a window made from opaque glass is, by one reading, merely a differentiated section of wall, and by another, a tantalising blindfold that heightens our awareness of the very domain it hides. Stained-glass windows make the glass itself the focus of the gaze, which in a religious context

[16] Henderson, 'The Image and Imagination of the Fourth Dimension', *Configurations*, 17 (2009), 131-160, p. 146.

serves as a reminder of another reality, higher and worthier than the one that lies beyond the glass.

With the definition of the window thus expanded, there is no reason to assume that its worth as a metaphor was lost with the advent of modernism; to discount the metaphor entirely is to presuppose not only that the function of the window no longer corresponded to that of art, but that the window had only one function to begin with. The notion that what is enabled by the window – when it allows us to see at all – is not just a *sight*, but a *way of seeing*, corresponds neatly to the values inherent in many modernist works, which sought not merely to pinpoint new objects of sight, but to rethink the very idea of vision. Jose Ortega y Gasset illustrates this in his 1925 essay *The Dehumanization of Art*, when he correlates the respective possibilities of looking *through* and looking *at* a window with the contrasting ways of looking required by twentieth-century works of art and those that preceded them:

> To see a thing we must adjust our visual apparatus in a certain way. […] Take a garden seen through a window. Looking at the garden we adjust our eyes in such a way that the ray of vision travels through the pane without delay and rests on the shrubs and flowers. Since we are focusing on the garden and our ray of vision is directed toward it, we do not see the window but look clear through it. The purer the glass, the less we see it. But we can also deliberately disregard the garden and, withdrawing the ray of vision, detain it at the window. We then lose sight of the garden; what we still behold of it is a confused mass of colour which appears pasted to the pane. Hence to see the garden and to see the windowpane are two incompatible operations which exclude one another because they require different adjustments.[17]

A similar 'adjustment in visual apparatus', he continues, is needed to understand the twentieth-century work of art. In order to understand the new art, we must stop looking *through* it:

> A work of art vanishes from sight for a beholder who seeks in it nothing but the moving fate of John and Mary or Tristan and Isolde and adjusts his vision

[17] José Ortega y Gasset, 'The Dehumanization of Art' in *The Dehumanization of Art and Notes on the Novel*, trans. by Helene Weyl (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1948), p. 10.

> to this. [...] Not many people are capable of adjusting their perceptive apparatus to the pane and the transparency that is the work of art. Instead they look right though it and revel in the human reality with which the work deals.[18]

Ortega's assertion stands in direct contrast to Alberti, partly because it no longer seemed possible or desirable to endorse Alberti's assertion that a painting must be 'seen through', but also because technological developments in glass production had altered the function of the window itself, ushering in a new manifestation of the metaphor. The glazed window is here seen to be an appropriate symbol for modernist abstraction: in drawing our attention to its materiality as well as what it portrays, the abstract work of art functions like a *seen* window, a window-object, rather than a mere transparency.

### ii. Illusion vs. awareness

The conflict between these two modes of viewing – looking *at* and looking *through* – has a long cultural history, which I briefly touched on in the thesis introduction. It is emblematic of an enduring debate as to whether we should think of artworks primarily as representations or primarily as objects in the world, and the extent to which these identities coincide. Thomas Baldwin summarises the problem as follows:

> Do I see through the canvas to the object portrayed there, or can I also, or simultaneously, attend to the signifying, material substance of the picture? When I read a novel, while I may not actually see the object *in* the words, in what sense, if at all, am I able to see *through* the words to the object they appear to describe?[19]

In *Downcast Eyes*, Martin Jay (citing the work of Svetlana Alpers) suggests that the problem goes back at least to the Renaissance, arguing that a split along precisely these lines can be detected between the Dutch and Italian painterly traditions. Dutch Renaissance painting, in his words, was 'not as taken [as its Italian counterpart] with the reverse pyramid on the other side of the window'; it 'accepted the materiality of

[18] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[19] *Spectre*, p. 7.

the canvas and the paint on it far more readily than did Italian'.[20] By this token, the 'adjustment in visual apparatus' that Ortega describes is not required solely in the arena of modernism.

As Marian Hobson recounts in *The Object of Art*, the approach favoured by the Italian tradition fell drastically out of favour in the twentieth century. 'The illusion of art,' she writes,

> has often been characterised by a scornful twentieth century as a fascination, a passive trance in front of a work which has effaced all trace of its production […] a branch of the bourgeois drug trade, to lull the consumer from all critical spirit and even all activity, to envelop him and insulate him, to act as a diving bell in which the plunge into unreality may be effected.[21]

W. J. T. Mitchell makes a similar claim for the field of ekphrasis, describing the phenomenon of 'ekphrastic fear' as the moment in ekphrastic theory in which 'the utopian figures of the image and its textual rendering as transparent windows onto reality are supplanted by the notion of the image as a deceitful illusion, a magical technique that threatens to fixate the poet and the listener.'[22] For the critic 'fearful' of ekphrasis, the traditional window metaphor is no mere cliché, but an object of suspicion. What is at stake, presumably, is the very stability of the material world, which risks being supplanted by a virtual one unless sufficient care is taken. If this is indeed a genuine risk, it is surely not limited to ekphrasis, but must be inherent in all 'transparent' art forms, whether textual or visual. The immersive model becomes dishonest and immoral; to see the art form as a 'pure aperture' is to allow the mutual contamination of two domains that should not, at least beyond a certain point, be breached.[23]

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[20] Jay, pp. 60-61.

[21] Marian Hobson, *The Object of Art: The Theory of Illusion in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 3.

[22] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 156.

[23] The moral necessity behind this is, of course, highly debatable; this position seems largely like a melodramatic overstatement of the human ability either to engage with art and writing or to transcend the material world. That said, it does have a certain prophetic legitimacy in that it foreshadows contemporary debates about new and potential augmented reality technologies, which often involve predictions of a dystopian future in which computer images are so inextricably connected to the human visual faculty that it is no longer possible to distinguish between the virtual and the material. Most episodes of Charlie Brooker's television science fiction series *Black Mirror* (2011—), for example, engage with this fear in some way.

For Hobson, this militant rejection of illusion in modern criticism is misguided because it 'fails to take into account the dialectic between representation and form, between imaginative tissue and awareness of production'.[24] Her critique would presumably extend to Ortega, who allows for no such dialectic; for him, the acts of looking *through* and looking *at* are 'incompatible operations that exclude one another'. In this schema, the reader or viewer cannot attend to the literal, formal properties of the image or text at the same time as its narrative or representational properties. Ortega's view anticipates that of the art historian and theorist E. H. Gombrich. 'Is it possible to "see" both the plane surface and the battle horse at the same time?' Gombrich asks. 'The demand is for the impossible. To understand the battle horse is for a moment to disregard the plane surface. We cannot have it both ways.'[25] This 'bipolar' approach, in which '*either* the physical matter *or* the imaginative tissue of the work is present to us at one time', is countered by a more nuanced, 'bimodal' one, in which awareness of the materiality of a work of art intersects with implication in what it depicts.[26] Barthes, for example, argues in *Le Plaisir du texte* that 'le lecteur peut dire sans cesse: "je sais bien que ce ne sont que des mots, mais tout de même … (je m'émeus comme si ces mots énonçaient une réalité)"'.[27] This Hobson describes as 'an oscillation' in which 'involvement and consciousness run together and succeed each other'.[28]

The idea of an oscillation between these two modes of engagement will be a thread that runs through this chapter. It raises the possibility that modernist works of art might not function exclusively as 'seen windows' – that there might also be a sense in which they 'double back' towards a more immersive, transparent model. Examining the ways in which Proust and his avant-garde contemporaries interrogate and subvert the classic metaphor enables me to use the figure of the window as a means of navigating an indeterminate space in which the work of art is both transparent mediator and material, visible surface. In this regard, my argument here will continue in the same vein as Chapter 1, by exploring the ways in which a boundary between two apparently distinct states (there, intuition and analysis; here, immersion and awareness) is blurred or transcended. These questions will again be

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24 Hobson, pp. 4-5. Baldwin also sees this position as mistaken: 'all resolutely anti-mimetic, pro-literality arguments implode as soon [as] they seek to amputate a term from what is (at least) a dialectical process' (*Spectre*, p. 8).

25 E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London: Phaidon Press, 1960), p. 237.

26 Hobson, p. 23.

27 Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973), p. 76.

28 Hobson, pp. 7-8.

examined with reference to Proust's fictional painter, Elstir, as well as to the intersection of Elstir's imagined painterly strategies with Proust's own textual ones. I then turn to real-life paintings by Robert Delaunay and René Magritte, which I argue use the *motif* of the window as a means of commenting on and interrogating the metaphor. Finally, I consider Proust's textual description of windows that appear to be 'like paintings', rather than the reverse.

## I. Elstir's Textual Paintings

Proust uses his fictional painter Elstir to thematise the immersion-awareness debate in a variety of ways. Two comedic moments, for example, send up an attachment to realist mimesis among the supposedly cultivated classes, which renders them incapable of grasping the significance of Elstir's work. The first is in 'Un Amour de Swann', when Mme Cottard disparages Elstir (known as Biche at this point in the narrative) in favour of the (now largely forgotten) society portrait painter, Jules-Louis Machard. A recent portrait by the latter, she declares to Swann, 'fait courir tout Paris'; she herself is an enthusiastic member of 'le camp de ceux qui approuvent' (I, 368):

> Moi, je le trouve idéal. Évidemment elle ne ressemble pas aux femmes bleues et jaunes de notre ami Biche. Mais je dois vous l'avouer franchement, vous ne me trouverez pas très fin de siècle, mais je le dis comme je le pense, je ne comprends pas. Mon Dieu, je reconnais les qualités qu'il y a dans le portrait de mon mari, c'est moins étrange que ce qu'il fait d'habitude, mais il a fallu qu'il lui fasse des moustaches bleues. Tandis que Machard! […] je trouve que la première qualité d'un portrait, surtout quand il coûte dix mille francs, est d'être ressemblant et d'une ressemblance agréable. (I, 368-369)

Mme Cottard's assessment is both outmoded and paradoxical: portraiture, she declares blithely, must always be both realistic *and* pleasing to the eye. Her pompous fawning over Machard is rivalled in ignorance by a later remark made by (the supposedly more refined) M. de Guermantes:

> Swann avait le toupet de vouloir nous faire acheter une *Botte d'asperges*. Elles sont même restées ici quelques jours. Il n'y avait que cela dans le tableau, une botte d'asperges précisément semblables à celles que vous êtes en train d'avaler. Mais moi, je me suis refusé à avaler les asperges de M. Elstir. Il en demandait trois cents francs. Trois cent francs, une botte d'asperges! Un louis, voilà ce que ça vaut, même en primeurs! (II, 790-791)

In his conviction that a painting of a bunch of (fresh) asparagus is qualitatively no different to the actual, cooked asparagus on the narrator's dinnerplate, M. de Guermantes confuses the image with its referent to the point of absurdity. His reaction is particularly ridiculous if Elstir's *Botte d'asperges*, as critics have suggested, is intended as a nod towards Manet's 1880 painting of the same name, since the latter's proto-Impressionist developments were a catalyst for the movement *away* from mimesis: if Elstir's asparagus look anything like Manet's, then, they are not 'précisément semblables' to those the narrator is eating.[29] M. de Guermantes's equation of a painting's worth with the monetary value of its subject matter is based on a determination to see mimesis where there is none: his behaviour is no less farcical than Mme Cottard's outdated attachment to pictorial resemblance and her enthusiasm for second-rate portraiture.

Proust's message is clear: painting is about more than just resemblance. Needless to say, the narrator's own discussions of Elstir's paintings and their processes of representation are considerably more nuanced. He is frequently both taken with their subject matter *and* attentive to the artist's method and rationale: his description of the *Port de Carquethuit*, for example, is exacting and analytic, intended to demonstrate the perceived intentions of the painter and the effects of these on the viewer rather than to offer a textual imitation of what he sees. We might, in this instance, describe him as hyper-aware of the workings of the painting in question, to the point of being oblivious to any mimetic function.[30] But the actual objects depicted

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[29] A frequently-cited anecdote seems to confirm that Elstir's painting is based on Manet's: in real life, Manet sold his *Botte d'asperges* to Charles Ephrussi (a model for Charles Swann), who paid him 1000 francs instead of the asked-for 800. Manet's response was to paint another asparagus spear, which he sent to Ephrussi with an explanatory note: 'il en manquait une à votre botte.' (Via Yoshikawa, p. 310.) 'With a wry sleight of hand,' writes Eric Karpeles, 'Proust fashioned a tiny morality play from this charming vignette […] transform[ing] an anecdote about largesse into a tale of arrogant refusal, using a beautiful small painting as a touchstone to expose the unpredictable behaviour of *le beau monde*.' (pp. 13-14.)

[30] That said, although the narrator is attentive to the artist's intentions, he does not actually comment on the physical properties of the canvas itself. In J. M. Cocking's words, 'he never tells us whether Elstir's surfaces were as smooth as Renoir's or as rough as Monet's, of which Renoir remarked that you could strike a match on them.' (p. 133.) Gabrielle Townsend has also pointed out the lack of colour in

in the picture – the boats, the buildings, the people – are merely secondary, tools by which the painter communicates a broader vision. The *real* subject of the painting is precognitive vision, and in this the narrator unquestioningly believes, even as he applies his intellectual scrutiny to the surface of the canvas. We saw in Chapter 1 that there is some doubt as to whether precognitive vision communicates 'reality' ('la nature telle qu'elle est') or illusion ('ces illusions optiques dont notre vision première est faite') but what is not in doubt is the narrator's belief in its status as a real-world phenomenon (II, 191-194). And yet he is also *aware* of this belief and of his investment in the ideas at play, and proves it by offering examples of their relation to his own prior experience. He is immersed in the painting, but self-consciously so.

But of course, this is not really a painting: it is an ekphrastic description of one. There is much to suggest that this 'upper' level of representation, the text itself, is 'transparent' – that 'les mots passent à travers notre regard', as Sartre puts it. In his introduction to *The Picture as Spectre*, Baldwin identifies two distinct critical approaches to literary ekphrasis, the first of which is the domain of the 'art spotter': 'a form of detective labour that results in a precise identification of the "real" work of art described by the text'. This method effaces the text, which is 'construed as a transparent linguistic window'.[31] Many critics have approached the *Port de Carquethuit* from this direction, trying to pinpoint the actual painting or paintings hidden behind the words, as we saw in Chapter 1; the Pléiade edition prompts the reader's inner eye by providing a list of possibilities in its footnote to the passage (II, 1436). But Juliette Monnin-Hornung's contention that 'cette toile surchargée' must be modelled on 'six tableaux au moins' suggests, in fact, that it should be understood less as a picture than as a prop for a piece of writing.[32] If the *Port de Carquethuit* is really an impossible painting, which can have no real-world referent (and in Mieke Bal's words, 'de toute évidence, il ne saurait s'agir d'un art plastique référentiel dans la description du tableau'),[33] would we not be better off directing our critical energy to the workings of the text itself, rather than to whatever image that text is able to convey? (I am not suggesting that this is Monnin-Hornung's view; she herself goes

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Proust's description ('there is no attempt to describe the sky in terms of colour other than black and white'), which she attributes to the likelihood that the description was inspired, in part, by *reproductions* of Turner's paintings (*Imaginary Museum*, pp. 88-89). As Mieke Bal puts it, 'ce n'est pas à l'aide du verre grossissant du connaisseur […] que Proust présente les nombreuses œuvres d'art qui interviennent […] dans *La recherche* […] Proust n'est pas quelqu'un à qui on se fierait pour l'achat du grand art.' (*Images*, p. 19.)

[31] *Spectre*, p. 1.

[32] Monnin-Hornung, p. 75.

[33] *Images*, p. 25.

on to guess at the identities of the six-plus paintings in question).[34] The same note in the Pléiade edition asserts that 'on ne saurait "voir" *Le Port de Carquethuit*, pas plus qu'on ne peut "entendre" la *Sonate* de Vinteuil'; the painting is not present in the text to be 'seen' (II, 1436). In this regard, the episode might be better served by the second critical approach that Baldwin pinpoints, which 'understands ekphrasis in terms of outright textual obliteration – an "outdoing" – of the painted work. The latter disappears, overwhelmed by the seas of language.'[35] Here the ekphrastic description is figured as a sort of opaque covering – the opposite of a 'transparent linguistic window'.

But this approach does not quite fit our purposes either. Proust's text is still clearly descriptive; it is the sheer volume of goings-on within the painting described that creates problems for the 'art spotter', not the obfuscating virtuosity of a text that wants to steal the limelight for itself. But there *is* still a sense in which the painting has been effaced. This is because the primary purpose of the text is not, ultimately, to describe a painting, but to describe a mode of attention – not to make us 'see', but to explain a *concept* of vision. *Seeing through* the text does not, in this case, mean 'seeing' the painting; it means understanding and believing in the mode of attention that the painting seeks to convey. The painting and its creator are vehicles that enable Proust to put forward a broader perceptual manifesto. The 'effacement' (or perhaps 'demotion') of the painting functions, therefore, as another form of transparency – for if we as readers are to subscribe to this manifesto, the ekphrastic act must be seen not to have happened. We must look straight *through* the text and focus on the narrator, who conveys these perceptual principles by both looking *through* the canvas to its subject – precognitive vision – and looking *at* the representational techniques that the painting employs.

Yet the mode of attention that is revealed by looking through the text also reflects back on the *workings* of that text. The entire description is intended to demonstrate the way Elstir employs a technique 'analogue à celle qu'en poésie on nomme métaphore', using, for example 'des termes marins' for the town and 'des termes urbains' for the sea (II, 191-192). As my conclusion to Chapter 1 suggested, his use of metaphor is emblematic of a broader dynamic that also underpins involuntary memory, and which the narrator will eventually exalt as a route to artistic truth. Elstir's painting, then, gestures towards what is both an artistic ideal

[34] See Monnin-Hornung, pp. 93-94.
[35] *Spectre*, p. 2.

and a structuring principle of the text in which it is situated. In Sophie Bertho's analysis, 'on retrouve […] dans la peinture d'Elstir, dans ces "métamorphoses", le rapport métaphorique fondé sur l'analogie qui a la prééminence absolue dans l'écriture proustienne […] La peinture d'Elstir synthétise, symbolise la poétique proustienne.'[36] By this analysis, to look through the writing of this passage is to have our attention redirected to the macro-level workings of the text as a whole. This process is bolstered by micro-level references to language more generally. As well as the reference to metaphor, the narrator discusses Elstir's process of naming and unnaming – his creation of a new reality based on removing or replacing the names of the objects he paints: 'si Dieu le Père avait créé les choses en les nommant, c'est en leur ôtant leur nom, ou en leur en donnant un autre qu'Elstir les recréait' (II, 191). Meta-linguistic references such as this are like the flaws in a pane of glass that remind us of its presence and prevent its being entirely, invisibly transparent; here, they enable the text to assert its presence through autoreferentiality. Like the *Port de Carquethuit* itself, then, the text can be understood as both transparent and not: our two modes of attention – immersion and awareness, looking through and looking at – do not cancel each other out, but coexist as a complex, multilayered structure.

A few pages after the description of the *Port de Carquethuit*, the narrator discovers a watercolour depiction of a young woman, entitled *Miss Sacripant*, which dates from an earlier stage of Elstir's career (in a departure from habit, Proust provides an actual date of execution: 1872). Once again, the narrator is captivated. But he is initially captivated by the *model*, not by Elstir's *depiction* of her. The painting, he writes,

> me causa cette sorte particulière d'enchantement que dispensent ces œuvres non seulement d'une exécution délicieuse, mais aussi d'un sujet si singulier et si séduisant que c'est à lui que nous attribuons une partie de leur charme, comme si, ce charme, le peintre n'avait eu qu'à le découvrir, qu'à l'observer, matériellement réalisé déjà dans la nature et à le reproduire. (II, 203)

This is the older narrator's voice, providing a retrospective commentary on – or an excuse for – his younger self's desire to look through the image to the object it depicts.

[36] Sophie Bertho, 'Asservir l'image, fonctions du tableau dans le récit' in *L'Interprétation détournée: Proust, Magritte/Foucault, Beckett, Robbe-Grillet, Coetzee, Calvino*, ed. by Leo H. Hoek (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), pp. 25-36 (pp. 32-33).

Deriving a general rule about human behaviour from his own experience of viewing the painting, he declares that our belief in the existence of such singular and seductive objects, which are 'beaux en dehors même de l'interprétation du peintre', satisfies an innate tendency towards materialism ('un matérialisme inné') that exists in defiance of our reason, and which counterbalances '[les] abstractions de l'esthétique' (II, 203). He is suggesting that we have a natural inclination to equate the image with the material object it depicts: if a painting enchants us (as in this case) or bores us (as in the case of M. de Guermantes), we assume it is because its subject matter is enchanting or boring. To separate the two, he says, is a work of the intellect. The younger narrator has not yet realised this, and proves it a few pages later when he tells Elstir he would love to visit Carquethuit, 'sans penser que le caractère si nouveau qui se manifestait avec tant de puissance dans le "Port de Carquethuit" d'Elstir tenait peut-être plus à la vision du peintre qu'à un mérite spécial de cette plage' (II, 209-210). The temporal gap between the experience of looking and its rendering in the text allows the narrator to comment – as so often in the *Recherche* – on the actions and views of his younger self. In this instance, it enables him to position himself in relation to the conflict between looking *through* and looking *at*, by equating the former with a less mature stage in his own intellectual development. Making a retrospective assessment of his earlier mode of engaging with the image, he subtly accuses his younger self of an attitude comparable to that of Mme Cottard and M. de Guermantes. The episode does not just contain a textual rendering of an image, then, but an implicit aesthetic manifesto.

Moreover, the narrator's attempt to focus on the subject matter is complicated by the latter's ambiguity. Failing to live up to Mme Cottard's high standards, the portrait is not 'ressemblant', since the narrator can only take a wild guess at the model's identity (it is, in fact, an image of a very young Odette Swann) – nor, we must assume, would Mme Cottard find it particularly 'agréable', since the model is dressed as a man. Her androgyny means the narrator can never quite be certain of exactly who or what he is looking at ('je ne savais pas exactement ce que j'avais sous les yeux' (II, 204)). The model's gender seems both to declare and obscure itself, fluctuating between one category and another: 'le long des lignes du visage, le sexe avait l'air d'être sur le point d'avouer qu'il était celui d'une fille un peu garçonnière, s'évanouissant, et plus loin se retrouvait, suggérant plutôt l'idée d'un jeune efféminé vicieux et songeur, puis fuyait encore, restait insaisissable.' (II, 205) This is the principle of precognitive vision in action once again: painting what he sees rather

than what he knows has prevented Elstir from fixing his model in a definitive, recognisable category, creating an aesthetic of visual indeterminacy. In fact, he has deliberately highlighted the androgyny and ambiguity of his subject matter, regardless of any social or moral questions that this might raise: 'on sentait qu'Elstir, insoucieux de ce que pouvait présenter d'immoral ce travesti d'une jeune actrice […] s'était au contraire attaché à ces traits d'ambiguïté comme à un élément esthétique qui valait d'être mis en relief et qu'il avait tout fait pour souligner.' (II, 204-205) Elstir has made a specific effort, it seems, to thwart the attempts of the naïve viewer determined to look *through*.

Proust himself has done something similar in his depiction of Elstir and his *œuvre*; what is more, he has done so in a way that seems to reference avant-garde practice. He tells us that the painting of Miss Sacripant is dated 1872, and is contemporaneous with numerous portraits by Manet and Whistler; the studio visit itself seems to be occurring some time in the 1890s. Yet in a manner comparable to the episode featuring the Hubert Robert fountain, the narrator's own commentary on the painting seems inflected with Cubism. Mme Swann is unrecognisable as the subject of the painting, we are told, because Elstir has disrupted the carefully cultivated unity of her outer appearance, rearranging her traits according to his own vision:

> Le génie artistique agit à la façon de ces températures extrêmement élevées qui ont le pouvoir de dissocier les combinaisons d'atomes et de grouper ceux-ci suivant un ordre absolument contraire, répondant à un autre type. Toute cette harmonie factice que la femme a imposée à ses traits et dont chaque jour avant de sortir elle surveille la persistance dans sa glace, chargeant l'inclinaison du chapeau, le lissage des cheveux, l'enjouement du regard, d'en assurer la continuité, cette harmonie, le coup d'œil du grand peintre la détruit en une seconde, et à sa place il fait un regroupement des traits de la femme. (II, 216)

It is as if Cubism has influenced Proust's thinking about the art that preceded it, so that Elstir's work becomes stranded in chronological limbo. At the very end of this passage, however, the narrator declares that the painter's tendency to rearrange the model's features '[donne] satisfaction à un certain idéal féminin et pictural qu'il porte en lui' (II, 216). This sounds less like Cubism than the idealism of the Romantics.

Information provided by Mme Cottard confuses the issue still further: at around the time he painted Odette Swann, Elstir – or rather 'Biche' – was rendering the subjects of his portraits (including Dr. Cottard) in blue and yellow, suggesting not the more subdued tones of Manet or Whistler, but the post-Impressionist or Fauvist palettes of Van Gogh or Matisse. And yet the description of the *Port de Carquethuit* – a much more recent painting – reads like a mid-nineteenth-century genre scene even as it propounds a late Turnerian, impressionistic aesthetic.[37] As Monnin-Hornung notes, Elstir's *œuvre* is 'une suite de tableaux très différents, qui ne paraissent pas fortement unis par une esthétique commune'.[38] Just as the *Port de Carquethuit* is an 'impossible' painting, then, so Elstir is an 'impossible' painter. We cannot look *through* Proust's text to a logical, comprehensible gallery of imagined paintings that follow a real-life art historical trajectory. Elstir's images exist only in, not beyond the text, in a virtual aesthetic space all of their own. This problematises Sartre's claim that prose takes us 'au-delà des mots, près de l'objet': Proust's prose dangles the 'object' before us, only for it to fragment irretrievably when we look more closely.[39]

Moreover, these paintings are motivated: they are not served by the text, but serve it. The 'femmes bleues et jaunes' and the *Botte d'asperges* highlight the stupidity, respectively, of Mme Cottard and M. de Guermantes. The *Port de Carquethuit* foreshadows the narrator's later pronouncements on the importance of metaphor and enables him to articulate a concept of perception that is adopted into his own literary aesthetic. *Miss Sacripant* is loaded with intra-textual references: revealing another of Odette's numerous identities, it accords with the recurrent theme of the inherent multiplicity of human beings, while also harking back to earlier discussions of her sexuality and 'loose' morals, and anticipating the narrator's later preoccupation with the same issues as they concern Albertine, whom he is on the point of meeting. Thus, these textual paintings – or references to paintings – are not just concerned with painting as a genre, even if they do provide fodder for the 'art spotter': their primary purpose is arguably to draw our attention to the broader concerns of the text in which they are situated, helping it to assert its identity as an object in its own right, rather than just a window onto other objects.[40] Proust's text

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[37] J. Theodore Johnson gives a damning assessment of Elstir's *chef d'œuvre*: in his view, it is 'little more than a terribly overcrowded studio piece heavily charged with nineteenth-century picturesqueness', and 'one of the all-time outstanding examples of kitsch' (Johnson, pp. 28-29).

[38] Monnin-Hornung, p. 80.

[39] *Littérature*, p. 19.

[40] As well as detecting numerous possible sources for the *Port de Carquethuit*, Monnin-Hornung also suggests that *Miss Sacripant* could have been inspired by Renoir's *Madame Henriot en page* (1875-1877), or Whistler's *Connie Gilchrist* (1873) or *Lady Archibald Campbell déguisée en Orlando* (c. 1884), all images

practises what it preaches. Through parody, description, analysis, and self-assessment, he has told us that the act of engaging with a painting is not a simple matter of looking *through* (or, indeed, of looking *at*). If we consider them closely, these very passages tell us the same thing about reading, by deflecting our attempts to look through the text to the images – and the artist – it describes.

## II. Robert Delaunay: Self-Referentiality and Abstraction

The work of the painter Robert Delaunay provides an interesting counterpart to Proust's layered construction of textual and painterly 'seen windows'. Delaunay was a contemporary of the Cubists, and his work is often grouped with theirs. This is significant because Cubism is often seen as the point of origin for what Hobson calls the twentieth century's 'scorn' for artistic illusion, and the shift in focus to the representation over the represented (even though, as Vargish and Mook point out, many critics 'would want the credit shared with movements and individuals preceding and paralleling Cubism' – namely Impressionism).[41] Cubism, Gombrich contends, 'is the most radical attempt to stamp out ambiguity and to enforce one reading of the picture – that of a man-made construction, a coloured canvas' (238).[42] As Sartre argues in *L'Imaginaire*, 'on a coutume, depuis le cubisme, de déclarer que le tableau ne doit pas *représenter* ou *imiter* le réel mais qu'il doit constituer par lui-même un objet.'[43]

There are two oversights inherent in this 'coutume'. For one thing, it presupposes a total lack of external referent in Cubist painting, which is simply not the case: the referent or referents may be fragmented to the point of being almost unrecognisable, but it does not follow that they are not there at all. For another, the fact that we do not *recognise* the represented reality does not mean there *is* no represented reality, and that the painting functions only as an object in the actual world, rather than as the container of a virtual world. Sartre goes on to argue that we commit a 'grave erreur' by thinking of Cubist and post-Cubist painting exclusively as an object:

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of women dressed as men. 'Miss Sacripant' also holds a straw hat against her knee – a motif frequently seen in Whistler's work, as in his portraits *Harmony in Grey and Green: Miss Cicely Alexander* (1873) and *Arrangement in Brown and Black: Portrait of Miss Rosa Corder* (1876-1878) (p. 98-99).

[41] Vargish and Mook, p. 61.

[42] Gombrich, p. 238.

[43] Sartre, *L'Imaginaire* [1940] (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), pp. 366-367.

> L'objet réel ne fonctionne plus comme analogon d'un bouquet de fleurs ou d'une clairière. Mais […] ce tableau fonctionne encore comme *analogon*. Simplement ce qui se manifeste à travers lui c'est un ensemble irréel de *choses neuves*, d'objets que je n'ai jamais vus ni ne verrai jamais mais qui n'en sont pas moins des objets irréels, des objets qui n'existent point *dans le tableau*, ni nulle part dans le monde, mais qui se manifestent à travers la toile.[44]

In other words, the painting can still be looked *through*, however abstract it is – it is just that the reality we look into does not resemble our own. Like Elstir, the Cubist painter creates a new world by undoing familiar systems of recognition and representation. This recalls Henderson's suggestion, quoted in the introduction to this chapter, that the Cubist painting is still a window, but one that gives on to a different version of reality, full of unrecognisable objects and spatial configurations. Delaunay himself suggested much the same thing of his own more abstract works, speaking of the paintings in his *Fenêtres* series as 'des fenêtres sur une nouvelle réalité'.[45]

Delaunay's relationship to Cubism is not straightforward, but much of his work is certainly *cubistic*, particularly his series of studies of the Eiffel Tower, produced between 1910 and 1911.[46] The later *Fenêtres* series, however, of 1912-1913, would move away from the Cubists' preoccupation with form; the paintings are studies of colour that verge on total abstraction. Apollinaire termed Delaunay's work 'Orphism', or Orphic Cubism, which he describes in *Les Peintres cubistes* as 'l'art de peindre des ensembles nouveaux avec des éléments empruntés non à la réalité visuelle, mais entièrement créés par l'artiste'.[47] Yet if we accept Sartre's argument, there must be some kind of *réalité* conveyed by the images, even if they do not match

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[44] Ibid., p. 366.

[45] Robert Delaunay, *Du Cubisme à l'art abstrait*, ed. by Pierre Francastel (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1957), p. 66.

[46] Virginia Spate suggests that the 'diagrammatic thrusts of light', which break into the structure of the tower itself, 'could have been influenced by the Futurists' ideas on the way light and movement can dynamically penetrate solid bodies' (Spate, p. 174).

[47] *Peintres cubistes*, p. 57. As well as Delaunay, Apollinaire included Fernand Léger, Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp under this epithet. Yet the term 'Orphism' gives the misleading impression of a united, cohesive movement; in reality, many of the painters rejected the term. Virginia Spate notes that 'only Picabia and Delaunay accepted the designation, and Delaunay tried to limit it to his own kind of painting. Later he claimed that Apollinaire's invention of the term was simply an art-political manœuvre designed to present the avant-garde as a united front, and there is some truth in this assertion.' Nevertheless, she continues, 'Apollinaire had perceived the first stirrings of something that was very real – an art which would dispense with recognizable subject-matter and would rely on form and colour alone to communicate meaning.' (Spate, pp. 1-2.)

the appearance of the material world. What do we find, then, when we look into the 'reality' of paintings like these?

### i. The *Tour* series

In this more cubistic series, Delaunay presents numerous perspectives of the tower on the singular plane of the canvas, breaking it into fragments and reshuffling its composite parts. Indeed, as Sherry A. Buckberrough has observed, the Eiffel Tower is a particularly appropriate subject for a cubistic study, since its omnipresence on the Parisian skyline means it is visible all over the city, the optical centre of an extensive network of shifting sightlines.[48] In drawing together multiple views of the tower, Delaunay's studies subvert Alberti's assertion that 'the painter is concerned solely with representing what can be seen' – and yet they do not quite uphold Apollinaire's argument that Orphist paintings have nothing to do with 'réalité visuelle'. Clearly, the presence of a recognisable referent means Delaunay is at least partly concerned with *what* can be seen – but as in the *Port de Carquethuit*, the seen object functions as a metonym for a *way of seeing*, a tool with which to explore the nature of vision itself. Like the Cubists, Delaunay's interest at this stage lies in the multiple manifestations of objects as they are seen and experienced over time, or simultaneously from several viewpoints, rather than from the singular, static viewpoint of traditional perspectival painting. As well as a visual object, the Eiffel Tower is an elevated viewing platform from which the city itself can be observed, as is implied in several of the studies by the tiny apartment buildings around the base of the tower. It is presented, then, not only as a seen object but as a subject that sees; the images visualise Barthes's observation that 'la Tour [...] transgresse cette séparation, ce divorce ordinaire du voir et de *l'être vu*'.[49] Delaunay celebrates the tower as an emblem of the Cubist redefinition of vision, now thought of as a process that far exceeds the limited sensory capacity of individuals.

Interestingly for our purposes, Delaunay's depictions of the tower seem to have been partly inspired by the view from a window, after his friend, the poet Blaise Cendrars, spent time bedridden in a Paris hotel room in 1910 (or 1911 – the exact date is unclear), having broken his leg. Fortuitously, the window of this room gave on to the Eiffel Tower. Cendrars recalls in his essay *Aujourd'hui* that Delaunay 'venait

[48] Sherry A. Buckberrough, *Robert Delaunay: The Discovery of Simultaneity* (Essex: Bowker Publishing, 1978), p. 57.

[49] Roland Barthes, 'La Tour Eiffel' in *Œuvres Complètes: Tome I, 1942-1965* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993), pp. 1380-1400 (p. 1384).

presque tous les jours me tenir compagnie. Il était toujours hanté par la Tour et la vue que l'on avait de ma fenêtre l'attirait beaucoup. Souvent il faisait des croquis ou apportait sa boîte de couleurs.'[50] Yet the canvases themselves were not produced with direct reference to this view, but in the country, from memory – 'a process that freed the artist to concentrate on formal and compositional considerations rather than labouring over realistic minutiae', in Eric Robertson's words.[51] Delaunay's refusal to depict the tower 'from life', even though the framed view of it that so attracted him must have lent itself to painterly transcription, both reinforces his rejection of vision as a singular and static process and provides another example of the Cubist intellectualism that we considered in Chapter 1. Delaunay's series is a conceptualisation as well as a visualisation of the Eiffel Tower. He implicitly rejects the window as a paradigm for painting, perhaps because its implications are too purely visual, too divorced from thought. What is revealed by looking 'through' these paintings is not a visual continuation of the material world, but an undoing of familiar spatial systems and a conceptual interrogation of the practice of vision itself.

The importance of the painting's status as object, meanwhile, is highlighted by one image in particular: *La Tour aux rideaux* (fig. 8), of 1910, in which the tower is bordered by a pair of curtains and the angled line of what appears to be a windowsill. Here, the window ceases to be a metaphorical point of reference for painting and becomes an actual motif in the image itself, paving the way for a more deliberate, specific rejection of the traditional metaphor.[52] In Robertson's analysis, the motif introduces an element of Ortegan self-referentiality:

> In the manner of twin columns, the curtains draw the eye not only towards the view that lies between them but also to the window and its angled frame, to the very process of framing. This bipartite inner frame acts as a visual and conceptual focus, both channelling the view towards the centre of the canvas and emphasising the conscious act of choice that led to the picture's creation.[53]

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[50] Blaise Cendrars, *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929, suivi de Essais et réflexions 1910-1916* (Paris: Denoël, 1987), p. 76.

[51] Eric Robertson, 'Painting Windows: Robert Delaunay, Blaise Cendrars, and the Search for Simultaneity' in *The Modern Language Review*, 90 (October 1995), 883-896 (p. 884). Robertson credits Virginia Spate with revealing this information (see Spate, p. 172-173).

[52] Something similar happens in Juan Gris's *The Painter's Window* (1925). In this instance, as Vargish and Mook assert, the window 'shows now an objectless grey-green-blue mottled blank. The window image subserves modernist reflexivity by suffering reduction into a light source for the artist' (p. 146).

[53] Robertson, p. 884.

The curtains' role as a framing device underlines the presence of the outer frame – that is to say, the edge of the canvas – and thus the fact that the painting exists as a physical object in its own right as well as a medium through which a visual meaning or message is conveyed. Self-referentiality is a means by which the work of art can assert its own presence, as we saw demonstrated in Proust's ekphrastic descriptions of Elstir's canvases. The fact it is a painted *window* that permits this here seems deliberately to make an irony of the classic metaphor, which would not traditionally enable the painting to assert its status *as painting*, but would underline its role as a mimetic representational device. Delaunay challenges simplistic assumptions about the role and function of a window with a framed space that *looks* like a window but does not *act* like one, since the abstract nature of the 'view' frustrates any desire on the viewer's part to look 'beyond' to a recognisable, comprehensible space.

Robertson also points out a barely perceptible ray of light that originates about halfway up the tower and extends to the curtain in the foreground, which in his argument

> acts as a discreet clue to the self-referentiality of the work: it directs our gaze towards the translucent surface of the curtain, and in so doing links the most distant background with the immediate foreground. This unifying of perspectives creates ambiguity between the representational depth of the image and the actual flatness of the canvas. We are reminded that what we behold, besides being a re-creation of the sensation of perceiving different angles of vision, is ultimately nothing but combinations of colours on a two-dimensional surface.[54]

To Robertson's discussion, I would add that the contrast between the fragmented, abstract tower and the (comparatively) mimetic depiction of the curtains creates a further level of ambiguity as to the identity of the 'window' and the 'view' it represents. Why, after all, would a largely realistic pair of curtains open on to a wholly unrealistic view beyond? The abstract tower robs the mimetic curtains of their status as logical, recognisable objects, while they in their turn undermine the very abstraction that the painting seems otherwise to promote. We could argue that the focal point is the foreground; the tower is disrupted into an Ortegan 'confused mass

[54] Robertson, pp. 885-886.

**Fig. 8:** Robert Delaunay, *La Tour aux rideaux*, 1910

of colour' (or rather of form) because the painter has focused on the accoutrements of the window itself, rather than on the view it reveals. But this near-sighted rendering does not include evidence of the window's actual, physical structure. Its presence is implied by the curtains, but *only* implied: we can see no outer or inner framework, nor any means of opening it. Might we argue, then, that this is not a representation of a window at all, but of a painting that happens to be kept behind curtains? The physical presence of the canvas is again called to our attention, this time by the possibility that we might be looking at a mise-en-abyme, an image within an image – that the subject of Delaunay's painting might not be the Eiffel Tower so much as the practice of painting itself. The process of looking is neither bipolar nor bimodal, but cyclical: in a manner reminiscent of Proust's Martinville episode, we try

to look through the representative object (the painting, in this case) to its subject matter, but its subject matter only directs our attention back to the representative object. The possibility of an oscillation between immersion and awareness seems negated, since the ultimate result of immersion in this painting is to have our awareness of its materiality reasserted.

### ii. The *Fenêtres* series

Delaunay's use of the window as a motif anticipates his later series, *Fenêtres*, produced between 1912 and 1913, which completes the progression towards abstraction heralded by the Cubistic *Tour* series. The Eiffel Tower appears here as a barely-perceptible triangle that almost gets lost among the brightly coloured geometric forms that dominate; its presence suggests that the 'fenêtres' in question look out on to a cityscape, but unlike in *La Tour aux rideaux*, the window is not present as an identifiable motif. Rather, as Delaunay himself articulated, the series can be understood as 'des fenêtres sur une nouvelle réalité'.

Turning away from the aesthetic concerns central to Cubism, Delaunay's *Fenêtres* series foregoes the structured linearity favoured by his colleagues, instead foregrounding light and colour over form and volume. In this regard, his paintings belong to an Impressionist lineage rather than a Cézannean one.[55] Blaise Cendrars, in *Aujourd'hui*, documents Delaunay's study of light, recalling his practice of painting in a darkened room, making a hole in a shutter and studying the ray of light that penetrated it.[56] Certain titles of Delaunay's paintings (*Les Fenêtres simultanées sur la ville*; *Fenêtres ouvertes simultanément*) also betray his debt to the nineteenth-century chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul and his theory of *contrastes simultanés*, which considers the optical effects of combining juxtaposing colours, and which also influenced the Neo-Impressionists (for Delaunay, Rosanna Warren writes, 'Seurat is elevated over Cézanne as the father of modern painting').[57] In Virginia Spate's words, these interests were compounded by '[Delaunay's] belief that colour was the very essence of life', which she suggests was reinforced by his knowledge that light itself

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[55] As if to acknowledge his debt to the Impressionists, Delaunay credits the movement with being 'la naissance de la Lumière en peinture' (Delaunay, p. 146). This has favourable implications for a study of Proust and the avant-garde: the endurance of Impressionist concerns in avant-garde practice undermines the suggestion, implicit in much scholarship, that Proust's own 'impressionism' negates any possibility for an avant-garde impulse in his work.

[56] See *Aujourd'hui*, pp. 77-78. Incidentally, this calls to mind Proust's description of Elstir's studio: 'Les stores étaient clos de presque tous les côtés […] l'atmosphère de la plus grande partie de l'atelier était sombre […] mais humide et brillante aux cassures où sertissait la lumière.' (II, 191.)

[57] Rosanna Warren, 'Orpheus the Painter: Apollinaire and Robert Delaunay', *Criticism*, 30 (Summer 1988), pp. 279-301 (285).

is composed of an intense spectrum of colours.[58] The prismatic colours of the *Fenêtres* series can thus be understood not only as an exercise in combining 'couleurs simultanées', but as a reference to the structure of pure light. Unlike his Cubist

**Fig 9:** Robert Delaunay, *Les Fenêtres simultanées sur la ville*, 1912

contemporaries, then, Delaunay's focus was no longer on the spatial and material elements of the physical world, but on the very components of vision itself.[59]

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[58] Spate, pp. 190-191.

[59] Here Delaunay seems to diverge from changed ideas about the nature of vision, as discussed in Chapter 1. The set-up of his studio is strikingly reminiscent of the camera obscura – that emblem of an older visual order that Jonathan Crary discusses. Here, of course, the focus is on light itself as an abstracting force, rather than the logical reality that it reveals. Yet this focus also places the emphasis on vision as an externally produced phenomenon, effected by light rather than by the physiological workings of the human eye.

The window is a primary participant in this process, not least because it acted as a physical aid to his investigations; in the paintings themselves, Warren writes, 'the window asserted by the title serves to focus the act of looking, and, indeed, makes "looking" a major theme by partitioning off the segment of cityscape we are to contemplate.'[60] *Les Fenêtres simultanées sur la ville* (fig. 9), of 1912, incorporates an internal frame, implicitly referencing the process of selection that looking through a window entails and further drawing attention to the act of looking itself. The window in Delaunay's understanding is a metaphor for 'seeing' in its purest sense: that is, for the processes at work when the eye responds to external stimuli. If Spate is correct in her contention that Delaunay was influenced by his prior *knowledge* of the role of the colour spectrum in the make-up of light, we cannot quite call this a return to a Ruskinian/Elstirean notion of perceptual 'innocence' or precognitive vision. Nonetheless, in moving from the conceptualised vision of the *Tours* series to a purer form of vision here, Delaunay's concerns do take a turn in an Elstirean direction; indeed, in Robertson's words, 'the principal challenge for Delaunay was […] not conceptual but visual: how to portray the *precognitive experience* of the human eye as it perceives light.'[61] If Elstir's version of precognitive vision strips the act of seeing of its functional and intellectual quality, Delaunay moves further along the same path by stripping it of all relation to the everyday objects and events of the world. Read in conjunction with Delaunay's work, Elstir's disruption of spatial and material boundaries can be understood as a first step on the path to abstraction, while Delaunay's *Fenêtres* images, which dispense with these categories altogether, are in Elstir's direct lineage. (It may seem jarring to suggest that the work of a real painter could follow in the lineage of a real one, but it makes sense if Proust's descriptions were inspired by Turner's proto-Impressionist visual effects and Delaunay's canvases owe a debt to Impressionism itself.)

A causal link between precognitive vision and the act of looking through a window is implied both by the title of Delaunay's series and by the fact that the narrator's own experiences of it have occured when looking out of a window.[62] An oblique link is also implied, then, between the act of looking through a window and the development of abstact or quasi-abstract representational techniques. Yet the

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[60] Warren, p. 286.
[61] Robertson, p. 887; my emphasis.
[62] 'Parfois à ma fenêtre, dans l'hôtel de Balbec, […] il m'était arrivé grâce à un effet de soleil, de prendre une partie plus sombre de la mer pour une côte éloignée, ou de regarder avec joie une zone bleue et fluide sans savoir si elle appartenait à la mer ou au ciel.' (II, 191.)

depiction of precognitive vision through an artistic medium presents a further challenge to the traditional window *metaphor*. There is a fundamental misalignment between the *portrayal* of this type of vision on the canvas and the *experience* of viewing the painting: a precognitive visual experience, in Proust's definition, results in the blurring of boundaries and categories, but the act of engaging with a painting necessarily entails an unconscious process of categorisation, since it must be understood as distinct from its surroundings in order to be seen as a 'painting' at all. This paradox negates any possibility of complete Albertian illusion – of 'looking clear through' a painting that takes precognitive vision as its subject matter.

## III. René Magritte: Questioning Representation

In *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* of 1928, André Breton declared that he found it 'impossible de considérer un tableau autrement que comme une fenêtre'.[63] Such a description, as Johanna Malt has observed, 'seems to invite painting to retreat from the self-conscious materiality of modernism and take refuge once more in the idea of itself as a transparent form' – a surprisingly conservative analogy for a theorist so disdainful of traditionalism in the arts, and one that makes way for a number of possible conclusions.[64] We might interpret this as an attempt to distance Surrealism from those avant-garde movements and tendencies that had set a precedent for artistic self-consciousness – abstraction, Cubism, even Dada – and deliberately to dismiss twentieth-century attempts to reappropriate and reshape the traditional window metaphor. Alternatively, we might conclude that Breton was unaware of or simply uninterested in exploring the problematics of equating windows to painting. But is there perhaps a sense in which this signals a new interpretation and reshaping of the old metaphor?

The notion of Surrealist painting as a 'transparent' art form is reinforced by the movement's stylistic distance from the abstract and near-abstract modes of expression developed in other avant-garde movements, which do not just depict unfamiliar objects and scenes, but disrupt and reconfigure space itself. The Surrealists 'resist[ed] the lures of nonrepresentational abstraction', as Jay puts it; the

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[63] Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p. 2.
[64] Malt, *Obscure Objects of Desire: Surrealism, Fetishism, and Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 181.

representative space of their paintings is recognisably linear and Euclidean, their frequent depiction of interior spaces and rooms echoing the geometric architectural structures of Renaissance perspectival painting.[65] In her article 'The Surrealists' Windows', Susan Harris Smith develops Breton's statement by citing examples of Surrealist paintings which 'encourage the viewer to look through or beyond the object, not at it', arguing that in Surrealism 'the picture itself is a window; it is not a flat one-dimensional surface but a conduit to another world'.[66] Her arguments have much in common with Linda Dalrymple Henderson's suggestion that modernist paintings are 'new kinds of windows […] into a complex, invisible reality'; both assessments suggest that the arresting and unsettling scenes revealed by these windows amount to a new manifestation of the traditional metaphor, while leaving the accepted *function* of the metaphorical window unchallenged. Breton himself was less concerned by the function of the window itself than the nature of the scene beyond it, continuing: 'mon premier souci est de savoir sur quoi *elle* [la fenêtre] *donne*.'[67] What, then, do Surrealist 'windows' look out upon? Certainly not upon events that can be said to resemble the viewer's own everyday experience; rather, their familiar and comprehensible spaces provide an arena for strange, unsettling scenes to play out, the former throwing the latter into relief. In Smith's analysis, these are windows that do not so much look *out* on the external world as look *in* towards the marvellous, dreamlike landscapes of the mind. This function is emphasised, she argues, in paintings in which a face at a window peers into a room:

> That the function of a window or picture ultimately should be to allow introspective discovery is evident in the last category of Surrealist window paintings. Repeatedly in these works the face at the window is a witness to a bizarre action in a room. It is not stretching the point too far, given Breton's early insistence on the prominence of dream and Freudian theory in Surrealism, to suggest that the witnesses are, in effect, looking at images from their own subconscious minds.[68]

[65] Jay, p. 246.
[66] Susan Harris Smith, 'The Surrealists' Windows', *Dada/Surrealism*, 13 (1984), pp. 48-69 (p. 51).
[67] *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, p. 2.
[68] Smith, p. 62. She cites, among other examples, Giorgio de Chirico's *The School of the Amazons* (1936), Max Ernst's *The Virgin Spanking the Infant Jesus Before Three Witnesses […]* (1928), and Joan Mirò's *The Family* (1924), in which the witness at the window is a single large eye.

By this argument, the Surrealists' modernity is evidenced by the nature of the reality their paintings mediate, rather than by any visible or implied engagement with the dialectic of immersion and awareness. But we should nonetheless be cautious about dismissing this dialectic as irrelevant to Surrealism. Smith's unquestioned acceptance of the equivalence between window and painting is apparent in the first sentence of the above quotation, which suggests she considers them almost interchangeable. Her approach implies that 'we should look at what windows meant to the surrealists in order to understand what paintings meant to them,' as Malt points out.[69] Yet what Smith does not acknowledge is that such an equivalence also has the potential to problematise, rather than reinforce, the notion of the window as a transparent portal. The notion that paintings *are* windows raises the possibility that any comment on the window is also a comment on painting. Thus, a painting which seems visually to posit such a relation must inevitably be commenting, at some level, *on itself.* Indeed, the implication that a painted witness standing at a painted window is a visual metaphor for a real-life viewer standing before the painting precludes any possibility of total transparency: if this argument is taken to its logical conclusion, the window motif must be acknowledged as a device which comments, however subtly, on the function and purpose of the painting. The equivalence between window and painting, rather than privileging the painting's status as a visual aperture over its status as a material object, becomes another manifestation of modernist autoreferentiality, making an irony of the traditional metaphor while simultaneously paying tribute to it. The metaphor thus slots into a broader Surrealist schema by which, in Jay's words, 'representation was resurrected only to call it into question'.[70]

### i. *La Condition humaine I*

Although, as we have seen, René Magritte's official association with Surrealism only lasted from 1927 to 1930,[71] he remains a primary architect of this reappropriation of representation, writing in 1929 that 'tout tend à faire penser qu'il y a peu de relation entre un objet et ce qui le représente'.[72] His work persistently plays with the dynamics of immersion and awareness, transparency and opacity, most famously in

[69] *Obscure Objects*, p. 182.
[70] Jay, p. 246.
[71] According to Jay, 'he ultimately came to regret his connection'; nonetheless, 'his work was always admired by Breton' (p. 246).
[72] 'Les Mots et les images', in *René Magritte: Ecrits complets*, ed. by Andre Blavier ([Paris]: Flammarion, 2009), p. 60 (originally published in *La Révolution surréaliste*).

**Fig. 10:** René Magritte, *La Condition humaine I*, 1933

*La Trahison des images* (1929), in which a highly figurative image of a pipe is accompanied by the caption 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe'.[73] Other images explicitly bring the figure of the window into this investigation, notably *La Condition humaine I* of 1933 (fig. 10). In this painting, the scene is dominated by a large window looking out on a rural landscape. The view, however, is obscured by a painting on an easel, which represents the very same landscape as it is seen through the window and seems to be a replacement or continuation of it. Smith proposes this painting as an example of those that act '[as] a conduit to another world' – that are to be looked *through*, rather

[73] In his own words: 'the famous pipe. How people reproached me for it! And yet, could you stuff my pipe? No, it's just a representation, is it not? So if I had written on my picture "this is a pipe", I'd have been lying!' (In Harry Torczyner, *Magritte: The True Art of Painting*, trans. by Richard Miller (New York: Abradale Press/Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1985), p. 71.)

than *at*. In her words, 'the picture in front of an open window so exactly reproduces the landscape that the two, framed by the window curtains, are simultaneously distinct and united. The window is as much a painting as a painting is a window.'[74] Smith is correct in one respect – the window *is* ultimately a painting – but it does not necessarily follow that the painting must, in its turn, 'be' a window. Her argument falls prey to the temptation to attribute transparency to the painting-within-a-painting – exactly reproducing the literal view through a window, it appears as close to a 'window on the world' as a painting can realistically be. Were it a real painting it could be removed from its easel and exhibited elsewhere, acting as a portable stand-in for the window itself. But reframed within another painting, it is imbued with what Proust, in a passage we will consider in due course, calls 'l'immobilité de l'art' (II, 163): solid and static, it is fixed to the view it represents and consequently hides it from view. We have no means of peeling it back to determine whether or not it is a faithful stand-in, and our inability in this regard heightens our (impossible) desire to look beyond it. And yet if the painting bore no resemblance to the view it blocked, we would likely consider the latter to be of little consequence, simply an arbitrary background detail. The painting, therefore, draws our attention to the view while simultaneously negating it, asserting its importance as it denies us access to it.

As Patricia Allmer argues, the canvas in *La Condition humaine* 'destroys the illusion of a holistic view on to the landscape, […] covers and fragments what Magritte once described as "the reason for our existence", namely the desire to look beyond'.[75] This impossibility of 'looking beyond' is a recurring theme in Magritte's paintings, many of which show objects blocking or standing in for other objects: paintings blocking views, sheets covering bodies, a woman's torso standing in for her face. According to Michel Foucault in his short study of Magritte's work, *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, it is also affirmed by what Foucault defines as relations of 'similitude' within the paintings themselves. In his definition, *similitude* is opposed to *ressemblance*. The latter is a 'vertical', hierarchical relation between an external referent and its mimetic representations; it invites us to contemplate something outside the canvas itself. 'La ressemblance a un "patron",' writes Foucault: 'élément original qui ordonne et hiérarchise à partir de soi toutes les copies de plus en plus affaiblies qu'on peut en prendre.'[76] *Similitude*, on the other hand, is a 'horizontal',

[74] Smith, p. 51.
[75] Patricia Allmer, *René Magritte: Beyond Painting* (Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 153.
[76] Michel Foucault, *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (Montpellier: Éditions Fata Morgana, 1973), p. 61. This is Foucault's understanding of *ressemblance*; however, critics have demonstrated that his interpretation

non-hierarchical accumulation of visual elements that bear an equivalence to each other, 'se développ[ant] en séries qui n'ont ni commencement ni fin'.[77] Silvano Levy explains that for Foucault, 'an image should be considered to demonstrate similitude when it draws attention to a lateral relationship which oscillates within the painting alone.'[78] *La Condition humaine* appears to draw on both these concepts: it may well be founded on a *ressemblance* with a real room and a real landscape, although we cannot say for sure. Meanwhile, a relation of *similitude* clearly plays out between the painting-within-a-painting and the window. But according to Foucault, *similitude* overrides *ressemblance*, which is 'chassée de l'espace du tableau, exclue du rapport entre les choses qui renvoient l'une à l'autre'.[79] By this argument, the original referent – the physical landscape – pales into insignificance, outdone by the dynamic of reciprocity between the elements within the canvas itself, which partake in 'un jeu de transferts qui courent, prolifèrent, se propagent, se répondent dans le plan du tableau'. This is '[un de] ces jeux infinis de la similitude purifiée qui ne déborde jamais à l'extérieur du tableau'.[80] The image is not a proxy for a real-world scene, but a self-contained world of its own. So while the figurative style of Magritte's brushwork invites us to look *through* the painting, our 'ray of vision' never quite gets that far, but stops at the intrapictorial play of representation. At the risk of vulgarising Ortega's metaphor, we could envisage this set-up as a double or secondary glazed window: rather than looking through both layers of glazing to the world outside, we look through the first but not the second, focusing our attention on the space between the two.

The possibility of gesturing to a domain 'beyond' the canvas is doubly thwarted because this particular relation of similitude (unlike Magritte's doubled portrait of Paul Nougé, which is the example Levy gives in his article) plays out between two objects with a representative or quasi-representative function. What is hinted at in Delaunay's ambiguous *La Tour aux rideaux* is here made explicit: the painting's self-referential quality inevitably brings our attention back to the medium

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does not quite map onto Magritte's own. The two corresponded by letter over the terms *ressemblance* and *similitude*, but Silvano Levy suggests that Foucault's text 'bring[s] what would have been a contentious exchange of ideas to a premature and unwarranted conclusion', and may well not have been published in its existing form 'had Magritte not died in 1967' (Silvano Levy, 'Foucault on Magritte on Resemblance', *The Modern Language Review*, 85 (January 1990), pp. 50-56 (p. 50)). I have opted to use Foucault's interpretation nonetheless, on the basis that even if it is founded on a misinterpretation of Magritte's ideas, it is still interesting argument in its own right that is useful for our purposes here.

[77] Foucault, p. 61.

[78] Levy, p. 51.

[79] Foucault, p. 66.

[80] Foucault, p. 71.

of painting itself, enforcing a cyclical mode of looking that keeps us removed from the world contained within the image. Reinforcing this sense of removal is what Allmer calls 'the recursive accumulation of frames' in the painting; the frame of the painting-within-the-painting stands before the two framed panels of the window, which is framed in turn by the windowsill, the curtain rail, and the curtains, with the whole ensemble enclosed within the physical frame of the canvas. This understanding of the frame as a distancing mechanism relates to its role as an indicator of 'fictionality, or at least artificiality':[81]

> Reality becomes art or representation, once the 'here' and 'there', the 'inside' and 'outside' are marked out, less so by the window than by its frame. The frame is the sign of the creation of otherness in some kind of other space which is not mine any longer, which I cannot penetrate, which does not belong to my world and yet is in my world.[82]

The focus here is shifted to the window's status as a physical barrier that prevents us from accessing the outside world, rather than as an aperture that reveals it to us. This altered definition raises the possibility that the comparison between window and painting might be reversed – that the *painting* might be thought of as a metaphor or reference point for the *window*, rather than the other way around. However convincingly 'realistic' a painting, we are always, and by necessity, incapable of physically rejoining the reality it mediates. Similarly, while we might conceivably reconcile ourselves with the view through a window simply by going out- or inside, to do so is to rob the view of its defining quality: its *separateness* from us. A scene that we look upon as outsiders is fundamentally redefined when we ourselves become part of it; it becomes an immersive rather than a purely visual space. The view through the window, then, is elusive, and can never be experienced directly. When understood in this way, the window is no longer simply a threshold between different spaces; the view it provides is better described as a visual feature of one of those spaces, merely a fragment or a reduction – indeed, a representation – of the world it reveals.

Proust illustrates this notion beautifully in a scene from *Le Côté de Guermantes*, in which the narrator describes the windows that give onto a courtyard, and which

[81] Werner Wolf, via Allmer, p. 148.
[82] Allmer, p. 159.

offer the outsider a glimpse of the domestic life within, as an exhibition of Dutch genre paintings:

> l'extrême proximité des maisons aux fenêtres opposées sur une même cour y fait de chaque croisée le cadre où une cuisinière rêvasse en regardant à terre, où plus loin une jeune fille se laisse peigner les cheveux par une vieille à figure, à peine distincte dans l'ombre, de sorcière; ainsi chaque cour fait pour le voisin de la maison, en supprimant le bruit par son intervalle, en laissant voir les gestes silencieux dans un rectangle placé sous verre par la clôture des fenêtres, une exposition de cent tableaux hollandais juxtaposés. (II, 860)

The description calls to mind images by Johannes Vermeer or Pieter de Hooch, many of which layer up contiguous interior and exterior spaces to create the illusion of depth: we might be looking upon the action from the doorway of an adjacent room, for example, which might itself give on to an external courtyard through a window, or to another room through an open door. Proust inverts these techniques of mimesis by having his narrator perceive actual depth – signified by the old woman standing in the shadows, presumably at the back of the room – as a visual effect conveyed by a pictorial surface. The window in this depiction is a means not just of separating two physical spaces, then, but of 'virtualising' one of the two. This counters Breton's suggestion, and Smith's development of it, that Surrealist painting is 'window-like' in its transparency. Rather, the reverse is true: windows are like paintings, Surrealist or otherwise – barriers that not only prevent access to the world they reveal, but reduce it to a representation, a fiction. Thus, even without allowing for the distancing effect of *similitude*, we are separated from the view in *La Condition humaine* by three layers of representation: first by the window itself, then the canvas that stands before it, and finally the actual physical painting that contains these first two frames.

For this reason, the image does reach beyond the domain of the canvas in a *conceptual*, if not a visual sense. According to Magritte himself, these mechanisms of removal are representative of a wider issue not limited to the process of painting and framing: that is, although we perceive the world as external to us, our only possible experience of it is as a visual imprint *inside* of us. We will never experience the objective reality of what we see; before painting or windows, we are first distanced from the world around us – cast as outsiders – by our own subjectivity. This is the human condition: to experience nothing except as a representation. Magritte writes:

> Le problème de la fenêtre donna *La Condition humaine*. Je plaçai devant une fenêtre, vue de l'intérieur d'une chambre, un tableau représentant exactement la partie de paysage masquée par ce tableau. L'arbre représenté sur ce tableau cachait donc l'arbre situé derrière lui, hors de la chambre. Il se trouvait pour le spectateur à la fois à l'intérieur de la chambre sur le tableau et à la fois à l'extérieur, par la pensée, dans le paysage réel. C'est ainsi que nous voyons le monde. Nous le voyons à l'extérieur de nous-mêmes et cependant nous n'en avons qu'une représentation en nous.[83]

This reasoning calls to mind two distinct forms of space, defined by the mathematician Henri Poincaré: *l'espace géométrique* and *l'espace représentatif*, which can be broadly understood as objective and subjective space. *L'espace géométrique* is inaccessible to us, and we are able to experience only a representation of it:

> Il nous est aussi impossible de nous représenter les corps extérieurs dans l'espace géométrique, qu'il est impossible à un peintre de peindre, sur un tableau plan, des objets avec leurs trois dimensions. L'espace représentatif n'est qu'une image de l'espace géométrique, image déformée par une sorte de perspective, et nous ne pouvons nous représenter les objets qu'en les pliant aux lois de cette perspective.[84]

While we may think of the space we see as 'true space', it is in fact an illusion, akin to the illusion of three-dimensional space presented by linear perspective. Poincaré was among those who had theorised on the possible existence of a fourth dimension; his position thus assumes that the true nature of space is far more complex than our eyes will allow.[85] His argument gives credence to W. J. T. Mitchell's much later claim that 'there is no neutral, univocal, "visible world" there to match things against, no unmediated "facts" about what or how we see'. Thus, Mitchell continues,

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[83] 'La Ligne de vie II', in *Ecrits complets*, p. 144.

[84] Henri Poincaré, *La Science et l'hypothèse* (Paris: Flammarion, 1968), p. 82.

[85] Poincare's ideas were popular, as is suggested in *Le Côté de Guermantes* when Robert de Saint-Loup, in a discussion of military tactics, remarks: 'rappelle-toi le grand mathématicien Poincaré, il n'est pas sûr que les mathématiques soient rigoureusement exactes.' (II, 414.) That Proust puts this observation in the mouth of the aristocratic Saint-Loup might be suggestive of the prevalence of new theories about space; Allen Thiher argues that it 'points up that […] something as esoteric as concern about the foundations of mathematics, brought about by the puzzles proposed by non-Euclidean geometry, could occupy the usually frivolous aristocracy of the Faubourg Saint-Germain' (Allen Thiher, *Fiction Refracts Science: Modernist Writers from Proust to Borges* (University of Missouri Press, 2005), p. 109).

> if vision itself is a product of experience and acculturation – including the experience of making pictures – then what we are matching against pictorial representations is not any sort of naked reality but a world already clothed in our systems of representation.[86]

We might here extend the window metaphor beyond the realm of art, and consider it emblematic of the way we see: through the 'frame' of the physical limits to our vision, and the 'screen' of our own subject position, which can never be broken through and is irreconcilable with objective, essential reality. I am reminded of another famous window metaphor of the Renaissance – Leonardo's dictum that the eye is the 'window of the soul' (not to be confused with the somewhat hackneyed saying, of uncertain origin, that 'the eyes are the windows *to* the soul').[87] By this reasoning, however, the eyes are the 'windows of the soul' not because they enable vision, but because they restrict it. *La Condition humaine* seems intended not merely as a metaphor for the inadequacies of the human eye, but as a comment on the inevitable fate of painting in a world that cannot be experienced except as an image. A medium that attempts to represent reality can never fully succeed if all of 'reality' is already itself a representation; it cannot simply trace or copy an original when the true nature of that original must always be in doubt. Like the canvas-within-the-canvas, mimetic painting might purport to enable us to see, but in fact removes us by one step further from a reality that can never fully be grasped.

## IV. Proust's Window Paintings

As was discussed in the introduction to this thesis, it has been observed that the narrator of the *Recherche* displays a marked tendency 'to represent objects and scenes ekphrastically – as things already represented on flat surfaces (as paintings)'.[88] A

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[86] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 38.

[87] See Leonardo da Vinci, *A Treatise on Painting*, trans. by A. Philip McMahon, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956), I, p. 18.

[88] Baldwin, *The Material Object in the Work of Marcel Proust* (Oxford, Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 2005), p. 103. David Mendelson has given a similar argument, quoted in my introduction: 'déjà à Combray, nous le surprenons à transformer tel ou tel paysage qui lui est cher en un objet d'art dépourvu de matérialité, presque irréel.' (*Le Verre*, p. 129.)

particularly pertinent example occurs in a passage in the second half of *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, before the encounter with Elstir, in which the narrator constructs a 'musée imaginaire' by looking out of his hotel room window.[89] It is the occasion for a Magrittean blurring of the boundaries between reality and representation, and one which looks ahead to the 'exhibition' of *tableaux hollandais*; it plays with the traditional equivalence between window and painting by suggesting not that artistic representations enable us to *see*, but that seeing is already a form of representation. The narrator is ostensibly taking a siesta and preparing to dine at Rivebelle, but the narrative is paused while he describes the scene from the window as it appears over the course of the season. As the summer wears on, his successive views of the sea resemble an array of paintings of varying styles and genres: at the height of the season, the foam of the sea is as delicately outlined as a drawing by Pisanello; seen through the window pane there is an enamel quality and a fixity to it akin to Gallé's glasswork. As the nights begin to draw in, the view starts to resemble an altarpiece, and then a collection of Japanese prints. Later still it reminds the narrator of one of Whistler's *Harmonies*, awash with grey.[90] Sometimes the illusion is so deceptive that he comes close to believing that the scene before him is a fiction:

> si, sous ma fenêtre, le vol inlassable et doux des martinets et des hirondelles n'avait pas monté comme un jet d'eau, comme un feu d'artifice de vie, unissant l'intervalle de ses hautes fusées par la filée immobile et blanche de longs sillages horizontaux, sans le miracle charmant naturel et local qui rattachait à la réalité les paysages que j'avais devant les yeux, j'aurais pu croire qu'ils n'étaient qu'un choix, chaque jour renouvelé, de peintures qu'on montrait arbitrairement dans l'endroit où je me trouvais et sans qu'elles eussent de rapport nécessaire avec lui. (II, 162)

Here the Albertian metaphor, in which the painting gives the illusion of reality and physical depth as if it were a window, is directly inverted; instead, the view from the window gives the illusion of falsity and flatness, as if it were a painting. The notion

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[89] This scene seems also to be encompassed within what Bal calls the 'museum effect', one of a number of visualising effects in the novel, which occurs 'when the visible world that cannot be encompassed is represented as a juxtaposition of flat images' ('All in the Family', p. 70).
[90] This seems also to be the occasion for one of the narrator's own experiences of precognitive vision, which he will later refer to in the Elstir scene: 'Parfois l'océan emplissait presque toute ma fenêtre, surélevée qu'elle était par une bande de ciel bordée en haut seulement d'une ligne qui était du même bleu que celui de la mer, mais qu'à cause de cela je croyais être la mer encore et ne devant sa couleur différente qu'à un effet d'éclairage.' (II, 162-163.)

that the painting might be an appropriate metaphor for the window, rather than the other way around, is here taken further; the narrator does not merely compare the view to painting, but actually believes – or at least, very nearly believes – that it *is* a painting. Rather than suspending his disbelief in a fiction, he suspends his *belief* in the three-dimensional materiality of what he sees. The whole passage operates in a constant state of interstitial indeterminacy: we are dealing with quasi-ekphrastic descriptions of not-quite paintings, a reality that is not quite real and in which the narrator does not quite believe.

As Baldwin points out in a discussion of this passage, the notion that the 'paintings' are displayed 'arbitrairement […] sans qu'elles eussent de rapport nécessaire avec [l'endroit où je me trouvais]' raises questions about their relation to the actual, physical view through the window:

> [The narrator] seems to be denying that they are *of* the scene outside, that is to say, that there is any direct (or even relatively indirect) genetic connection between the paintings and what he can see through his window. This denial is unsettling: it suggests that the paintings could be *of* anything at all, or that they might be of another seascape – just not this one.[91]

And yet, Baldwin continues, the swifts and swallows that dart across the 'image' serve to link it back to material reality and to reassert a causal link between the 'paintings' and the view. This ambiguous instability leaves open the possibility that the 'image' both is and is not real. It is almost as if the narrator's hotel room is a real-life version of the room in Magritte's *La Condition humaine*, in which the view through the window has been blocked by a painting that may or may not be an accurate depiction of it – the difference being that the 'image' is not detachable from the window in this case, but fills it. The set-up is also reminiscent of a later painting of Magritte's: *La Lunette d'approche*, of 1963, which depicts a window that appears to look out over the sea. The right-hand windowpane, however, stands slightly ajar, revealing a black emptiness that seems to undercut the seascape, as if the latter is an image attached to the window glass rather than a physical space beyond the window. Yet if we look closely we find we can see the outer window frame through the top left-hand corner of the open pane, which raises the possibility that the glass is transparent after all, and that the seascape exists somewhere beyond the window,

[91] *The Material Object*, pp. 110-111.

rather than within it. This illogical combination of elements creates an indeterminacy that can never be resolved, magnifying the difficulty of distinguishing between image and reality that Proust's text implies.

Like that in *La Lunette d'approche*, the Balbec seascape appears not simply as an image beyond the glass, but an image *in* the glass. The sea appears 'dans la verre glauque et qu'elle boursouflait de ses vagues rondes […] sertie entre les montants de fer de ma croisée comme dans les plombs d'un vitrail' (II, 160). The image is fixed in place by the structure of the window, turning the glass blue-green and causing it to bloat and swell; where we might expect the glass to distort the view, the view has instead altered the very substance and quality of the glass. The stained-glass window simile implies both that the glass itself has become the focus of the gaze, and that in doing so it has obscured what actually lies beyond it. This recalls not only *La Lunette d'approche*, but also Marcel Duchamp's satirising of the window metaphor in both the *Grand Verre*, or *La Mariée mise à nue par ses célibataires, même* (1915-23), and the *Petit Verre*, or *A regarder d'un œil, de près, pendant presque une heure* (1918). In both of these works, an image is painted not on a canvas, but on a glass pane, robbing the glass of its transparency. It is as if Duchamp, with characteristic irony, is setting out to demonstrate that a painting that is *literally* a window cannot be seen *through* at all.

Yet traditionally, the role of stained glass is not so much to visually block off 'reality', but to remind the viewer of a domain *outside* the material world. Are we to suppose, then, that the 'vitrail' to which the narrator refers might have some link to a new aspect or level of his reality? I would suggest, in fact, that the seascape represents the virtual, spectral reality of art and religion, and that the window is the gateway between this domain and its competitor: the empirical, superficial reality of the mundane and the *mondain*. The image of the stained glass is combined with strong overtones of religiosity in the narrator's descriptions of what he sees outside: the setting sun, '[pareil] à la représentation de quelque signe miraculeux, de quelque apparition mystique', moves towards the sea 'comme un tableau religieux au-dessus du maître-autel', while the reflection of the same scene in the windows of the bookcase behind him recalls the detached panels of an altarpiece. In an earlier passage, looking through the open window in the hallway prior to entering his room, the narrator allows himself 'un instant d'adoration' to 'faire [s]es dévotions' before the view of a cottage on a hillside, which reminds him of the miniature, ornamental buildings often used as reliquaries (II, 160). That the religiosity of these descriptions appears in parallel with references to secular art implies a reciprocal relation between

art and religion that is later made explicit in the narrator's encounter with Elstir, who, like God, creates the world anew from his 'laboratoire d'une sorte de nouvelle création du monde' (II, 191). This implied connection between artistic and religious creation not only casts artists as mythical, quasi-deific figures, but also ranks their paintings at a level of importance and substance equal to God's own work – the material world, *les choses*. Thus, the 'paintings' seen through the window are fundamentally *real*, whether three dimensional or not, tied to a higher, non-material reality. The image of the reliquary, implying as it does that the view is the container of some essential quality or object, recalls the narrator's obsession with pinning down the essences that will enable understanding of such realities. It suggests that this may be another of those occasions on which he will attempt to detect the essential truth of what he sees, like at Martinville or Hudimesnil – that he will not settle for an understanding of the 'images' as mere representations, but will embark on an immersive, quasi-intuitive search for the 'truth' of the scene before him.

But this is not, in fact, what happens. For one thing, the narrator cannot intuitively immerse himself in the window-image because to do so would be to rob it of its 'image-ness': looking 'clear through' the – literal, non-metaphorical – window would mean fully accepting the material reality of the view, at the expense of the very indeterminacy that set it apart in the first place. To continue operating in its uncertain, interstitial domain, the narrator's 'ray of vision' must stop at the glass, or somewhere just beyond it. And yet, the narrator does not really look *at* the window-image any more than he looks *through* it. He does observe some pictorial details, but he is largely preoccupied with thoughts of the outfit he will wear to Rivebelle, of the women he will encounter there and of the *petite bande de jeunes filles* – Albertine and her friends – whom he has glimpsed for the first time that afternoon. In his appreciation of the paintings he is, in Baldwin's words, 'essentially "only" parading his sophistication and taste'; in Mendelson's, 'c'est bien "l'amateur" qui s'adresse ici à nous, et non le créateur, qui reste encore à naître.'[92] Later, he will learn to prioritise art over the trivial distractions of society, but for the moment he has learned no such lesson. Like a passenger in one of the boats on the horizon ('comme si j'avais été sur la couchette d'un des bateaux que je voyais assez près de moi'), he is 'de tous côtés entouré des images de la mer' (II, 161), but is unable to engage with them as anything other than flat, arbitrary forms:

[92] *The Material Object*, p. 125; Mendelson, p. 127.

> bien souvent ce n'était, en effet, que des images; j'oubliais que sous leur couleur se creusait le triste vide de la plage, parcouru par le vent inquiet du soir. […] L'attente du dîner à Rivebelle rendait mon humeur plus frivole encore et ma pensée […] était incapable de mettre de la profondeur derrière la couleur des choses. (II, 161-162)

That the beach goes unnoticed and invisible suggests an elimination of the physical distance that separates the narrator from the view: the 'painting' has been brought forward, towards the window. The hollow, melancholy emptiness of the beach, and the movement of the wind across it, are looked over and seen through. The view, then, has been rendered pure surface, robbed of its physical depth and consequently of its cruelly realistic elements – the 'triste vide de la plage' and the 'vent inquiet du soir'. But it has also lost its metaphorical depth: the narrator's distracted mind is unable to accord it any significance except as an object of casual acknowledgement and appreciation. What is curious about this passage is that the proximity and the sequence of these two observations imply a correlation between them, suggesting that physical flatness and metaphorical superficiality are natural allies. Both are offered as evidence for the successive views being '*que des images*', a construction suggesting that the physical view is in some way degraded by its resemblance to a painting. We might write this off as an anomaly: should we not expect the older narrator to know better, since he is to provide a lengthy analysis of the philosophical and metaphorical significance of Elstir's (flat) canvases, only a few pages later? [93] But we might also take this passage as evidence that the 'image', as a category and a concept, has more than one role to play. Proust here puts forward a possibility ignored in the 'immersion vs. awareness' debate, which accepts without question the importance of attending to the image as an independent entity: that the latter might also exist merely as a subsidiary of its context, as a 'nice picture' with no autonomy or meaning of its own. The balance (or competition) between immersion *in* and awareness *of* the image might equally be made irrelevant by a more powerful call on the viewer's attention: that is to say, by the wider world, of which the picture

[93] For Bal, 'flatness', or *platitude*, is a constant of Proust's visual universe, the framework through which she conducts her study of Proustian visuality in *Images littéraires*. She emphasises the double meaning of the French term: a lack of depth, in one sense, but also banality. In her view, 'la tension et l'intégration non harmonieuse de ces deux sens du mot constituent un ressort littéraire central chez Proust.' (*Images*, p. 2.) Her analysis suggests it is no anomaly that Proust posits an equation in this episode between flat surfaces and a lack of metaphorical depth: 'l'image à deux dimensions est plate; c'est une platitude. Cette caractéristique de l'image, je l'appellerai ici donc *platitude* afin de tenir présente, en permanence, la conjonction de la visualité et de la banalité dont Proust fera émerger le sublime.' (p. 14.)

is a part. In this scenario, the image is still the site of an oscillation – not between immersion and awareness, but between indifference and engagement. It awaits an external pair of eyes to cement its identity as either an element of a broader context or an object of attention in its own right. Its meaning, crucially, is as much a product of the subject looking as of the image-object itself – and aspiring young intellectuals, it seems, are no less likely than frivolous society figures to ignore an image's cerebral potential in favour of a more superficial, platitudinous understanding.

Oscillation between two modes of engagement is not the sole preserve of the window: it is also a defining factor in the linguistic workings of the passage itself. The virtual and the actual exist throughout in a state of awkward, indefinable ambiguity, but they are also brought together with surprising immediacy:

> *parfois* sur le ciel et la mer uniformément gris, un peu de rose s'ajoutait avec un raffinement exquis, cependant qu'un petit papillon qui s'était endormi au bas de la fenêtre semblait apposer avec ses ailes, au bas de cette 'harmonie gris et rose' dans le goût de celles de Whistler, la signature favorite du maître de Chelsea. Le rose même disparaissait, il n'y avait plus rien à regarder. *Je me mettais debout un instant* et avant de m'étendre de nouveau, je fermais les grands rideaux. (II, 163; my emphasis)

Here the discussion moves without warning (and with no change in tense) from the hypothetical to the here and now – from an occasional occurrence to an immediate action. Two separate levels of the narrative are at once united and juxtaposed, in much the same way as the interior of the room and the distant view beyond are both united and juxtaposed by the butterfly in the window, and as Whistler's butterfly symbol, which he used as a signature, unites the fiction of his paintings with the presence of the artist who constructed it. The butterfly bridges the separation, created by the window in the first case and the picture surface in the second, between the virtual and actual realms. The transition between two narrative levels, meanwhile, functions as a textual representation of the possibility of transitioning between different 'levels' of engagement with an image.

Moreover, Isabelle Zuber's analysis, in her study of Proust's seascapes, implies that we can also consider the passage itself to be a metaphorical 'seen window' – a window at the level of form as well as of content. Zuber finds a

particular significance in the following sentence, in which the narrator expresses disdain towards his younger, more superficial self: 'avec le regard dédaigneux, ennuyé et frivole d'un amateur ou d'une femme parcourant, entre deux visites mondaines, une galerie, je me disais: "C'est curieux, ce coucher de soleil, c'est différent, mais enfin j'en ai déjà vu d'aussi délicats, d'aussi étonnants que celui-ci."' (II, 162) It would read more fluidly, she argues, if Proust had placed 'une galerie' directly after 'parcourant', and the fact that he has not done so is significant. His decision to chop the sentence into parts, she writes, creates a stilted rhythm that reflects the episodic nature of the gallery visits: 'comme dans la réalité où la visite de la galerie forme une sorte d'intermezzo entre deux épisodes, elle coupe ici la phrase en deux.'[94] This idea is particularly intriguing for our purposes because it also an accurate representation of the window as an object, in its capacity as an 'intermezzo', a limin or an *entre-deux* that cuts something in two.[95] In that sense, the passage itself is a form of window, as other elements of Zuber's analysis imply. It operates in its own domain, she suggests, partly as a result of the almost exclusive use of the imperfect tense throughout the passage, which contrasts with the frequent use of the simple past in the pages that precede and follow it. The imperfect is of course the tense of continuity and movement – 'throughness', so to speak – as opposed to the stasis and completion of the simple past, so in this regard it is as if two solid, simple past 'walls' surround an imperfect 'window'.

Moreover, Zuber continues, the description of an entire season within what is ostensibly a brief pause between two social engagements situates the passage in a separate temporal sphere, outside the flow of the narrative:

> La série de tableaux vue à travers la fenêtre de la chambre d'hôtel du héros ressort du texte narratif qui l'entoure en se distinguant nettement de ce qui la précède et de ce qui la suit […] il s'agit surtout d'un moment d'arrêt dans la narration, de ce que Paul Ricœur, au sujet d'autres textes, nomme "station contemplative" […] grace à la remémoration de toute la saison, cette "station contemplative" semble bien plus longue que le temps que met le héros à regarder le paysage.[96] (112-113)

[94] Isabelle Zuber, *Tableaux littéraires: les marines dans l'œuvre de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Peter Lang, 1998), p. 121.
[95] This inevitably recalls André Breton's famous description, in first Surrealist manifesto, of a dream in which a man is 'coupé en deux par la fenêtre' (Breton, p. 31).
[96] Zuber, pp. 112-113.

The role of the passage as it is described here is closely comparable to the typical role of the window in a literary text, as Zuber describes it earlier on in her study: 'les fenêtres et les perspectives plongeantes sont des points névralgiques du récit, des nœuds où le cours narratif s'arrête. La pose du spectateur à ce moment réclame une pause de l'action, tandis qu'il s'absorbe dans le paysage.'[97] I would suggest that both this passage in Proust's text and the window it describes might then be described as 'stations contemplatives', atemporal sites of stasis and reflection. Yet the narrator's inability to forget the encounters of the afternoon just past and of the evening ahead prevents total suspension from the flow of narrative events. Much like the meta-linguistic references in his discussion of Elstir's paintings, the continued references to worldly concerns serve as a reference back to what Zuber calls 'le premier niveau du récit' and as a reminder of the passage's situation within a longer text, just as the material of the window – the glass, wood, and metal – might remind us of its position within an overall architectural structure.[98]

There is one final metaphor to call on. Although I note above that the passage is like a window because it functions in an atemporal zone apart, Zuber also suggests that Proust envisaged the seascapes 'comme des "morceaux", détachables du reste', evidenced by the fact that he submitted them as independent pieces for publication in the *Nouvelle Revue française*.[99] If the passage can in fact be broken apart and recontextualised, the metaphor of a gallery of images might be just as appropriate as that of the window. Certainly Zuber herself seems to favour it:

> le fait que le passage soit tiré hors du temps, devienne quelque chose qui a sa propre temporalité, le distingue nettement de ce qui l'entoure, l'isole, et en fait une sorte de monument, une galerie précisément, à l'intérieur du texte.[100]

The gallery is a space of reflection and contemplation that provides both a sanctuary from the forward push of everyday life and an erratic experience of chronology: the visitor can hop from century to century as she moves from room to room, spending longer on the eras that most interest her and skipping others altogether. This process

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[97] Ibid., p.66.
[98] Ibid., p. 113.
[99] Ibid., p. 115.
[100] Ibid., p. 114.

in itself bears a certain resemblance to the writing of the passage under discussion: the gallery visitor, wandering autonomously as and where she desires, 'edits' the images into a *personal* chronology. The visit (though inevitably punctuated by objective factual information) also becomes an internal journey of sense- and meaning-making, played out in a private, non-standard temporality. The gallery is, in more than one sense, a 'station contemplative'.

All experiences of a gallery are in some way sequential, and the passage's use of sequence further upholds the metaphor. At its most basic, it is a sequence of quasi-ekphrastic descriptions, like a textual exhibition. Zuber also notes that the view from the hotel window, which gives on to the same subject at different hours of the day and at the same hour of different days, '[rappelle] implicitement la pratique de certains impressionnistes, notamment de Monet, qui créait des series consistant en des tableaux du meme sujet vus à différents moments'.[101] A version of this same practice occurs quite by chance in the reflection of the view in the glass of the bookcase:

> les différentes vitrines de la bibliothèque montrant des nuages semblables mais dans une autre partie de l'horizon et diversement coloré par la lumière, paraissaient offrir comme la répétition, chère à certains maîtres contemporains, d'un seul et même effet, pris toujours à des heures différentes mais qui maintenant avec l'immobilité de l'art pouvaient être tous vus ensemble dans une même pièce, exécutés au pastel et mis sous verre. (II, 163)

Sequence here is in itself a form of atemporality, enabled only by 'l'immobilité de l'art', or the painting's exemption from the process of evolution that will inevitably alter its subject. As Zuber points out, the sequence of descriptions also forms 'une sorte de coucher de soleil, puisqu'elle commence avec le "grand jour" pour finir avec la nuit'.[102] Moreover, it begins with the long, bright evenings of the high season and ends with the grey light of the season's end, and is thus embryonic of a broader, metaphorical 'coucher de soleil': the transformation of summer into autumn. While the images in the bookcase are a sequence made static, here natural sequence is condensed and accelerated. Both are processes that can be compared to the gallery

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[101] Ibid., p. 113.
[102] Ibid., p. 117.

visit, the sequential aspect of which is shaped, accelerated and stilled by the visitor's movement through it.

The passage, then, is at once a textual window and a textual gallery of images that encloses the 'window-images' of its subject matter: a merging of entities and a use of mise-en-abyme highly reminiscent of Magritte's self-referential, ironic use of the window motif. I would suggest, in fact, that Magritte's paintings and this passage can be seen as contrasting interpretations of the same subject matter. Both see the window, the painting and the combination of the two as sites of ambiguity and fluctuation between the virtual and the actual. To Proust's narrator, virtuality at times seems like the dominant force over material reality, only prevented from taking over completely by the flight of the birds before the window, while at others, his preoccupation with the evening ahead of him reasserts the material and subsumes the virtual. This vacillation is echoed in both *La Condition humaine* and *La Lunette d'approche*, in which the material is continually alluded to and thus retained as a persistent presence within the virtual world of the image. Proust and Magritte use the motif and metaphor of the window as an opportunity both to explore the merging of worlds and spaces, and to trouble the boundaries between them. As a result, the window and the painting, and the relationship between the two, are liminal and indeterminate: in Proust, a window represents an actual view that is almost but not quite a painting, while in *La Condition humaine* and *La Lunette d'approche*, actual paintings portray windows – and paintings-within-paintings – that give on to ambiguous and indeterminate views. All superimpose and juxtapose layers of the 'real' and the illusory, the virtual and the material, the image and the object, complicating any attempt we might make to definitively categorise the viewer as *either* immersed in the represented world of the image *or* aware of its status as an object. What emerges more broadly from these works, and those of Delaunay, is a scenario in which the metaphor of the window, aided by its representation as a motif in a text or image, is reappropriated in a twentieth-century context to support multiple modes of viewing and reading.

# 3. Technologies of Speed: Moving Observer, Moving Observed

## Introduction: The Culture of Speed

I now turn away from questions relating to actual artists and art objects and towards a more implicit relation between broader cultural phenomena and art as both a formal and representational practice. My focus is on the ongoing development of mechanised transport technologies, one of the period's most transformative influences on perceptions of the world and of the objects in it. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were shaped by the invention and growth of the train, the bicycle, the car, and the aeroplane; in the space of a hundred years the way human beings travelled through space had changed beyond all recognition, and was continuing to do so as Proust wrote his novel and the avant-gardes developed new styles of painting. Proust, for one, was enthused by these developments. A self-described 'fervent d'automobilisme',[1] he was wealthy enough to indulge his interest well before mass production made the new technologies affordable for everyone else, as William Carter has observed.[2] He hired the machine-obsessed Alfred Agostinelli as a chauffeur, for example, with whom he embarked on numerous motoring excursions around the Normandy countryside (which would inspire the account in 'Journées en automobile', of 1907, and thus, by extension, the Martinville episode of *Du Côté de chez Swann*). He was also an acquaintance of the Duc Armand de Guiche, Carter recounts, 'a pioneer in aerodynamics who stimulated [his] interest in aviation well before […] Agostinelli […] began to study flying.'[3] Proust's enthusiasm finds its way into the *Recherche* on numerous occasions: as well as the Martinville episode, the novel is punctuated with rides in trains and cars, aeroplane sightings and encounters with young cyclists.

Many of those in the avant-garde saw the new technologies as integral to their art. The Italian Futurists were famously passionate about mechanised movement and speed. Marinetti had eulogised on the allure of the automobile (his 'beautiful shark') in the 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', published on the front page of *Le*

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[1] Letter to Antoine Bibesco, 1907 (*Correspondance*, VII, p. 296).
[2] Carter, p. 2.
[3] Ibid. See Chapter 1 of Carter's study ('The Age of Speed') for a detailed account of the changes wrought by these new technologies, and the book as a whole for biographical information about the role they played in Proust's life.

*Figaro* in 1909;[4] three years later, in 'The Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature', he declared that he had 'sensed the ridiculous inanity of the old syntax' while sitting on the fuel tank of an aeroplane, the 'whirling propeller' of which had told him precisely what must be done with language to render it worthy of Futurism (destroying syntax, abolishing adjectives, adverbs, punctuation, and so on).[5] His love of the car found its pictorial correlate in the painter Giacomo Balla's heady, abstract depictions of speed, while other motifs of the mechanical age appear in the works of his colleagues – a tram in the work of Carlo Carrà, for example, and trains in that of Gino Severini and Umberto Boccioni, the latter of whom also depicted cycling in his stunning *Dynamism of a Cyclist*, of 1913. The Futurists were by no means alone in their love of mechanised movement. Jean Metzinger's series of paintings of racing cyclists, which will be considered in this chapter, was the fruit of his own enthusiasm for the sport: he recalled in the 1950s that 'he had won a bet in 1912 against Gleizes and Jacques Villon (with Fernand Léger as enthusiastic onlooker) to ride a bicycle nonstop over 100km in the Parisian Vel d'Hiv arena'.[6] In 1923 Léger himself would defend his own use of machines as motifs in his painting against criticisms from his contemporaries ('on m'a violemment critiqué en 1918-1919 d'avoir abordé l'élément méchanique comme possibilité plastique'.)[7] He also provided an oft-cited account of a trip he made to the Paris Air Show with Marcel Duchamp and Constantin Brancusi ('probably in 1912', according to Christoph Asendorf),[8] which gives an insight into Duchamp's own enthusiasm for the aesthetic potential of the new technologies: 'Marcel qui était un type sec, avec quelque chose d'insaisissable en lui, se promenait au milieu des moteurs, des hélices sans dire un mot. Puis tout à coup, il s'adressa à Brancusi: "C'est fini la peinture. Qui fera mieux que cette hélice? Dis, tu peux faire ça?"'[9]

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[4] F. T. Marinetti, 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' [1909], in *Futurist Manifestos*, pp. 19-24 (21): 'They thought it was dead, my beautiful shark, but a caress from me was enough to revive it; and there it was, alive again, running on its powerful fins!'

[5] 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature' [1912], in *Modernism: An Anthology*, ed. by Lawrence Rainey (Malden, MA, Oxford, et al.: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 15-19 (15-16).

[6] Erasmus Weddigen and Sonya Weddigen-Schmid, 'A Short Cycle Ride Through Art History towards New Dimensions' in *Cycling, Cubo-Futurism and the Fourth Dimension: Jean Metzinger's* At the Cycle-Race Track, curated by Erasmus Weddigen (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2012), pp. 10-29 (p. 13).

[7] 'L'Esthétique de la machine et de l'object: note sur l'élément méchanique' [1923] in *Fonctions de la peinture* (Paris: Éditions Gonthier, 1965), pp. 50-52 (p. 50).

[8] Christoph Asendorf, 'The Propeller and the Avant-Garde: Léger, Duchamp, Brancusi', in *Fernand Léger, 1911-1924: The Rhythm of Modern Life,* ed. by Dorothy Kosinski (Munich and New York: Preste, 1994), pp. 203-209 (p. 203).

[9] Cited in Dora Vallier, 'La Vie fait l'œuvre de Fernand Léger: Propos de l'artiste recueillis', *Cahiers d'Art*, 29 (October, 1954), 133-172 (p. 140).

That Proust also saw a link between art and mechanised movement is suggested in Clayton Alcorn's observation that 'the subject of art, beauty and esthetics arises directly or indirectly in all of the passages [of the *Recherche*] which treat at any length the attributes of a particular mode of transport'.[10] The manner in which the new technologies can be seen to have interwoven with parallel developments in art will be one of my areas of investigation in this chapter. Certainly, they provided new artistic subject matter: in her analysis of the role of transport technologies in Proust's *Recherche*, Sara Danius observes that such technologies make the world appear new, 'as if it ha[s] just been born'.[11] This is partly, she argues, 'because the world itself *is* new' (123; my emphasis) – full of strange objects that are not instantly recognisable, such as the aeroplane that the narrator sees on his second visit to Balbec, the sight of which reduces him to tears (this episode will be examined here in due course).[12] But for the earliest passengers, as my analysis in Chapter 1 suggested, the new mechanised vehicles were not just objects seen from the outside, nor even just instruments of movement, but optical tools that altered the seen world, seemingly changing the actual properties of the spaces through which they travelled. Indeed, if vision is above all a bodily mechanism, as Jonathan Crary has suggested, it follows that it would have been affected by the body's newly heightened capacity of movement. Transport technologies did not just replicate the functioning of the eye, like the stereoscope, or see in a way that the eye was unable to, like chronophotography; rather, by acting upon the whole body, of which the eye was a part, they drastically altered the eye's relationship to its object and to the space that it inhabited. Wolfgang Schivelbusch has demonstrated that the train in particular had a radical, paradoxical effect on space and distance: drastically increasing the spatial radius to which individuals had access, as the car and the bicycle would do later, its earliest passengers bore witness not simply to a shrinking of journey times, but an apparent shrinking of space itself. At the same time, space was also experienced as expanded: 'this diminution of space,' Schivelbusch writes, '[…] caused an expansion of transport space by incorporating new areas into the transport network. The nation's contraction into a metropolis […] conversely appeared as an expansion of the metropolis.'[13] Seen from the window of a speeding vehicle, this

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[10] Clayton Alcorn, 'Cars, Trains, Planes and Proust', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 14 (Fall-Winter 1985), pp. 153–161 (p. 157).
[11] Danius, p. 108.
[12] Ibid., p. 123; my emphasis.
[13] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1986), p. 35.

simultaneously expanded and contracted space also appeared to be in motion, as the French writer Octave Mirbeau suggests in his autobiographical novel, *La 628-E8*, an account of a motoring trip around Europe: 'la vie de partout se précipite, se bouscule, animée d'un mouvement fou [….] Tout autour de [l'homme], et en lui, saute, danse, galope, est en mouvement, en mouvement inverse de son propre mouvement.'[14]

Of course, the influence of transport technologies on the body did not stop with the perceptive faculty. Numerous claims were made regarding the physiological risks posed by early mechanised transport: the lack of suspension in steam trains, for example, caused a ceaseless vibration that impacted on the bodies of travellers, with a pamphlet published by *The Lancet* in 1862 observing that 'the frequency, rapidity, and peculiar abruptness of the motion of railway-carriages keep thus a constant strain on the muscles; and to this must be ascribed a part of that sense of bodily fatigue, almost amounting to soreness, which is felt after a long journey'. Moreover, the noise of the train was 'of an intensity and pitch that are truly damaging to ears and nerves'.[15] The bicycle, with its more direct relation to the human body, gave rise to numerous claims about its physiological effects, both positive and negative. Riders were warned against 'bicycle stoop', the result of arching one's back for long stretches on a racing bike, and 'bicycle face', 'a contorted appearance supposedly brought on by [the riders'] incessant struggle to keep their vehicle in balance', in David V. Herlihy's words.[16] Cycling was considered particularly risky for women, doubtless by those who feared the social ramifications of this new source of female freedom of movement. As Hugh Dauncey notes in his social and cultural history of cycling in France, concerns were raised about the possible impact of cycling on female reproductive health, in particular by the French theorist of medicine, Dr. Philippe Tissié:

> [Tissié] was disapproving of women's cycling, mainly since the design of the machines (hard saddles, solid tyres, frames ill-adapted to female anatomy) would prove injurious to women's health through the strain they placed on reproductive organs. […] [In 1893] he reminds readers that medical opinion should be sought by aspiring female cyclists, given that a woman's abdomen

[14] Octave Mirbeau, *La 628-E8* [1907] (Paris: Les Éditions Nationales, 1936), p. 6.
[15] *The Influence of Railway Travelling on Public Health* [1862], via Schivelbusch, p. 117.
[16] David V. Herlihy, *Bicycle: The History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 271-272.

> is made for carrying the fruit of conception and that women are 'wombs with other organs surrounding them'.[17]

Others, however, rubbished concerns like these, extolling the value of cycling as a new form of exercise: 'physicians […] are coming to the conclusion that it is practically a sovereign remedy for rheumatism, indigestion, dyspepsia, and other ills which are too frequently merely the result of a lifetime of little to no outdoor exercise,' wrote Joseph B. Bishop in 1896.[18] Still others took more creative liberties with the impact of cycling on the body, linking it to sexual freedom and prowess. Maurice Leblanc's 1898 novel, *Voici des ailes!*, is the story of two couples who embark on a cycling tour and become increasingly uninhibited, finding a new pleasure in their own embodiment: the women remove their corsets, and then take off their blouses altogether and cycle bare-breasted; eventually the rapid progress of the couples' social and sexual liberation enables them to ignore the bonds of marriage altogether, and switch spouses.[19] Four years later Alfred Jarry would publish his novel *Le Surmâle*, in which the aristocrat André Marceuil, under the guise of anonymity, cycles in and wins a 10,000-mile race against a train, before having sex a record number of times in succession (eighty-nine). Not insignificantly, his partner in the endeavour is a motorist, implying a link between sexual prowess and speed more generally – or perhaps, in particular, between sexual prowess and the act of controlling one's own mechanised, speeding vehicle.[20]

This chapter will investigate the effects of mechanised travel on both the perceptive faculty and on physicality more broadly. The first half will focus on accounts of speed as an 'intuitive' or 'immersive' state, in which the subject travels in a mechanised vehicle. The *Recherche*, as a first person account that details such experiences in more depth and with more specificity than any in the visual avant-gardes ever did, will be my primary source here. Rather than attempting to make a direct comparison between Proust's portrayal of transport technologies and that of the avant-gardes,

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[17] Hugh Dauncey, *French Cycling: A Social and Cultural History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), p. 36. The actress Sarah Bernhardt also weighed in on this debate, as a note in the *Pléiade* edition of the *Recherche* informs us: 'toutes ces jeunes femmes, toutes ces jeunes filles qui s'en vont dévorant l'espace renoncent pour une part notable à la vie intérieure, à la vie de famille.' (II, p. 1416 [note to p. 146].)

[18] Joseph B. Bishop, 'Social and Economic Influence of the Bicycle', *Forum*, 21 (March-August, 1896), 680-689, p. 684.

[19] See Maurice Leblanc, *Voici des ailes!* [1898] (Vierzon: Éditions Le Pas de côté, 2012).

[20] See Alfred Jarry, *Le Surmâle* [1902] (Paris: Éditions le Terrain vague, 1977).

which in many cases does not get us very far, my intention here is to read the narrator's perceptual experience of speed as an advocation of an avant-garde aesthetic.[21] In a manner that recalls instances discussed in Chapter 2 – since the act of looking through a window is once again portrayed as having a representative function – travel functions as a heuristic experience that allows the narrator to develop a perceptual and artistic sensibility in line with avant-garde concerns. This approach will enable us not just to elucidate Proust's avant-garde impulse, but also to theorise on the role of speed in the avant-garde aesthetic revolution. Moreover, the narrator's distinction between train and car travel, and the contrasting relationships they enable between traveller and traversed space, allow us to figure the experience of speed as a site of ambiguity between states of 'insidership' and 'outsidership'.

The role of outsidership becomes more pronounced in the second half of this chapter, which considers the perceived physical effects of speed on those who control their own vehicles, whom I call *practitioners* of speed – namely cyclists and aviators. I investigate the ways in which such physical effects might also manifest as ideological effects, creating a division between practitioners and non-practitioners: speed or mechanicity, I will suggest, can be understood as a function of distancing and alterity that is imagined by artists and writers with reference, variously, to art, mythology, religion, and the elusive theory of the fourth dimension. If the experience of travelling at speed is intuitive or immersive, the relation between static observer and speeding observed, in this argument, is a sort of reverse process of analysis, with all the epistemological incapacity that this implies: speed, like certain understandings of the picture surface, is a means of closing off, of erecting an insurmountable barrier between the seeing subject and the object that is seen.

## I. Moving Observer: Space Witnessed from the Train and the Car

### i. Train space: from linear perspective to Cubism

Proust's major discussion of train travel comes in *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, when the narrator first travels to Balbec – an episode, I will argue in what follows,

[21] There is not much to compare, for example, between the narrator's experience of motoring around the Balbec region and the 'white-hot iron of joy' that supposedly passed through Marinetti's heart as he emerged from the ditch into which he had crashed his car ('Founding and Manifesto', p. 21).

with decidedly aesthetic undertones that evokes multiple modes of representation. The narrator's attitude to rail travel does not explicitly change over the course of the episode; the events themselves, however, demonstrate a subtle evolution in values that aligns broadly with the developments in *painterly* values that were occurring between the time at which the episode is set (sometime in the 1890s) and the time at which the volume was written (the 1910s). Before the narrator embarks on the journey, his description of train travel reveals that he values it only in its relation to the places to which it provides access, and notes its superiority to the car in this regard:

> Ce voyage, on le ferait sans doute aujourd'hui en automobile, croyant le rendre ainsi plus agréable. On verra qu'accompli de cette façon, il serait même en un sens plus vrai puisqu'on y suivrait de plus près, dans une intimité plus étroite, les diverses gradations par lesquelles change la surface de la terre. Mais enfin le plaisir spécifique du voyage n'est pas de pouvoir descendre en route et s'arrêter quand on est fatigué, c'est de rendre la différence entre le départ et l'arrivée non pas aussi insensible, mais aussi profonde qu'on peut, de la ressentir dans sa totalité, intacte, telle qu'elle était dans notre pensée quand notre imagination nous portait du lieu où nous vivions jusqu'au cœur d'un lieu désiré, en un bond qui nous semblait moins miraculeux parce qu'il franchissait une distance que parce qu'il unissait deux individualités distinctes de la terre. (II, 5)

The appeal of travel, according to this assessment, is not actually in the *act* of travelling at all – the narrator is not interested in exploring the intervening space between his point of departure and his destination, but rather in heightening his impression of the differences between those two points. These differences appear to best effect, it is implied, when the journey itself plays as minimal a role as possible. The narrator values the car less than the train precisely because it places more emphasis on the journey than on the destination; indeed, its ability to stop here and there en route practically does away with the act of arriving altogether ('il n'y a guère plus d'arrivée' (II, 5)).[22] Schivelbusch has remarked on a metaphor frequently

[22] The narrator's attitude here sets him at odds with Proust's beloved John Ruskin, for whom the railway is devoid of interest precisely because it foregrounds arrival at the expense of the journey: 'going by railroad I do not consider travelling at all,' he writes; 'it is merely "being sent" to a place, and very little different from becoming a parcel.' (*Modern Painters*, p. 311.)

deployed in the nineteenth century to evoke the loss of sensory experience that distinguished train travel from horse-powered transport: 'the train was experienced as a projectile, and travelling on it, as being shot through the landscape […] the rails, cuttings, and tunnels appeared as the barrel through which the projectile of the train passes.'[23] Although the metaphor was generally used negatively, here it is the train's projectile-like qualities that determine its appeal. Inherent in the narrator's appreciation of train travel is his belief that railway stations contain the essences of the towns they serve; they are 'ces lieux spéciaux, […] lesquels ne font pas partie pour ainsi dire de la ville mais contiennent l'essence de sa personnalité de même que sur un écriteau elles portent son nom' (II, 5). Like a projectile, then, the train has a penetrative function, 'piercing' its target in search of the heart.

This is an essentially aesthetic assessment: it is a model that calls on the passenger to look past the space surrounding the destination, as the viewer of many mimetic paintings is expected to ignore the surface of the canvas, carrying the passenger inwards to a singular centre as the eye of the viewer is drawn in towards the vanishing point. As the viewer's sightline moves from its origin in actual space to its target in virtual space, so too, the narrator implies, is the traveller conveyed from the actual space of departure into the mysterious, virtual space of the imagined destination. But the narrator is making a crucial mistake in thinking the town as discovered by the railway can match up to the town as it appears in his imagination. Time and again, he will learn that the reality of a place or person cannot live up to the exalted image we construct in our heads; he has already been surprised and disappointed by his encounters with the writer Bergotte, who is not 'le langoureux vieillard' he had pictured but 'jeune, rude, petit, râblé et myope' (I, 537), and with Mme de Guermantes, whose image he had imbued with a feudal romance, but who turns out to be a flesh and blood human, complete with a spot on her nose (I, 173). This journey will be a comparable lesson in disappointment: he will not find Balbec church on the gothic, storm-whipped cliff of his imaginings, but several miles from the coast, brought down from its lofty, artistic heights by the café, tramline, and passers-by with which it shares the town square. This episode entirely discredits the narrator's declaration, only a few pages earlier, that the train preserves the specific quality of a place 'telle qu'elle était dans notre pensée'.

All of this suggests that the journey should not be dismissed out of hand as secondary to the destination. This is borne out by the rest of the episode, which places

[23] Schivelbusch, p. 54.

a marked emphasis on the aesthetics of the journey itself and is, in Luzius Keller's words, 'essentiellement picturale'.[24] That the journey itself will play an aesthetic function is foregrounded by the narrator's numerous references to artists in the preceding passages: he has already called on Chardin and Whistler in his description of Françoise's hat, and Mantegna and Veronese in his description of the Gare Saint-Lazare. Once the journey begins – having enthusiastically followed his doctor's advice to calm his nerves by drinking 'un peu trop de bière ou de cognac' – he is fascinated by the beauty of elements specific to the train itself: the deep blue of the window blinds, the way the sun hits the windowsill, the glint of the conductor's buttons. In the morning, he wakes early to a view of the sunrise – an episode that I will shortly discuss in more depth – and immediately describes it in artistic terms. It appears 'dans le carreau de la fenêtre', like a landscape painting: the clouds are a 'doux duvet […] d'un rose fixé, mort, qui ne changera plus, comme celui qui teint […] le pastel sur lequel l'a déposé la fantaisie du peintre' (II, 15). Later that morning, the train stops at a station in the mountains and a local peasant girl, who appears on the platform to sell coffee, is described in a manner similar to the sunrise: 'empourpré des reflets du matin, son visage était plus rose que le ciel […] le teint de sa figure était si doré et si rose qu'elle avait l'air d'être vue à travers un vitrail illuminé' (II, 16-18). The narrator's readiness to see the girl as an image is attributed by Danius to 'the window gazing' of the journey so far, which she claims 'has aestheticized his way of seeing to such a degree that [the girl] immediately turns into a spectacle'.[25] The idea that the act of looking through a train window turns the surrounding space into something like an image is a machine-age manifestation of the traditional equivalence between windows and paintings, and one that diverges from Alberti's original metaphor in two senses: first, because it foregrounds the window's status as a barrier, rather than as a site of visual passage, and second, because it encourages a move away from linear perspective, as I will show in the analysis that follows.

One of the most prominent differences between the train and the organic modes of travel it replaced was the barrier imposed between the traveller and the space through which she passed. Controlled by a faceless system rather than the whims of individual passengers, who could no longer choose when to stop or

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[24] Luzius Keller, 'Tableaux exposés et tableaux cachés', in *Marcel Proust Aujourd'hui*, 8 (2011), pp. 115-130 (p. 122).

[25] Danius, p. 113. The girl becomes an *Elstirean* aesthetic object, in Danius's view, because the narrator is 'faithful to what he sees, not what he knows' (p. 114) when he says not that she is getting nearer, but that she is getting bigger: 'elle revint sur ses pas, je ne pouvais détacher mes yeux de son visage de plus en plus large' (II, 18).

disembark, the train put the landscape behind glass, moving through it at a speed well beyond the capacity of either the human or the equine body.[26] One result of these (relatively) high speeds was the disappearance of the foreground, which now moved past so quickly that its individual aspects could no longer be made out. While the slowness of travel on foot or by horse had allowed the traveller to '[see] himself as part of the foreground', and thus as joined to the landscape, 'the speed and mathematical directness with which the railroad proceed[ed] through the terrain destroy[ed] the close relationship between the traveler and the traveled space'.[27] As Merleau-Ponty demonstrates in *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 'la profondeur révèle immédiatement le lien du sujet à l'espace'; 'elle annonce un certain lien indissoluble entre les choses et moi par lequel je suis situé devant elles, tandis que la largeur peut, à première vue, passer pour une relation entre les choses elles-mêmes où le sujet percevant n'est pas impliqué.'[28] The passenger in the train, who sees the world in its breadth, not depth, is distanced from the passing scene. She is distanced, too, by the process of framing that the act of window gazing entails. We recall Patricia Allmer's assertion, cited in Chapter 2, that the frame demarcates 'some kind of other space which is not mine any longer, which I cannot penetrate, which does not belong to my world and yet is in my world'. In Schivelbusch's assessment, the train – which Danius refers to as a 'framing device on wheels – was a real-life replacement for the popular panorama and diorama technologies of the early nineteenth century, which created an illusion of travelling by reproducing views of distant land- and cityscapes – a fad, he remarks, that died away in Paris in around 1840, at approximately the same time as the first great railways opened.[29] The implication that the one

[26] For many early passengers, this was a tiresome feature of the new modes of travel, and as Anne Green has demonstrated, it functioned for a number of writers as a pessimistic metaphor for individual powerlessness in the face of a world changing beyond all control or comprehension: 'several [c19th] writers articulate a sense of apprehension by focusing on the dislocation between the view outside the moving window and the passenger who sits passively in his or her own enclosed space, detached from the passing scene. That image of the disengaged traveller appealed to disillusioned writers who had turned their backs on the political process after the failure of the 1848 revolution. For them it was a means of evoking the social imperviousness of a 'progress' which seemed independent of any individual agency, and whose powerless 'passenger' can only gaze uncomprehendingly at a two-dimensional outside world.' She cites Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale*, in which Frédéric sits in a train and watches the world outside 'passing in a barely recognisable blur […] flattening into an artificial backdrop, disconnected and somehow unreal'. While it is clear how the train thus experienced might function as a social or political paradigm, there are clear aesthetic implications in the idea of a 'two-dimensional world', seen from behind glass and therefore 'disconnected and somehow unreal' (Anne Green, *Changing France: Literature and Material Culture in the Second Empire* (London and New York: Anthem Press, 2011), p. 60).

[27] Schivelbusch, pp. 63, 53.

[28] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), pp. 309, 296.

[29] Danius, p. 113; see Schivelbusch, p. 62. In line with this assessment, the train was described in 1842 as 'la véritable lanterne magique de la nature', by the novelist Paul de Kock (via Jack Jordan, 'Proust's Narrator: Travels in the Space-Time Continuum', in *Au Seuil de la modernité*, pp. 151-163 (p. 155)).

experience replaced the other suggests that the railway had an aesthetic function right from the beginning. This function would continue with the advent of the closed car several decades later, as Lynda Nead has observed: 'with railway and motor travel, viewers no longer belong to the same space as the objects they perceive; they become more detached […] their viewpoint becomes that of the machine that moves them through the world.'[30] She and Danius both call on a telling assessment by the artist and motoring enthusiast Hubert von Herkomer, who declared in a 1905 interview that 'the pleasure [of motoring] is seeing Nature as I could in no other way see it; my car having "tops," I get Nature framed – and one picture after another delights my artistic eye.'[31]

If the train, and later the car, functioned as instruments of aestheticisation, the question that inevitably follows is: what *kind* of aesthetic approach do they promote or emulate? The train's elimination of the foreground, for example, might make us think of certain Impressionist paintings in which depth is suppressed and the scene 'flattened', while the blurring of the foreground itself recalls the lack of visual distinction that characterised the movement. In a letter of 1837 – remarkably early to have been travelling by train – Victor Hugo described the experience in decidedly Impressionistic terms:

> Les fleurs du bord du champ ne sont plus des fleurs, ce sont des taches ou plutôt des raies rouges ou blanches; plus de point, tout devient raie; les blés sont de grandes chevelures jaunes; les luzernes sont de longues tresses vertes.[32]

For Keller, the narrator's description of the sunrise seen from the train window reads like a tribute to Monet's *Impression: Soleil levant* of 1872. He points out that the Normandy coast is not far enough from Paris to justify taking a sleeper train, and argues that the fact the narrator does so

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[30] Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c. 1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 153. Gregory Votalato recounts that the closed car, as opposed to the earlier open- or canvas-topped automobile, was 'an established part of the motoring scene before the first World War', although it was unaffordable for the majority. It became commonplace by the later 1910s (Gregory Votalato, *Transport Design: A Travel History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), p. 76).

[31] Via Danius, p. 136; Nead, p. 155.

[32] Via Marc Baroli, 'Le Train dans la littérature française' (doctoral dissertation, University of Paris, 1963), p. 50. Lynne Kirby calls this description 'a curious mixture of impressionistic amazement at the visual blending and objects and colors along the way and an aesthetic orientation opposed to the machine' (Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), p. 28).

> est l'artifice narratif qui permet à Proust de commencer ce que l'on pourrait appeler la 'journée impressionniste de la *Recherche*', c'est-à-dire le séjour à Balbec, par un lever de soleil, exactement comme l'impressionnisme commence par le *Soleil levant* de Monet.[33]

The parallels with Impressionism suggest that, if we are to think of travel at speed as an aestheticising process, we should align it with the shift away from figurative realism. We have seen that what I term the 'linear-perspectival model' of train travel, which the narrator initially promotes, does not stand up under scutiny. In fact, the rejection of linear perspective by the Impressionists' modernist successors was a sea change that I propose owed something to mechanised movement. In the first essay of his seminal volume *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger credits *cinema* with setting in motion a shift in perceptive norms that made linear perspective untenable. By 'isolat[ing] momentary appearances', he argues, the camera 'destroyed the idea that images were timeless'.[34] Instead, it highlighted the fact that 'what you saw was relative to your position in time and space. It was no longer possible to imagine everything converging on the human eye as on the vanishing point of infinity.'[35] While perspectival artworks suggested that the spectator was 'the unique centre of the world,' the camera, and particularly the cinematographic camera, 'demonstrated that there was no centre'.[36] This, he implies, had a direct effect on painting, particularly Cubism:

> The invention of the camera changed the way men saw. The visible came to mean something different to them. This was immediately reflected in painting. [...] For the Cubists the visible was no longer what confronted the single eye, but the totality of possible views taken from points all round the object (or person) being depicted.[37]

What is particularly interesting about this comparison is the fact that there are also clear parallels between cinema and train and car travel, and thus, perhaps, between

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[33] 'Tableaux exposés', p. 124.
[34] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 11.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

travel and the shift away from linear perspective. Remarking on cinema's timeless fascination with the railway, Lynne Kirby argues that:

> Some would see the cinema's interest in the train as that of the double: the cinema finds an apt metaphor in the train, in its framed, moving image, its construction of a journey as an optical experience, the radical juxtaposition of different places, the 'annihilation of space and time'. As a machine of vision and an instrument for conquering space and time, the train is a mechanical double for the cinema and for the transport of the spectator into fiction, fantasy, and dream.[38]

If the train and the cinema are doubles, and if the cinema helped usher in a new aesthetics that rejected linear perspective, it is logical to conclude that the train also played a role in this process. I argued in Chapter 1 that movement at speed provided a means of expanding the perceptive faculty, as evidenced by Proust's Martinville episode. If we accept Bergson's thesis that artists are *already* in possession of an expanded perceptive faculty, it follows that their experiences of speed could have had radical perceptual and representational ramifications, perhaps even nudging painters from path that they had trodden since the Renaissance. The fact that Cézanne (who regularly travelled by train) seems to have begun to stray from this path before the popularisation of motion pictures lends itself to the conclusion that cinema might in fact have consolidated a process that the train had already – so to speak – set in motion.[39]

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[38] Kirby, p. 2.

[39] There are some complexities to sift through here. Thomas Vargish and Delo E. Mook observe that Cézanne 'allowed himself to suggest discontinuities in the premised realistic space of his compositions and often to show dislocations in the objects represented' from as early as 1880, beginning with his still life of that year, *Fruits, serviette et boîte à lait* (Vargish and Mook, p. 31). This was well before Auguste and Louis Lumière had recorded and screened their footage of workers leaving the Lumière factory in 1895, events often cited as the beginning of cinema. Writing in 1995, Virgilio Tosi acknowledges that a 'grand nombre de manifestations pour le centenaire du cinéma' were taking place that year ('Étienne-Jules Marey et les origines du cinéma' in *Marey/Muybridge, pionniers du cinéma: rencontre Beaune/Stanford* (Beaune: Conseil Régional de Beaune, 1995), pp. 134-143 (p. 135)). These celebrations, however, were the cause of some contention, given the numerous proto-cinematic technologies invented before 1895, notably Marey's chronophotographic gun, which he began using in 1882. In 1893, Eadweard Muybridge's Zoopraxigraphical Hall at the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago became the first pay-to-enter screening room, but Muybridge had been using the technology in question – the zoopraxiscope – since 1879. It would be too simplistic, then, to say that Cézanne's upsetting of traditional perspective *preceded* cinema – rather, it developed in tandem with it. However, it seems uncontroversial to suggest he would not have been overly familiar with cinematographic technologies as he developed these new techniques, even if he was aware of their existence. What is certain, however, is that he regularly travelled by train: Nina M. Athanassoglu-Kallmyer states that he 'shuttle[d] between' Provence and Paris, and that he 'walked or took the train [from Aix] to Gardanne [and back]

Arguments made by Fernand Léger and Umberto Boccioni in 1914 support this. In *Futurist Painting and Sculpture*, Boccioni remarks on the fact that 'trains, automobiles, bicycles, and airplanes have upset the contemplative conception of the landscape', and declares that 'since speed is now the normal state with which we see natural appearances, the fact of limiting ourselves to observing the landscape […] only through the lenses of perspective or anatomy is something against nature'.[40] An article of Léger's, published in Apollinaire's journal *Les Soirées de Paris*, elaborates on this idea, arguing that the culture of speed has brought about a new mode of perception and consequently a new means of visual expression:

> Si l'expression picturale a changé, c'est que la vie moderne l'a rendue nécessaire. L'existence des hommes créateurs modernes est beaucoup plus condensée et plus compliquée que celle des gens des siècles précédents. La chose imagée reste moins fixe, l'objet en lui-même s'expose moins que précédemment. Un paysage traversé et rompu par une auto ou un rapide perd en valeur descriptive, mais gagne en valeur synthétique; la portière des wagons ou la glace de l'auto, jointes à la vitesse acquise, ont changé l'aspect habituel des choses. L'homme moderne enregistre cent fois plus d'impressions que l'artiste du dix-huitième siècle; à tel point, par exemple, que notre langage est plein de diminutifs et d'abréviations. La condensation du tableau moderne, sa variété, sa rupture des formes est la résultante de tout cela.[41]

Proust's sunrise scene also corroborates this argument. No sooner has the narrator begun to enjoy the sight of his 'Impressionist' sunrise than the 'contemplative concept of the landscape' is 'upset', taking an abrupt step towards these new aesthetic trends. As the narrator is pressing his eyes to the window ('collant mes yeux à la vitre') in order to command a better view of what he sees, the

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every day' between 1885 and 1886 (*Cézanne and Provence: The Painter in His Culture* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 10, 108).

[40] *Futurist Painting*, p. 113.

[41] Fernand Léger, 'Les Réalisations picturales actuelles' [1914], in *Les Soirées de Paris: Revue littéraire et artistique*, ed. by Guillaume Apollinaire and Jean Cérusse (Paris: Conti, 2010), pp. 497-504 (497). It is worth noting that Léger was himself a filmmaker and perhaps, therefore, particularly attuned to the aesthetic value of mechanised movement. Boccioni was to respond to Léger's article with characteristic boasting in an article published in *Lacerba* in 1913: 'Léger's article is a true act of Futurist faith which gives us great satisfaction […] But […] he ought to know that dynamism, as a definitive system, received its *first* statement from the Futurist painters.' And later: 'We were the first to proclaim that modern life is fast and fragmented (words also used by F. Léger).' ('Futurist Dynamism and French Painting' [1913] in *Futurist Manifestos*, pp. 107-110 (pp. 107, 109-110).)

train changes direction and the scene within the window is immediately replaced by 'un village nocturne aux toits bleus de claire de lune' (II, 15-16). The narrator rushes to watch the sunrise from the opposite window, but the train turns again, 'si bien que je passais mon temps à courir d'une fenêtre à l'autre pour rapprocher, pour rentoiler les fragments intermittents et opposites de mon beau matin écarlate et versatile et en avoir une vue totale et un tableau continu' (II, 16). There is a cinematic quality to the event, as Danius has also noted: the scene no longer 'converge[s] on the human eye', and the human in question – moving in space and time – must change his relative position in order to keep it within his field of vision.[42] The train becomes a quasi-camera, offering up first the sunrise, then the moonlit rooftops in a rapid succession of contrasting frames. At the same time, it becomes the instrument of a modernist intervention into the narrator's 'journée impressionniste', revealing a patchwork of cubistic visual fragments that he must piece together. As Keller notes:

> Le terme de *rentoiler* n'est pas tout à fait exact: il ne s'agit pas de fixer une peinture sur une toile neuve, mais de composer le tableau en réunissant sur la toile des fragments. En effet, le soleil levant de Proust n'est pas un tableau impressionniste; le train en mouvement en fait un spectacle futuriste, et les fragments *rapprochés*, *rentoilés* ou – choisissons le mot juste! – *collés* en font un collage cubiste.[43]

The Cubist – or rather Cubo-Futurist – view from the window is matched by the narrator's transformation into a Cubo-Futurist subject who dashes from one window to the other, looking on the scene from a series of slightly different angles, his sideways motion combining with the forward motion of the train to create a dynamic whole. His euphoric mood notwithstanding, he calls to mind Duchamp's self-portrait, *Jeune homme triste dans un train*, of 1911 (a prototype for the more famous *Nue descendant un escalier*, of 1912), which Duchamp himself credited with introducing movement into Cubism, and which uses techniques inspired by chronophotography – a precursor to cinema – to depict both the forwards motion of the train and the motion of the young man who walks about inside it.[44] 'Pour lire ce

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[42] 'Scenery follows upon scenery, as in a film montage.' (Danius, p. 113.)
[43] 'Tableaux exposés', p. 124.
[44] See Thierry de Duve, *Nominalisme pictural: Marcel Duchamp, la peinture et la modernité* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1984), p. 26. The two do not map onto each other perfectly, since Duchamp himself stressed that his young man is moving *parallel* to the train (see Marcel Duchamp/Pierre Cabanne, *Marcel Duchamp: Entretiens avec Pierre Cabanne* (Paris: Somogy, 1995), p. 36).

tableau comme un autoportrait,' asserts Thierry de Duve, 'il nous faut prendre en compte un dédoublement du personnage de Duchamp'; as well as the Duchamp who moves inside the train, 'il y a […] cet autre Duchamp qui portraiture le mouvement relatif du premier, et qu'il faut bien imaginer sur le talus ou sur le quai, hors du train comme un observateur fixe'.[45] That a comparable doubling of selves occurs in the *Recherche* is a given: the novel is itself an elaborate, temporal self-portrait of a younger narrator-protagonist by an older incarnation.[46] It is precisely this doubling that allows us to imagine the scene at hand as Cubist (or Cubo-Futurist), because a fundamental realignment occurs in the space between the experience and its textual representation. The young narrator-protagonist is not consciously or intentionally a modernist spectator: preoccupied above all with the sunrise *itself*, which he feels to be 'en rapport avec l'existence profonde de la nature' (II, 15), he races around the carriage primarily in order to prolong his view of *what* he sees, and presses his eyes to the window as if in an attempt to traverse this physical picture plane and to reconcile himself with what is essential about the image. His aim, then, is to look *through* the means of representation to the represented reality. But in the older narrator's account, the focus is shifted away from the visual object and towards the *manner* in which it is seen, and in which the train represents it – that is to say, from a succession of perspectives, as a series of fragments. It is no longer an attempt to intuitively *know* the sunrise; as I asserted in Chapter 1 with reference to Cubism, the interest is no longer in any sense of completion, but in the breaking apart.

Moreover, this narrator-as-author seems very consciously to have 'Cubist-ised' the episode, since it relies on a further instance of what Keller calls *artifice narrative* – that is to say, the evidently implausible violence and speed with which the train twists and turns through the landscape. These contorsions enable the inclusion of a 'moment cubo-futuriste' into the broader 'journée impressionniste', and come across as a very deliberate – almost laboured – rejection of the directed linearity inherent in the projectile metaphor and, evidently, in the linear perspective system, both of which had mapped so neatly onto the model of train travel that the narrator had been extolling only pages before. This rejection of straight lines is a principle that will be furthered several volumes later by the experience of car travel,

[45] Duve, p. 27.
[46] This is not to suggest that a single, definitive 'narrator' or 'protagonist' can ever be pinned down. Individuals in the Proustian universe are plural and multifaceted; thus, within this basic duality of 'older narrator' and 'younger protagonist' (critics sometimes refer to the latter as Marcel, in order to highlight this distinction), a more untidy process of splitting and layering takes place.

which is defined by 'les tâtonnements mêmes du chauffeur incertain de sa route et revenant sur ses pas' and 'les *chassés-croisés de la perspective* faisant jouer un château aux quatre coins avec une colline, une église et la mer' (III, 394; my emphasis).

But in keeping with this principle, the narrative will twist back towards a more bucolic, Romantic aesthetic in the following scene, in which the narrator enjoys the sight of the young coffee-seller against the picturesque backdrop of her mountain home. Once again, the narrator's aesthetic of choice is underlined by an instance of narrative artifice, since there are evidently no mountains between Paris and Normandy – it is as if the train has contorted its route even further by taking a sudden detour through the Alps. As a step towards modernist aesthetics, then, the sunrise scene is a fairly tentative one, and the narrator will return to a more resolutely Impressionist aesthetic over the rest of the Balbec stay. At this stage, his commitment to modernist painterly techniques forms part of a broader aesthetic expanse that aligns with the train's own chronology – but it becomes more pronounced, I will argue, in his descriptions of the car.[47]

### ii. Car space: continuity, fluidity, abstraction

Car travel in the *Recherche* further distances the traveller from the linear perspective model, partly because it forces the narrator explicitly to rethink his appraisal of the relation between journey and destination, as we shall see in the first part of this section, and partly because it alters the relation between traveller and traversed space, as we shall see in the second. Initially, however, the narrator considers the car inferior to the train, as my first quote from *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* attests. This has also been suggested earlier, at the end of *Du Côté de chez Swann*, when the narrator laments the changes time has wrought over the Allée des Acacias in the Bois de Boulogne: 'hélas! il n'y avait plus que des automobiles' (I, 417). For Proust himself, the charms of car travel were well established by this point, as evidenced by his article 'Journées en automobile', and his reincorporation of part of it into the novel as the Martinville episode. The narrator, however, will not travel in a car for a further three volumes, until he hires one for his excursions around the Balbec region with Albertine in *Sodome et Gomorrhe*. Once again, a trip to Balbec becomes the occasion for a revelation about the nature of mechanised movement: the experience sparks a

[47] The train had fascinated artists since its earliest days, and continued as an artistic subject through Impressionism and into the modernist era: see, for example, Turner's *Rail, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway* (1844); Monet's paintings of the Gare Saint-Lazare (1877), Boccioni's triptych, *States of Mind* (1911), and Severini's *Train de banlieue arrivant à Paris* (1915).

rethinking of his previous disdain for the car, and a new reflection on its differences with the train, in the light of which the Martinville episode can be understood not just as the occasion for a moment of self-discovery, but as the adumbration of new realisations about the nature of space and distance. That these spatial transformations have aesthetic implications is made clear by the narrator's brief, unexplained assertion that art is 'modified' by them ('l'art en est aussi modifié'); my purpose in this section will be to offer an interpretation of what might be meant by this. I quote at some length:

> [Albertine] pensait bien que nous pourrions nous arrêter ça et là sur la route, mais croyait impossible de commencer par aller à Saint-Jean-de-la-Haise, c'est-à-dire dans une autre direction [...] Elle apprit au contraire du mécanicien que rien n'était plus facile que d'aller à Saint-Jean où il serait en vingt minutes [...] ou [de] pousser beaucoup plus loin, car de Quetteholm à La Raspelière il ne mettrait pas plus de trente-cinq minutes. Nous le comprîmes dès que la voiture, s'élançant, franchit d'un seul bond vingt pas d'un excellent cheval. Les distances ne sont que le rapport de l'espace au temps et varient avec lui. Nous exprimons la difficulté que nous avons à nous rendre à un endroit, dans un système de lieues, de kilomètres, qui devient faux dès que cette difficulté diminue. L'art en est aussi modifié, puisqu'un village qui semblait dans un autre monde que tel autre, devient son voisin dans un paysage dont les dimensions sont changées. En tout cas, apprendre qu'il existe peut-être un univers où 2 et 2 font 5 et où la ligne droite n'est pas le chemin le plus court d'un point à un autre, eût beaucoup moins étonné Albertine que d'entendre le mécanicien lui dire qu'il était facile d'aller dans une même après-midi à Saint-Jean et à La Raspelière. Douville et Quetteholme, Saint-Mars-le-Vieux et Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu, Gourville et Balbec-le-Vieux, Tourville et Féterne, prisonniers aussi hermétiquement enfermés jusque-là dans la cellule de jours distincts que jadis Méséglise et Guermantes, et sur lesquels les mêmes yeux ne pouvaient se poser dans un seul après-midi, délivrés maintenant par le géant aux bottes de sept lieues, vinrent assembler autour de l'heure de notre goûter leurs clochers et leurs tours, leurs vieux jardins que le bois avoisinant s'empressait de découvrir. (III, 385-386)

Just as the *côté de Méséglise* and the *côté de Guermantes* had seemed irrevocably separate to the young narrator because he and his family would never walk along both in the same day, so he had thought of the towns around Balbec as hermetically sealed off from one another because the distances separating them had made it impractical to visit more than one in an afternoon. But as the narrator realises, distance is really only a measure of difficulty, and when that difficulty is overcome, distance is broken down. When this happens, space can no longer be understood in accordance with the model put forward by the train – as a series of immutable and closed locations, independent *emplacements* whose rigidity is their most essential, defining quality. The barriers imposed by distance are transcended, as Georges Poulet explains in his study of Proustian space:

> Le voyage bouleverse l'apparence des choses. Plus précisément, il altère gravement la situation dans laquelle elles existent les unes par rapport aux autres. Avant lui, les lieux étaient comme des vases clos entre lesquels les distances mettaient des barrières infranchissables. Et voici que ces barrières tombent, que les distances s'abolissent, qu'à l'isolement des lieux succède une sorte de voisinage.[48]

True space, the narrator realises, is fluid and continuous, transcendent of the places that had appeared to compose it, greater than the sum of its parts. The experience of riding in the car forces the narrator to rethink the space he thought he knew, which now seems both bigger and smaller than he has ever given it credit for. Although this is a realisation about the nature of space, it can nonetheless be elucidated by Bergson's arguments for the indivisibility of *time*:

> Qu'est-ce au juste que le présent? S'il s'agit de l'instant actuel, - je veux dire d'un instant mathématique qui serait au temps ce que le point mathématique est à la ligne -, il est clair qu'un pareil instant est une pure abstraction [...] il ne saurait avoir d'existence réelle. Jamais avec de pareils instants vous ne

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[48] Poulet, *L'Espace proustien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 93. This prefigures the ability of the aeroplane to transcend spatial boundaries and national borders, an idea given a utopian slant in the early days of the invention, as Stefan Zweig's response to Blériot's 1909 flight across the Channel indicates: 'How useless, we said to ourselves, are frontiers when any plane can fly over them with ease, how provincial and artificial are customs-duties, guards and border patrols, how incongruous in the spirit of these times which visibly seeks unity and world brotherhood!' (Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* [1964], via Kern, p. 244.)

> feriez du temps, pas plus qu'avec des points mathématiques vous ne composeriez une ligne. Supposez même qu'il existe: comment y aurait-il un instant antérieur à celui-là? Les deux instants ne pourraient être séparés par un intervalle de temps, puisque, par hypothèse, vous réduisez le temps à une juxtaposition d'instants. Donc ils ne seraient séparés par rien et par conséquent ils n'en feraient qu'un: deux points mathématiques, qui se touchent, se confondent.[49]

To the narrator, space had seemed to be an accumulation of *places*, all of which had an identity of their own and were delineated on subjective terms, according to the capacity of the human body to experience them in a given amount of time. But as he now understands it, space is no longer made up of a series of 'places', just as a line, in Bergson's reasoning, is not made up of a series of mathematical points and time is not made up of a series of instants. Space contains places within it, certainly – places can be, as it were, 'extracted' from the space that contains them – but an accumulation of these places cannot *reconstitute* space any more than a series of instants can reconstitute time, a series of static positions can reconstitute movement – or, indeed, than an accumulation of analytic viewpoints can give intuitive knowledge. True space is fluid and continuous, transcendent of the places that had appeared to compose it; seen from a car, places are 'séparés par rien', and therefore 'n'en [font] qu'un.' A single place always carries with it the rest of space, just as the present moment is inseparable from 'le passé qu'il traine avec lui'.

Sometimes this reworking of space deprives places of the qualities that had defined them and made them unique. Such is the fate of Beaumont, which the narrator and his grandmother would visit in Mme de Villeparisis's carriage on his previous trip to Balbec: a vantage point from which only sea and woodland were visible, and which they would always reach by the same tree-lined road, returning the same way 'sans avoir rencontré aucun village, aucun château' (III, 393). The trip was always a lengthy one, because the steepness of the road required the horses to walk, and the narrator, in consequence, had always thought of Beaumont as 'quelque chose de très curieux, de très loin, de très haut' (III, 393). But the trip in the car strips it of this mysterious quality:

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[49] 'Perception', pp. 1385-1386.

> L'automobile ne respecte aucun mystère: après avoir dépassé Incarville […] je demandai comment s'appelait cet endroit et avant même que le chauffeur m'eût répondu, je reconnus Beaumont à côté duquel je passis ainsi sans le savoir à chaque fois que je prenais le petit chemin de fer, car il était à deux minutes de Parville. (III, 393)

The revelation of Beaumont's location in space removes its unique, subjective identity, recasting it as one of many points in a spatial continuity in which places cannot be bracketed off by personal or emotive meaning any more than they can by distance. The subjectivisation of Beaumont was enabled by carriage-travel, but it has been sustained by the railway, which compartmentalises the landscape into a network of destinations in which Beaumont, unseen from the train and with no station of its own, has been allowed to pass by, out of sight.

This, then, is the most marked difference between the understanding of space promoted by the car and the narrator's initial understanding of 'train space': the 'vases clos' that are kept enclosed and compartmentalised by the train start to bleed into the rest of space when experienced in a car.[50] Of course, as we have seen, the narrator's actual experience of train travel differs from his original assessment, taking a step towards this new understanding by shifting the emphasis from the destination itself to the journey through the surrounding space. The car, however, foregrounds the journey to the point that the destination – both the specific destination and the *idea* of destination – is categorically changed. In place of the supposedly fairytale-esque quality of the unique *emplacement* approached on a train, the narrator learns to appreciate 'ces cercles de plus en plus rapprochés que décrit l'automobile autour d'une ville fascinée qui fuyait dans tous les sens pour lui échapper et sur laquelle finalement il fonce tout droit, à pic' (II, 394). In 'train space', the unique *emplacement* of the destination town exerts a centripetal force on the space

[50] This impression is emphasised by numerous descriptions of the landscape itself as being in motion: the towns and their buildings hurry towards the speeding car, while the fir trees of La Raspelière '[cours] dans tous les sens' to avoid it (III, p. 386). This is an echo of the church at Martinville, which throws itself into the path of Dr. Percepied's carriage, and of Martinville itself, which is said to accompany the carriage for a few seconds before disappearing behind them. (This is in contrast to the train episode, in which the fragmented, episodic disappearance and reappearance of the sunrise is very clearly attributed to the movement of the train itself.) In Poulet's words: 'l'effet le plus marquant du mouvement par lequel le voyageur (imaginaire ou réel) passe d'un lieu à l'autre, c'est qu'il semble transmettre aux lieux mêmes la mobilité et l'activité unificatrice qui l'anime, de telle façon que ces lieux, eux aussi, entrent en branle.' (Poulet, p. 96.) Danius points out that this 'rhetoric of inversion', by which space, rather than the vehicle, as described as being in movement, is part of a more widespread tendency; it is also found in several contemporary accounts of motoring, such as Maurice Maeterlinck's 'En Automobile', Octave Mirbeau's *La 628-E 8*, and Eugène Demolder's *L'Espagne en auto*.

that surrounds it, drawing the train in towards it, but in 'car space' the destination expands centrifugally outwards, and the car must work against this force as it encircles it and eventually chases it down. No longer reducible to their names or their landmarks, the towns 'unravel' outwards into space; their 'essences' are no longer solid, contained units to be juxtaposed with each other, but something like a gradual condensation of the same space that surrounds them – the nuclei at the centre of these expansive spatial circles.

The changing relationship between journey and destination is mirrored by a shift in the relationship between the traveller and the traversed space. The narrator argues that the car allows the passenger to *experience* the landscape, rather than simply *witness* it:

> cet emplacement, point unique que l'automobile semble avoir dépouillé du mystère des trains express, [l'automobile] donne par contre l'impression de le découvrir, de le déterminer nous-même comme avec un compas, de nous aider à sentir d'une main plus amoureusement exploratrice, avec une plus fine précision, la véritable géométrie, la belle 'mesure de la terre'. (II, 394)

The destination is reached, then, not by cutting blindly through the landscape in a projectile, but by a process of exploration and discovery in which the traveller enters into and becomes part of space. This dual process of fusion – destination-space, traveller-space – is reminiscent of a broader modernist and proto-modernist devaluation of containment and centrality in favour of flux and continuity. This was explored in Chapter 1: it is implied in Impressionism's visual indeterminacy; in Elstir's blurring of the boundary between land and sea; in Cézannean and Cubist *passage*; in the Futurists' expansive, 'holistic' perceptive faculty; in Severini's suggestion that the Futurist artist's intuitive capabilities cast him as a receptor of the 'qualitative radiations' of objects; and in Boccioni's apparent belief in ether physics and his declaration that 'to paint a human figure you must not paint it; you must render the whole of its surrounding atmosphere'.[51]

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[51] 'Technical Manifesto', p. 28. This was also a preoccupation of poets at around this time: Marianne Martin, for example, has attributed the Futurists' belief in continuity to the influence of the poet Jules Romains and his notion of *unanimisme*. In his book-length poem of 1908, *La Vie unanime*, Romains had written: 'Je ne me souviens pas d'avoir jamais vécu, | Et d'être plus ancien que ce chaud crépuscule | *Où les yeux ne voient pas de formes séparées | Où l'on ne pense à rien qui ne semble total. | Chaque chose en prolonge une autre. Le métal | Des rails, et les carreaux éblouis; les entrées | De maisons; les passants, les*

In *Le Temps retrouvé*, the narrator will shift this model towards the domain of human psychology and behaviour, making implicit reference to the avant-garde as he does so. Having despaired of ever developing the perceptive faculty of an artist because he cannot notice detailed minutiae in the manner of the Goncourt brothers, he realises that he possesses a different *sort* of perceptive faculty, which instinctively looks beyond the surface appearances of a social situation to the depths beneath: 'ce qui m'intéressait, c'était non ce qu'ils voulaient dire mais la manière dont ils le disaient […] le charme apparent, copiable, des êtres m'échappait parce que je n'avais pas la faculté de m'arrêter à lui.' (IV, 297) Already, this interest in the manner of expression rather than the meaning sounds rather like the post-realist move towards prioritising the manner of seeing and representing over the seen object itself.[52] The result of this perceptual tendency of the narrator's is that the person him or herself is reduced to a minor element in a much broader web of psychological laws:

> Il en résultait qu'en réunissant toutes les remarques que j'avais pu faire dans un dîner sur les convives, le dessin des lignes tracées par moi figurait un ensemble de lois psychologiques où l'intérêt propre qu'avait eu dans ses discours le convive ne tenait presque aucune place. (IV, 297)

Aware that this falls outside the bounds of a realist definition of art, he justifies himself by likening his technique to visual portraits that could easily be modelled on Boccioni's *Matter* or Picasso's portrait of his dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler:

> Mais cela enlevait-il tout mérite à mes portraits puisque je ne les donnais pas pour tels? Si l'un de ces portraits, dans le domaine de la peinture, met en

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*chevaux, les voitures* | *Se rejoignent entre eux et rejoignent mon corps;* | *Nous sommes indistincts;* chacun de nous est mort; | Et la vie unanime est notre sépulture.' (*La vie unanime: poème* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1913), p. 141; my emphasis). Martin considers it highly likely that Marinetti spoke of Romains's work to the Futurist painters, since he visited Paris regularly and knew Romains personally (Marianne W. Martin, 'Futurism, Unanimism and Apollinaire', *Art Journal*, 18 (Spring, 1969), 258-268 (pp. 259-261)). Virginia Spate, citing Romains, Jacques Barzun, and Blaise Cendrars, has also described a tendency among poets at this time to use the image of 'the circular expansion of light […] to suggest the expansion of consciousness from the single self to embrace and become one with all of life' (Spate, p. 43).

[52] Jean-Yves Tadié's analysis in *Proust et le roman* suggests that this tendency figures as an important factor of the novel more broadly. With reference to the difference between the narrator's first impression of a character and the qualities the latter is subsequently revealed to have (as when the narrator unfavourably judges Saint-Loup on their first meeting), he remarks: 'il ne s'agit pas […] de montrer comment Proust peint ses personnages, ni même de réfléchir sur leurs secrets, ou leur dévoilement progressif, mais comment le héros-narrateur regarde, écoute le monde; non pas ce qu'il nous livre du monde, mais comment il nous le livre.' (Tadié, *Proust et le roman: Essai sur les formes et techniques du roman dans* A la Recherche du temps perdu ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1971), p. 39).

> évidence certaines vérités relatives au volume, à la lumière, au mouvement, cela fait-il qu'il soit nécessairement inférieur à tel portrait ne lui ressemblant aucunement de la même personne, dans lequel mille détails qui sont omis dans le premier seront minutieusement relatés, deuxième portrait d'où l'on pourra conclure que le modèle était ravissant tandis qu'on l'eût cru laid dans le premier, ce qui peut avoir un importance documentaire et même historique, mais n'est pas nécessairement un vérité d'art. (IV, 297)[53]

The car episode, I would argue, is an element in the narrator's artistic education that helps him on the way to this eventual realisation. The experience teaches him the value, not of the focal point of a given experience – the person speaking at a dinner or the eventual destination of a car journey – but of the whole of the surrounding network of phenomena to which it relates. Again, this can be aligned with the move away from a realist aesthetics based on linear perspective, which not only asserts a principle of singularity *within* the image by drawing the eye towards a singular vanishing point, but also individuates the image in relation to its broader context by demarcating it as a virtual, representational space, inviting the viewer to look *past* its surroundings, *through* the canvas, and *into* the image itself. By bringing its passengers into closer contact with the landscape, Proust's car troubles the boundary between viewing space and viewed space in a manner comparable to non-figurative painting, deconstructing the sense of virtuality and apartness that the train had imposed. This is most clearly demonstrated by the example of Beaumont, which is likened to a fictionalisation when the narrator has discovered its situation relative to the rest of space and wonders, horrified, whether 'Mme Bovary et la Sanseverina m'eussent peut-être semblé des êtres pareils aux autres si je les eusse rencontrées ailleurs que dans l'atmosphère close d'un roman' (III, 394). Beaumont was once a comparable 'atmosphère close': a clearly demarcated, quasi-virtual space. It is precisely these qualities that the car journey has removed. While the train presents and preserves the world as representation, as aesthetics, as fiction, giving a front-row view of the passing 'theatre', the car takes the spectator 'backstage':

[53] In Keller's words, this passage 'esquisse […] une poétique du portrait cubiste […] *Volume*, *lumière*, *mouvement* – autant de termes rappelant la peinture de Léger, Delaunay ou Duchamp' ('L'Impressionnisme', p. 63).

> Non, l'automobile ne nous menait pas ainsi fériquement dans une ville que nous voyions d'abord dans l'ensemble que résume son nom, et avec les illusions du spectateur dans la salle. Il nous faisait entrer dans la coulisse des rues, s'arrêtait à demander un renseignement à un habitant. (III, 394)

This impression is apparently reinforced by the lack of a clear physical boundary between traveller and space. It seems that in this instance, the landscape is *not* seen from behind glass: before the journey begins, the narrator asks the chauffeur to roll back the roof (he determines that they will close it later, so as to have more privacy, but we never actually hear of them doing so), while the intense summer heat means all the windows, if there are any, are likely to remain open. The narrator and Albertine, we might surmise, are thus in more direct contact with the passing landscape than they could possibly be in a train or a closed car, restoring the sense created by horse travel of being *part* of the traversed space. But crucially, we cannot say for sure, since the narrator has not told us explicitly; moreover, this assessment takes on a certain ambivalence when read in conjunction with the first paragraph of 'Journées en automobile', where Proust remarks that 'le vitrage de l'automobile, que je gardais fermé, mettait pour ainsi dire sous verre la belle journée de septembre que, même à l'air libre, on ne voyait qu'à travers une sorte de transparence' (*CSB*, 63).[54] In this account, the car lends the landscape a certain visual apartness even when the windows are open. The combination of these two observations problematises any definitive conclusion we might reach about the car's capacity either to pictorialise or to 'de-pictorialise' the landscape: on the one hand it seems, like the train, to mark out the view as a virtual space, qualitatively different from that occupied by the traveller, and on the other, to blur or even do away with this boundary by reinforcing the sense that landscape and traveller belong to the *same* space. This very ambiguity, I would suggest, is a further means of aligning the visuality of car travel with the move away from linear perspective: the car occupies an interstitial aesthetic position not unlike that occupied by the paintings that were considered in Chapter 2, which thematise their own materiality by asserting themselves as physical surfaces, but which nonetheless retain a representative,

[54] Jack Jordan has observed that Proust particularly valued the car's ability to separate him from the outside world: 'in an automobile he could go anywhere he wanted, when he wanted and, if necessary, remain insulated from whatever it was he had gone to see (for instance from flowers, to which he was allergic). The automobile was his enclosed little world.' (Jordan, p. 152.)

virtualising function and thus cannot be said to operate *exclusively* as objects in the world.

As well as aligning with broader aesthetic developments, the narrator's experiences of train and car travel also anticipate his own later realisations about the nature of the work of art he intends to produce. Stephen Kern has compared the narrator's understanding of train travel to his description of metaphor: the former, he suggests, is 'like a metaphor in that it "unite[s] two distant individualities of the world"'.[55] As I argued in Chapter 1, the point of metaphor in the Proustian context is to enable new meanings and new realities to emerge from the 'space' between the two elements, which suggests that the train ride aligns even more closely to the metaphor model than Kern's analysis allows. The train does not just 'unite two distant individualities'; the shift in focus to the journey itself means it is no longer simply a means of conveying the subject from one place to another, and thus of bringing the two together, but the creator of something new and valuable that emerges from the (physical) space between them. Chapter 1 demonstrated that the connection between the narrator and the perceptual object in the Martinville episode is like the metaphor process writ large, with the narrator's first piece of writing emerging from the interstitial space between them. Here, an act of passage between two points in space functions, comparably, as an amplification of the metaphor process: this time, what emerges from the interstices is not a text but a set of Cubo-Futurist quasi-paintings. In both cases, a mode of representation is born from the coming-together of two disparate elements. Read like this, the train is both a means of linking modernist aesthetics to the literary process that the narrator will later advocate, and a building block in his own artistic apprenticeship, foreshadowing his later realisation about the way art should function and the techniques it should use.

This dialectical model of bringing together two elements in a way that creates something greater than the sum of its parts is a fundamental tenet of the Proustian world. As well as metaphor, it also forms the basis of involuntary memory, in which the narrator is reimmersed in a past moment without leaving the present one, such that he transcends time altogether, reaching an extra-temporal state. This, too, can be linked to mechanised movement. Poulet has emphasised the importance of travel in the *Recherche*; journeys, in his view, 'y tiennent une place au moins aussi important

[55] Kern, p. 217.

que les souvenirs'.[56] A clue to this is his use of the term 'vases clos' to describe the narrator's pre-car view of the towns in the Balbec region; Proust himself uses the term on only two occasions, firstly to describe the perceived spatial isolation of the *côté de Guermantes* and the *côté de Méséglise*, and secondly, hundreds of pages later, to describe the temporal isolation of the past moments through which we have lived and which remain buried in the depths of memory. Space is delivered from these kinds of compartmentalisations by the car, and involuntary memory serves the same function for time. Clayton Alcorn has written in some depth about this link between the two phenomena:

> The auto has done for space what the *expérience proustienne* does for time, or rather, the auto ride produces a phenomenon similar to that part of the *expérience proustienne* which demolishes the spatial barriers between the two moments (workings of the *mémoire involontaire* occur only in Paris, but they link that city with Combray, Balbec, Venice, and so on). During the *moments bienheureux*, there is a sense of living absolutely simultaneously in two points of time and space. The present is not erased; it is, rather, joined to the past in a marvelous, mystical manner. In the auto ride, the union is less perfect: it still requires some time to go from Beaumont to Incarville, although much less time than the traveller has been accustomed to. The experience is of a lower order, but its similarity is incontestable.[57]

This is another manner in which the car is integral to the narrator's artistic apprenticeship. If the train offers a glimpse into the primary technique – metaphor – that the narrator must use if his work of art is to ring true, the car hints at its subject matter by prefiguring the dynamics of involuntary memory in its manner of transforming space.

Alcorn does not mention it, but in *Le Temps retrouvé* the narrator directly links the car to the importance of memory. Driving to the Guermantes' matinée, where a series of involuntary memories will give him the impetus he needs to pursue his vocation, he remarks on the transcendental nature of what is about to happen by

[56] *L'Espace proustien*, p. 92.

[57] Alcorn, p. 154. Jack Jordan has also commented on this: 'as memory brings together events isolated in time, so travel brings together places and people isolated in space. In both cases – in the internal, subjective travel of memory in time, and in physical travel in space – he is able to escape the paralyzing inertia and uncertainty in which he would otherwise be imprisoned.' (Jordan, p. 152.)

suggesting that his car is taking off: 'le sol de lui-même savait où il devait aller; sa résistance était vaincue. Et, comme un aviateur qui a jusque-là péniblement roulé à terre, "décollant" brusquement, je m'élevais lentement vers les hauteurs silencieuses du souvenir.' (IV, 437)[58] The linking of spatial locations through literal car travel might be of a 'lower order' to the linking of temporal moments through involuntary memory, but in the realm of metaphor, the car can overcome its restrictive, earth-bound existence by turning into an aeroplane, carrying the narrator into a realm of spatial and temporal transcendence. The aeroplane itself has great importance as a metaphor for the narrator's new understanding of time; as William Carter observes:

> the last two hundred pages of the novel, wherein the Narrator continues to explore the nature and purpose of art, amount to an ascension, replete with vertical imagery: airplanes, planets, telescopes, and people on stilts who stand tall, occupying space as they have occupied time. Proust uses vertical imagery and the example of the telescope to show that the Narrator can now see in time.[59]

The car that moves upwards, then, transcending spatial and temporal compartmentalisations, is a way of imagining the narrator's own 'ascent' towards the state of being an artist who perceives connections in time as well as space.

The train and the car – and indeed the aeroplane – thus have a privileged link to art in its Proustian definition. At the same time, they strengthen a nascent link between the foundational principles of Proust's artistic philosophy and the broader artistic developments that were contemporaneous with him. All of the examples given above – metaphor, involuntary memory, car and train travel – can be further linked to tendencies in modernist painting. As the car brings two places into the same continuous space, as involuntary memory brings two experiences into the same moment of extra-temporal transcendence, and as the metaphor brings two otherwise unlinked ideas into the same sentence, the privileging of the work of art's status as *object* over its representational function brings viewer and painting into the same

[58] In his use of this metaphor, the narrator aligns himself with his own much earlier definition of artistic talent, which he first uses to describe Bergotte: 'Le génie, même le grand talent, vient moins d'éléments intellectuels et d'affinement social supérieurs à ceux d'autrui, que de la faculté de les transformer, de les transposer. […] Pour se promener dans les airs, il n'est pas nécessaire d'avoir l'automobile la plus puissante, mais une automobile qui, ne continuant pas de courir à terre et coupant d'une verticale la ligne qu'elle suivait, soit capable de convertir en force ascensionnelle sa horizontale.' (I, p. 544-545.)
[59] Carter, p. 200.

spatial realm: the surface of the canvas does not function as an absolute boundary between virtual and actual space, but as a material surface in its own right. Furthermore, as the train focuses on the intervening space between two places, as involuntary memory highlights the essential, absolute importance of Time, which links the two moments, and as a new understanding of reality emerges from the aperture between the two elements in a metaphor, so the modernist focus on the act of seeing, rather than on the visual object itself, foregrounds the interstitial act that links viewer and viewed, casting vision not simply as a tool or a vehicle but as something tangible to be explored and interrogated. All these examples foreground interstices in a manner that reconciles elements that were thought to be irreconcilable, demonstrating a desire in both the Proustian world and the wider art world to break open any number of spatial, temporal, ideational, and aesthetic *vases clos*.

## II. Moving Observed: Practitioners of Speed

When it comes to witnessing other people controlling speeding vehicles, however, the story is quite different. I will argue in what follows that the act of watching somebody else move at speed, or display the signifiers of someone who does so regularly, creates what Proust would call a 'liséré' – an intangible, ineffable barrier that is an indicator of radical difference between the observer and the observed, and which condemns the former to a state of irretrievable outsidership.

### i. Myth, mechanicity, alterity

Not long after the narrator's first ride in a car, a journey on horseback through the Balbec countryside is the occasion for another novelty: his first sight of an aeroplane. It is not the sort of setting in which encounters with cutting-edge technologies are expected: the bucolic scene so recalls a pair of early Elstir watercolours, *Poète rencontrant une Muse* and *Jeune homme rencontrant un Centaure*, that their memory superimposes itself onto the surrounding countryside, leaving the narrator 'tellement au-dehors du monde actuel' (III, 417) that he half expects to run into a mythological being himself. But no sooner has he expressed this thought than an unfamiliar noise announces the aeroplane, which immediately flies into view:

> Je vis […] entre deux grandes ailes d'acier étincelant qui l'emportaient, un être dont la figure peu distincte me parut ressembler à celle d'un homme. Je fus aussi ému que pouvait l'être un Grec qui voyait pour la première fois un demi-dieu. (III, 417)

The human body, augmented by this radically new means of moving through space, takes the place of the centaur and the muse whose presence might otherwise have completed the scene. The pilot and the plane that transports him form 'a modern version of Icarus',[60] the god-like quality of the pilot fitting with a broader cultural association between flight and the divine, as Stephen Kern suggests:

> [The plane's] cultural impact was ultimately defined by deeply rooted values associated with the up-down axis. Low suggests immorality, vulgarity, poverty, and deceit. High is the direction of growth and hope, the source of light, the heavenly abode of angels and gods. From Ovid to Shelley the soaring bird was a symbol of freedom.[61]

This parallel emerges as a theme in Apollinaire's poem of 1911, *Zone*, in which a modernised Christ is lauded because he flies 'mieux que les aviateurs' and holds 'le record du monde pour la hauteur', while an aeroplane flies in the company of a selection of figures from antiquity and the Bible: 'Icare Énoch Élie Apollonius de Thyane | Flottent autour du premier aéroplane | Ils s'écartent parfois pour laisser passer ceux qui portent la Sainte-Eucharistie | Ces prêtres qui montent éternellement en élevant l'hostie.'[62]

In Proust's description, this crossover between the modern and the antique, the mechanical and the mythological, is underscored by the impossibility of visually separating the pilot from his plane. Clearly, the plane in question is an early biplane, with the head and upper body of the pilot visible from the exterior; as Akane Kawakami argues, it would be natural at this time 'to see pilot and plane as a conjoined whole'.[63] She cites an article published in *Le Figaro* on 19 December 1908, in which 'man and machine are referred to in one breath as "l'homme-oiseau"' (169).

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[60] Danius, p. 122.
[61] Kern, p. 242.
[62] Guillaume Apollinaire, *Alcools*, ed. by A. E. Pilkington (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), pp. 2-3.
[63] Akane Kawakami, 'When the Unfamiliar becomes Familiar…? Proust, Planes and Modernity' in Rye and Segal, p. 169.

Proust's description is not quite this explicit, but the same sentiment prevails. There is nothing in what the narrator sees to determine that the pilot and the machine are separate entities, and he cannot state with any certainty that the pilot is a human: he only *seems* to *resemble* one. Kawakami states that:

> The 'being' located between the wings, made up of a humanoid face and the fuselage, presumably, as seen from the front, appears as a creature who has relinquished its limbs in favour of inorganic wings, suggestive of what would come to be called cyborgs later in the century: the ultimate modern 'demigod', half-man, half-machine, a common enough image today, but still a novel metamorphosis in Proust's time.[64]

Kawakami's description recalls Fernand Léger's painting of 1920, *L'Aviateur*, in which there is no clear distinction between the plane and the aviator in question, who is rendered in the same steely greys as some of the machinery. As Christoph Asendorf observes, he is 'shown in a pose suggestive of nonchalant sovereignty, and barely needs to attend to the controls. Man and machine constitute a single functional unit'.[65]

Indeed, such a crossover between human and machine is a recurrent theme of avant-garde theory and practice. The notion of a 'mechanical man' who merges with the machine that transports him recalls Marinetti's intention, in Christine Poggi's words, 'to obliterate traditional distinctions between the organic and the inorganic, between sentient beings and the physical and mechanical world'.[66] The most pertinent *visual* realisation of this idea is perhaps Umberto Boccioni's sculpture of 1913, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (fig. 11), the culmination of a period of

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[64] Ibid.
[65] Asendorf, p. 207.
[66] Christine Poggi, *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 151. Marinetti's adoption of this idea was characteristically extreme: 'he sought, in poetry but also in art and in politics, to open a new field in which a chiasmic exchange of properties and attributes might occur. The Futurist male, "multiplied" by the machine, would exemplify a new superhuman hybrid adapted to the demands of speed and violence. Sportsman, aviator, or warrior, he would be capable of astounding feats of physical prowess. His inner consciousness, modelled on the running motor, would be emptied of all that was private, sentimental, and nostalgic.' (p. 151.)

**Fig. 11:** Umberto Boccioni, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, 1913

sculptural experimentation based on the motif of a humanoid figure striding through space (although unfortunately most of the early models were destroyed in 1917 by a group of over-zealous workmen, clearing out the Milan storage space in which they were being held). The form of the body, which recalls both the bulging muscle and sinew of an elite athlete and the harsh angles of machine parts, 'strives to represent the Nietzschean ideal of the heroic superman by realizing the dreamed-of fusion of human flesh and metal'.[67] Yet rather than thinking of this being as an unrealisable Futurist (and proto-fascist) ideal, bordering on science fiction, we can also read the sculpture as an allegory for the human body that travels at speed, mechanically and kinetically augmented by the vehicle that transports it. The warrior-like helmet

[67] Poggi, p. 70.

might be thought as a reference to the headgear of a chauffeur or aviator, and the flame-like projections emanating from the figure's legs as a reference to the rush of air around a vehicle that draws the hair and clothing of the passengers back in its wake. That same suggestion of flames, rendered in metal, recalls the heat generated by an engine or by bodily exertion, juxtaposed with the metallic chill of the machine's outer body. (Thought like this, it also becomes reminiscent of Proust's description of the car as 'le géant aux bottes de sept lieues' (III, 386).)

Disappointed by the criticism his sculptures had received while on display at the Galerie La Boétie in Paris in 1913, Boccioni turned back to painting that same

**Fig. 12:** Umberto Boccioni, *Dynamism of a Cyclist*, 1913

year. The result was *Dynamism of a Cyclist* (fig. 12), an unambiguous tribute to mechanised transport technologies and a clearer illustration of the quasi-fusion of flesh and metal that such modes of transport entailed: the cyclist in question, emerging barely perceptibly from a frantic mass of colours and lines, is

**Fig. 13:** Jean Metzinger, *Au vélodrome*, 1912

indistinguishable from the bicycle on which he rides. Boccioni was not alone among his contemporaries in suppressing the distinction between bike and rider: in Jean Metzinger's *Au vélodrome* of 1912 (fig. 13), the left shin and the bicycle frame share the same demarcating line; the left foot, in shadow, is indistinct from the pedal and the chain, and there is no discernible right foot at all. The dark lines, sharp angles, and dramatic divisions between planes give the appearance of a man pieced together from geometric fragments, in the manner of a machine. Duchamp's tiny pencil sketch, *Avoir l'apprenti dans le soleil* (1914), would barely be comparable to either of these two images were it not for the lack of distinction between the bicycle and its

rider. All these cases are reminiscent of the narrator's experience of seeing an aeroplane for the first time, since the bicycle appears less as an addition to the body than a part of it. In what seems like a re-emergence of an Elstirean visual mode, it is only the viewer's prior *knowledge* that signals out the rider and the bicycle as separate entities – the images themselves give no such information.

These instances of apparent fusion between the human body and its vehicle are in accordance with other representations and discussions of cycling from this period. As Leblanc declares in *Voici des ailes!*:

> La bicyclette est un perfectionnement [du] corps lui-même, l'achèvement, pourrait-on dire. C'est une paire de jambes plus rapides qu'on lui offre. Lui et sa machine ne font qu'un. Ce ne sont pas deux êtres [...] Il n'y a pas un homme et une machine. Il y a un homme plus vite.[68]

This idea – that cycling augments the human body to the extent that it acquires qualities that go *beyond* the human – recurs in numerous guises throughout cultural discussions or representations of it; Dauncey notes a tendency in the French media in the early twentieth century to '[present] the human body – that of Tour racers – as a machine whose performance could be described in terms of output and input, stress, power, productivity and effort'.[69]

Cyclists are described in a comparable fashion in *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*. Early in his trip to Balbec, the narrator notices a group of girls on the seafront, one of whom will turn out to be Albertine. She is the only one of the group who we know for sure is a cyclist, for the simple reason that she is pushing a bicycle, and the others are not. Nevertheless, Françoise Gaillard suggests that we might logically think of all the girls in the group as cyclists (and we know they are interested in sport more generally because two of them are carrying golf clubs). The proof, she asserts, is in their way of moving, in the relationships between their bodies and the surrounding space:

> Qu'importe que les bécanes de ces demoiselles soient restées ce jour-là comme bien d'autres à la maison. Tout dans leur allure, leurs manières, leurs attitudes, dit qu'elles sont 'vélo'. Ça se sent au rapport à leur corps qu'elles

[68] Leblanc, pp. 34-35.
[69] Dauncey, p. 112.

> négocient autrement; ça se sent à la relation qu'elles entretiennent avec l'espace. Elles savent d'instinct s'y placer, s'y déplacer. Elles sont bien dans leur peau. Elles sont à l'aise dans leur corps. Celui-ci, d'ailleurs, a changé. Le bas s'est musclé et en même temps étiré, affiné, allongé. La silhouette s'en trouve grandie. Au point qu'on s'interroge: de quelle race sont donc ces créatures […] si différentes, morphologiquement parlant, des autres jeunes filles?[70]

Of note here is the suggestion that the cycling body is a 'cycling body' even when it is not on a bicycle. The girls are certainly not fused to their bikes, as the riders in the aforementioned images appear to be; but while the body and the bicycle are detachable, the bicycle nevertheless leaves traces – is still, in a sense, present, even when it is absent. A certain reciprocity exists between the two entities, such that they are never truly apart. The girls' bodies have changed, and taken on a mechanical quality; the narrator notes that they move through the seaside crowd as might an uncontrollable machine: 'elles ne paraissaient pas […] voir [la foule], forçaient les personnes arrêtées à s'écarter ainsi que sur le passage d'une machine qui eût été lâchée et dont il ne fallait pas attendre qu'elle évitât les piétons.' (II, 149)

Elsewhere in the novel, cyclists are described in similarly mythological, quasi-human terms to the pilot. In *La Prisonnière*, for example, three young women leaning against their bicycles in the Bois de Boulogne are compared to 'trois immortelles accoudées au nuage ou au coursier fabuleux sur lesquels elles accomplissaient leurs voyages mythologiques' (III, 675); another young cyclist is described as '[une] jeune créature mi-humaine, mi-ailée, ange ou peri' (III, 678). After Albertine's death, the narrator will remember her bending over 'la roue mythologique de sa bicyclette […] la tête enturbannée et coiffée de serpents' (IV, 70). Cyclists and aviators are part of a new mythology, defined by their quasi-mechanical, almost superhuman qualities that set them apart from ordinary people (indeed, Carter has remarked on the process of 'evolution' that links them, via the chauffeur, as if practitioners of speed belong to a separate and rapidly evolving species all of their own).[71] The implication is that speed 'deifies' those who practise it; the pilot

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[70] Françoise Gaillard, 'A l'ombre des jeunes filles en vélo, ou l'invention de la jeunesse', *Cahiers de Médiologie*, 5 (1998), 81-85 <10.3917/cdm.005.0081> (para 4 of 13).

[71] 'For Proust and his contemporaries the chauffeur and the aviator were linked in an evolutionary way. To them the progression from cyclist to chauffeur to pilot was an observable and logical one. The immediate mechanical progression from car to airplane was self-evident since the airplane was in many

and the cyclist become mechanised *déesses* or *demi-dieus*, in contrast to the mortal narrator, who observes from a place of comparative stasis. His difference from the pilot is underscored by his horse, which ties him to the old kinetic order, while the image of Medusa, implicit in the description of Albertine as 'coiffée de serpents', obliquely draws attention to his own relative stasis and passivity. Elsewhere, Carter observes, 'Albertine seems almost overburdened with athletic equipment, as though Proust wants to make certain we do not overlook this aspect of her personality and the sharp contrast between the sedentary Narrator and the athletic girl'.[72]

This contrast is an underlying principle of the mysterious inaccessibility that is Albertine's defining quality, and which will plague the narrator throughout the novel. From the very beginning, she belongs to a separate world. The girls, all of them cyclists if we accept Gaillard's arguments, are indisputably a unit, remarkable for their athletic poise and their meticulous command of their own limbs; as she argues, they appear as a different species or race from the clumsy, inelegant crowd that surrounds them. They are described early on as being akin to a group of birds, 'une bande de mouettes' (II, 146), and later to a group of Grecian statues (II, 149).[73] Yet their physical features also appear to be in flux. At first the narrator notes not distinct, individualised bodies, but single facial features, which seem to belong first to one girl, then another, in what he describes as 'un flottement harmonieux' (II, 148). Cycling women seem to belong to their own anthropological or even zoological category, within which identity is collective, malleable, and interchangeable. They exist in a realm apart that reveals nothing of their individuality, and to which the narrator has no access. The idea that he might one day be a friend of these young girls seems ridiculous – 'une contradiction aussi insoluble, que si devant quelque frise antique ou quelque fresque figurant un cortège, j'avais cru possible, moi spectateur, de prendre place, aimé d'elles, entre les divines processionnaires' (II, 153). Entering the world inhabited by the young girls seems as impossible as stepping through the picture surface from material into virtual space. Even as he begins to distinguish them from one another, and to notice Albertine in particular, he is struck

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respects an automobile with wings.' (Carter, p. 14.) Proust himself seems to illustrate this idea in his descriptions of cars that turn into aeroplanes and take off.

[72] Carter, p. 54.

[73] A visual realisation of the idea that cyclists constitute not only a collective but a collective *machine* can be found in the German-based Expressionist Lyonel Feininger's 1912 painting, *The Bicycle Race*, as Bernard Vere has observed: 'The riders seem at one with their machines. Just as importantly, the *peloton*, or bunch, seems to move as one […] the riders collectively seem to constitute a machine composed of triangles' (Bernard Vere, 'Pedal-Powered Avant-Gardes: Cycling Paintings in 1912-13', in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28, (May-June 2011), 1156-1173, p. 1159 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2011.567769>.

by the private inner realities that seem hidden behind her eyes, which form a barrier of their own: like tinted windows or half-open doors, they hint at the existence of people, places, and experiences she has known and lived, and of which he knows nothing. That he singles out the memory of hippodrome lawns, and of paths down which she might have cycled, as particular examples of what this inner world might contain, suggests that her unattainable quality is intimately linked to her identity as a lover of sport and speed.

This implied alterity is reflective of a broader socio-cultural tendency, which 'othered' female cyclists by suggesting that they no longer fitted the definition of what it meant to be a woman. Although the narrator never mentions it outright, debates abounded in the late nineteenth century about the suitability of cycling for women, with 'guardians of morality' warning that it enabled and encouraged them to leave home unchaperoned,[74] and physicians that it posed a risk to the female reproductive system, as we saw in the introduction to this chapter. The most visible signifier of this new threat to femininity were the cycling bloomers that were worn instead of long skirts, and it is of note that while other girls at Balbec are sporty, Albertine and her friends are the only ones to wear specially adapted sporting clothes; as Carter asserts, 'we should […] realize that at the moment the hero first sights Albertine, she is – although he does not mention this aspect – an androgynous figure.'[75] In what was presumably a slight on such masculinising attire, a certain Mlle Wanda de Boucza, an actress at the Odéon theatre in Paris, is recorded as claiming in 1896 that 'la bicycliste constitue un troisième sexe', as a note in the Pléiade edition of the novel recounts (II, 1416). In the light of contemporary comment that viewed the female cyclist as, at best, unladylike, and at worst, barely a woman at all, it seems telling that the cyclist Albertine is suspected of being promiscuous (the narrator immediately assumes that she and her friends must be the 'très jeunes maîtresses de coureurs cyclistes' (II, 151)) and, later, a lesbian. She emerges as unfathomable and inaccessible not only because she is athletic, but because she does not fit into clearly defined gender parameters, erring instead towards what is perceived as a sort of gender 'hybridity'. This hybridity was a phenomenon of car culture as well as cycling culture: androgynous chauffeurs' uniforms had the same effect as cycling bloomers, but in reverse. This is illustrated by Proust's description of his chauffeur, Agostinelli, as 'une nonne de la vitesse' in 'Journées en automobile' (*CSB*, 67), or by the episode

[74] See Kern, pp. 216-217.
[75] Carter, p. 54.

in *La Prisonnière* when the narrator observes a woman walking in the street below his bedroom window, only to realise that 'she' is in fact a male chauffeur, dressed in a long leather coat (III, 643-644). Like that of the cyclist, the identity of the chauffeur is obscured, in doubt; the physical accoutrements of speed function as a disguise.

The aviator takes this further: in the narrator's description, he is a being of indeterminate species, transcending not gender but humanity itself. Moreover, he inhabits a realm – the sky – which, although part of the physical world, is just as inaccessible to the onlooker as the quasi-virtual realm inhabited by the young cyclists. In all these cases, then, the fact of being an active practitioner of speed, as opposed to a passenger, creates a sort of psycho-social veil that conceals identity and inner reality and prevents access to the realm or domain to which the practitioner belongs. Cyclists and aviators (and chauffeurs, up to a point) are represented in a manner that suggests they exist in a sort of 'beyond' space, in which contradictions are resolved, and seemingly unshakeable distinctions between states of being – human-animal, human-deity, human-machine, male-female – are transcended. Like Elstir, with his creation of a world in which the distinction between illusion and reality can be undone, Proust and his avant-garde contemporaries use metaphor and pictorial experimentation as a means of depicting a world in which a dialectical resolution such as this can occur – in which the 'vases clos' of identity can be broken open, allowing new 'hybrid' forms to emerge from the interstitial space between them. Yet this in itself creates a new paradox, since in doing so they erect another boundary between those who have access to this world and those who do not. This boundary, I will argue, can be further elucidated with reference to the theory of the fourth dimension.

### ii. New dimensions

As we have seen, the term 'fourth dimension' was prevalent at this time in learned and creative circles of various disciplines, reflecting a widespread questioning of the nature of time and space. Precisely what was meant by it is difficult to pin down: some theorists, notably the English mathematician Charles Howard Hinton, believed in and sought to prove the existence of an additional *spatial* dimension, perpendicular to the three known dimensions and imperceptible to the human eye. Others were more interested in its implications for time; as H. G. Wells has his Time Traveller say, '"there are really four dimensions, three which we call the three planes

of Space, and a fourth, Time."'[76] As I have already noted, Linda Dalrymple Henderson's extensive research has demonstrated that the concept was a source of inspiration and speculation for many in the avant-garde, although again there was no real consensus about its precise definition, and the extent to which it was a topic of earnest enquiry, rather than a fashionable buzzword or shorthand for a more general interest in new understandings of time and space, is in some doubt.[77] According to Marcel Duchamp, speaking in 1966, 'la quatrième dimension devenait une chose dont on parlait, sans savoir ce que ça voulait dire.'[78] But however vague its definition, the prevalence of such a concept is nonetheless an important indicator of a deeper hunger for a new version of reality that falls outside the rigid parameters of nineteenth-century postivism, Euclidean geometry, and Newtonian physics.

By far the most interesting interpretation of four-dimensionality, for our purposes, is that which sees it as linked to or enabled by movement and speed.[79] A rather cryptic passage of Boccioni's book appears to suggest – somewhat unsurprisingly – that the author subscribes to a version of four-dimensionality underpinned by movement, force and dynamism:

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[76] H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* [1895] (London, et al.: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 4.

[77] In *Les Peintres cubistes*, Apollinaire implies that use of the term was fairly generalised and unspecific: 'les peintres ont été amenés tout naturellement […] à se préoccuper de nouvelles mesures possibles de l'étendue que dans le langage des ateliers modernes on désignait toutes ensemble et brièvement par le terme de quatrième dimension.' (pp. 51-52.) Erasmus Weddigen and Sonya Weddigen-Schmid have also suggested that it was moulded to fit a variety of philosophical and artistic agendas. For the painter Albert Gleizes 'the new four-dimensional pictorial space was to unite the contradictions between space and time', while the German writer and critic Carl Einstein 'wanted to see the destruction of the hierarchy of time and space' (Erasmus Weddigen and Sonya Weddigen-Schmid, 'A Short Cycle Ride Through Art History towards New Dimensions' in *Cycling, Cubo-Futurism and the Fourth Dimension: Jean Metzinger's* At the Cycle-Race Track, curated by Erasmus Weddigen (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2012), pp. 10-29 (pp. 21-22)). Maurice Raynal went further, as they point out, claiming that 'si […] le peintre arrive à rendre un objet sous toutes ses dimensions il réalise une œuvre de méthode d'un ordre supérieur à celui d'une œuvre peinte sous les seules dimensions visuelles' (Raynal, p. 5). In his study of Surrealism and modern physics, Gavin Parkinson has analysed the importance for Salvador Dalí of the 'fourth dimension' in its later incarnation as Einsteinian space-time. The melting clocks of Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory*, he asserts, '[evoke] Einstein's notion of "time dilation"; that is, the relative variation, depending upon position in space, of the rate of temporal flow – the function within Relativity of the fourth dimension, [what Dalí referred to in his essay "The Tears of Heraclitus" as] the "delirious and Surrealist dimension par excellence".' (Gavin Parkinson, *Surrealism, Art and Modern Science: Relativity, Quantum Mechanics, Epistemology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 192.)

[78] Duchamp/Cabanne, p. 29.

[79] As Henderson has detailed, movement played an important role in Hinton's definition of four-dimensionality. His texts (*A New Era of Thought* (1888), *The Fourth Dimension* (1904), and numerous articles and short stories) explored the ideas that movement in space could generate a fourth dimension, or that a four-dimensional being or object could visibly pass through our own, three-dimensional space. Hinton's texts were not translated into French, but his ideas were referenced in a number of French texts on the fourth dimension, such as Maurice Boucher's *Essai sur l'hyperespace*, of 1903, so it was possible that members of the avant-garde were familiar with these ideas. For more on Hinton, see Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension*.

> The *dynamic form* is a sort of fourth dimension in painting and sculpture [...] If, with artistic intuition, it ever becomes possible to get close to a fourth dimension, we Futurists will be the first to arrive there. In fact, with the sole form that depicts continuity in space, we're creating a form that's the sum of the potential developments of the three known dimensions. For this reason, we can't depict a *measured and finite* fourth dimension, but rather a continuous projection of forces and forms that are intuited in their infinite development. The single dynamic form whose existence we've declared is, in reality, only the suggestion of a form of motion that appears for an instant and is then lost in the infinite unfolding of its multiplicity.[80]

Precisely what is meant here is uncertain; critics have drawn different conclusions as to the wider theoretical implications of the passage, although certainly Boccioni's reliance on notions of continuity and intuition betrays his debt to Bergson.[81] What is particularly striking, however, is the almost word-for-word reference to the title of the 1913 sculpture that we considered above: the 'sole [unique] form that depicts continuity in space'. We might logically conclude that the sculpture is intended as a representation or investigation of four-dimensionality; that it is in some way 'the sum of the potential developments of the three known dimensions'. What is also intriguing is the fact that this four-dimensional 'single dynamic form' is simply a form of movement 'that appears for an instant and is then lost in the infinite unfolding of its multiplicity'. For all the abstruseness of Boccioni's prose, this sounds rather like what a static viewer would see of a speeding vehicle, which *would* appear for an instant only to be lost, continuing on with no end in sight. I have already argued that *Unique Forms*, seemingly an expression of four-dimensionality, can also be read as an allegory for the human body moving through the world in a speeding vehicle. Are we to infer, then, that mechanised speed is *itself* a form of four-dimensionality?

A potential answer to this question can be found in Georges Poulet's analysis of movement in Proust, in his early study, *Études sur le temps humain*. In what must

[80] *Futurist Painting*, pp. 115-116.

[81] Henderson assumes that the 'sole form' is represented by the sculpture *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, and suggests that the figure depicted in the sculpture might be an attempt to represent a three-dimensional part of a four-dimensional form as it passes through our space ('Italian Futurism and the "Fourth Dimension"', *Art Journal*, 41 (Winter 1981), 317-323, p. 321). Drawing on her work, Mark Robert Antliff argues that Boccioni's fourth dimension is an expression of the Bergsonian notion of 'extensity' – neither pure *durée* nor scientific, homogeneous space, but the lived combination of the two that defines our human experience ('The Fourth Dimension and Futurism', p. 720 [eg.]).

surely be a nod – if a vague one – to Proust's own use of the term 'quatrième dimension' in *Du Côté de chez Swann*, which I will consider in due course, Poulet argues that movement in time and space gives access to a new, four-dimensional reality:

> N'est-ce pas proprement le rôle du temps de surmonter cette exclusivité réciproque des points de vue qui est le propre de l'espace? Tels les clochers de Martinville, apparaissant d'abord en face d'un spectateur immobile, au fond d'une perspective immuable, ne livrant alors d'eux-mêmes qu'un aspect nécessairement 'épisodique et momentané'; mais qui, dès qu'ils se trouvent engagés par le déplacement du spectateur dans un mouvement inverse, entrent par le simple changement successif de leurs lignes, dans un univers tout différent; un univers qui n'est plus celui où les trois dimensions de l'espace composent à elles trois un univers épisodique et momentané, mais un univers où la quatrième dimension, qui est celle du temps, fait sortir l'objet de l'épisodique et du momentané pour en livrer tous les aspects au spectateur se mouvant à la fois dans l'espace et dans le temps.[82]

He continues:

> Le temps est […] comme une quatrième dimension qui en se combinant avec les trois autres, *achève* l'espace, rapproche et rentoile ses fragments opposites, enferme en une même continuité une totalité qui autrement resterait toujours irrémédiablement dispersée. Vu à travers le temps l'espace se trouve délivré, transcendé.[83]

In this account, four-dimensional space is not an imperceptible, inaccessible realm, but the space we know and inhabit, altered and redefined by the visible unfolding of time. Although Poulet does not state it, it seems safe to conclude that this unfolding is enabled by *mechanised* movement in particular; as we are by now well aware, the Martinville episode is brought about by a journey in a 'car in disguise', and the narrator's first explicit description of car travel, which we discussed above, also fits Poulet's description here. The aeroplane is surely the ultimate enabler of this spatial

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[82] Poulet, *Études sur le temps humain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1949), p. 398.
[83] Ibid., p. 399.

transformation: moving both at speed and upwards, into the *third* dimension, it 'delivers' space from fragmentation, offering up a view of the landscape in its totality. To varying degrees, then, mechanised transport technologies can overwrite the old version of space with the new. Active practitioners of speed, I would argue, have a particularly privileged relationship to this continuous, 'total' space, since they enter it under their own control and on their own terms, while those who travel slowly or who remain static are, by contrast, confined to the old, fragmented, episodic version. Static humans are separate from speeding humans not only because the latter are physically 'mechanised' or because their identities are in doubt, but also because they occupy a separate dimensional reality.

I am not suggesting that Poulet's description here should be taken as a decisive answer to the 'fourth dimension question'; indeed, his use of the term is largely metaphorical and acknowledges neither its many possible scientific or critical definitions, nor its place in cultural history. Rather, it provides one possible means of shedding light on an extremely woolly concept, which, in the case of the avant-garde, was always confined to the realm of metaphor and inference anyway, the lack of consensus as to its true meaning freeing up artists and writers to use and represent it as they saw fit. What is more important than settling on a clear definition is the suggestion that there might be a distinction between those who can access a four-dimensional space and those who cannot, and that mechanised movement might be the means of providing such access.

This distinction is made tangible in Metzinger's *Au vélodrome*, which Erasmus Weddigen and Sonya Weddigen-Schmid argue was also an attempt to engage with a concept of four-dimensionality. The painting is the last in a series of three, all of which depict racing cyclists – subject matter that trespasses onto Futurist territory, with the transparency of the third cyclist's body in particular recalling Boccioni's declaration in the Technical Manifesto of Futurist painting that 'movement and light destroy the materiality of bodies'.[84] The number 4 appears in all of them: on the

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[84] 'Technical Manifesto', p. 30. Weddigen and Weddigen-Schmid dub the series 'Cubo-Futurist', and point out that Metzinger was friends with Gino Severini, who lived in Paris; that the latter had arranged for Boccioni and Carrà to visit Metzinger's studio when they were in Paris in 1911, and that Metzinger would undoubtedly have also taken an interest in the exhibition of Futurist painting at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris in 1912. Citing Henderson's research, they claim that Boccioni in particular was impressed by what he saw on his visit to Metzinger's studio (see Weddigen and Weddigen-Schmid, p. 28; note 50). This, however, paints a more amicable picture of Boccioni's relations with the Cubists than we have come to expect. Vere's assessment is more in line with what we know about Boccioni's general attitude to his French rivals – not to mention with the fact that in 1913 he would 'gleefully [point] out that the Cubist critic Roger Allard had already expressed "a number of doubts about the Futurist dynamism of J. Metzinger"' (via Vere, p. 1169). Vere suggests that Boccioni's *Dynamism of a Cyclist* might be a response to *Au vélodrome*, particularly since he went on to produce *Dynamism of a Footballer* – 'surely

cyclist's back in *Le Bicycliste*, the first in the series; on his arm in the second, *Coureur Cycliste*, and on a sign above the grandstand hoardings in *Au vélodrome*. Weddigen and Weddigen-Schmid take this as a reference to the fourth dimension, since the number '[is] important neither for the rider's identity nor for the details of the contest'.[85] Metzinger was interested in the concept, without doubt; a subsequent painting, now lost, was entitled *Nature morte (4e dimension)*, and he declared in a letter to Gleizes of 1916 that 'the fourth dimension holds no more secrets for me. Before I had only ideas, now I have certainty.'[86] The viewer, of course, can have no such certainty – the lost painting might have helped to pinpoint what remains unclear in the cycling paintings. Nonethless, it remains to be observed that the cubistically geometric, futuristically transparent form of the cyclist implies the sort of avant-garde investigation into spatiality that, in Apollinaire's account, was generally referred to by the shorthand 'fourth dimension' (see note 77), and if Metzinger was intentionally flirting with Futurism at this time, it makes sense that his version of four-dimensionality would be based on movement, dynamism and speed.

The fact that Metzinger's only painting explicitly to reference the fourth dimension was a still life suggests he soon gave up on trying to link four-dimensionality to movement, and for Weddigen and Weddigen-Schmid, there is no doubt that the cycling painting falls short in its attempt to explore the concept, if that is indeed its aim. Part of this failure is the fact that the crowd, confined behind the hoardings of the grandstand, is rendered in traditional academic perspective. Ultimately, they conclude, 'the conventions of Euclidean geometry and perspective were stronger, for Metzinger, than avant-gardist demands for a reassessment of traditional values'.[87] Boccioni would likely have had qualms about this use of perspective, given that it implies a *finite* fourth dimension, restricted to the space inhabited by the cyclist himself. But I read this as more than simply a stylistic inconsistency. Indeed, the perspectival distinction between the cyclist and the crowd serves to heighten the impression that they exist not merely in separate spaces, demarcated by the white barrier of the grandstand, but in separate spatial *systems*, one of them conventional and old-fashioned, the other new and revelatory. The sign on the hoardings, reading 'PARIS-ROUB' and pasted from a real newspaper, informs

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a response to Gleizes's *The Football Players*'. If so, it was likely he was trying reclaim what he saw as Futurist subject matter from its usurpers in Paris.

[85] Weddigen and Weddigen Schmid, p. 24.

[86] Via Weddigen and Weddigen Schmid, p. 23.

[87] Weddigen and Weddigen-Schmid, p. 26.

us that the cyclist is taking part in the gruelling Paris-Roubaix cycle race, and that he has been travelling not just around the velodrome but many kilometres across northern France. We could speculate that the experience has altered his view of the space he has traversed in a manner that fits Poulet's description of four-dimensionality, whereas the spectators – seated in a confined space, their sightlines blocked by the walls of the velodrome – remain in the fragmented, episodic space of pre-mechanisation, as their perspectival rendering implies. What is more, the general culture of professional cycling at this time demonstrated a wilful ideological distancing between spectators and competitors, the former hero-worshipping the latter with a fervour that 'came close to the cult for touching icons, reliquaries and lingams'.[88] In the light of this, it is pleasing to note Hinton's declaration, in his book of 1904, that the concept of four-dimensionality was 'generally embraced by our religious faculties, by our idealising tendency'.[89]

In the *Recherche*, Proust demonstrates at least a passing interest in the furore surrounding the concept of the fourth dimension. If he can be said to belong to a particular school of thought, it is to that which sees time as a fourth dimension, as is implied when the narrator describes the church at Combray as 'un édifice occupant, si l'on peut dire, un espace à quatre dimensions – la quatrième étant celle du Temps' (I, 60). The church as the narrator experiences it is a three-dimensional 'section' of its four-dimensional existence, although the successive epochs through which the church has passed have left traces, visible and tactile evidence of its spatio-temporal coexistence.[90] The fact that his *own* life unfolds in 'space-time', to borrow a phrase from Einstein, will become clear at the end of the novel, when he recognises time as 'cette dimension énorme que je ne me savais pas avoir' and realises that involuntary memory suppresses 'cette grande dimension du Temps suivant laquelle la vie se réalise'.[91] Well before the narrator has recognised this aspect of time, however, he has

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[88] Ibid., p. 11.
[89] Charles Howard Hinton, *The Fourth Dimension* (London: Swan Sonnechschein & Co.; New York: John Lane, 1904), p. 1.
[90] For more on Proust's 'four-dimensional' understanding of time, see Diane R. Leonard, 'Proust in the Fourth Dimension', in *Au Seuil de la modernité*, pp. 165-178; see also Richard Durán, 'Fourth-Dimensional Time and Proust's "A la recherche du temps perdu"', *South Atlantic Review*, 56 (May 1991), 73-90.
[91] It is almost certain that Proust, by this stage, had at least a layperson's awareness of Einstein's notion of four-dimensional space-time, an integral part of relativity theory, since relativity had entered the public consciousness in 1919, when a well-publicised English astronomical expedition successfully set out to validate his theories through observation of a total solar eclipse. As John D. Erickson has pointed out, there was a vogue in the 1920s for comparing Proust to Einstein: 'for a brief period, largely in the early twenties, a few critics thought they had discovered the key to the structure of *A la recherche du temps perdu*.' (Erickson, 'The Proust-Einstein Relation: A Study in Relative Point of View', in *Marcel*

been confounded by his awareness of Albertine's 'four-dimensional', spatio-temporal existence. Her memories of the past, her desires for the future, and the spaces she has known and will yet know inevitably slip from his grasp. Their cohabitation in *La Prisonnière* will teach him that the object of love is not simply a physical being, 'un être [...] enfermé dans un corps', but 'l'extension de cet être à tous les points de l'espace et du temps que cet être a occupés et occupera' (III, 607-608). It is impossible, therefore, to truly inhabit or possess the beloved: 'si nous ne possédons pas son contact avec tel lieu, avec telle heure, nous ne le possédons pas. Or nous ne pouvons toucher tous ces points.' (III, 608) As Carter has it:

> The person he desires is […] fugitive, always fleeing, *insaisissable*, moving away from him at a rate that increases in direct proportion to his desire. The conception of woman as the geometric embodiment of space-time is expressed in a maxim: 'L'amour, c'est l'espace et le temps rendus sensibles au coeur.'[92]

Carter goes on to point out that speed and desire are intimately linked in the *Recherche*. The narrator, he notes, 'desires only those girls who are in motion or those whom he sees while he is moving, which also endows them with fugacity'.[93] Of all these girls, it is the sport-loving Albertine whose character is most defined by movement; it is no coincidence that it is also she whom the narrator most desires, and whose unknowable quality causes him the most anguish. Her passion for physical movement and speed directly correlates, then, to her internal fugacity: her actual status as a cyclist is a physical manifestation of her metaphorical status as an

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*Proust: A Critical Panorama*, ed. by Larkin B. Price (Urbana, IL, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1973), pp. 247-276 (p. 251).) In 1922, Proust described one such comparison, made by Camille Vettard as 'le plus grand honneur que je puisse recevoir' (letter to Vettard, *Corr.*, XXI, p. 396). Nevertheless, he also confessed his inability to understand Einstein's theories in a letter to the Duc de Guiche in 1921: 'Que j'aimerais vous parler d'Einstein! On a beau m'écrire que je dérive de lui, ou lui de moi, je ne comprends pas un seul mot à ses théories, ne sachant pas l'algèbre.' (*Corr.*, XX (1921), p. 578.)

[92] Carter, p. 35. Jordan relates this impossible situation to relativity theory, and Einstein's use of the train as an image with which to illustrate his argument: 'not only can he never find out exactly what [Albertine] is doing, and with whom she is doing it, he cannot even escape the confines of his own temporal context. As Einstein explains, events which are simultaneous with reference to one coordinate system (such as on a train) are not simulaneous with regard to another (such as on the embankment): "Every reference-body (co-ordinate system) has its own particular time; unless we are told the reference-body to which the statement of time refers, there is no meaning in a statement of the time of an event". The Narrator will try to imprison Albertine on the train, in the compartment, in his arms, and even there cannot do it because of what is going on outside the train, in the compartment, inside Albertine, and inside his own self. There are far too many 'coordinate systems' to arrive at any solid, fixed certainty.' (Jordan, pp. 158-159.)

[93] Carter, p. 46.

'être de fuite' (III, 599). As Carter remarks, the narrator first hears of Albertine when she is described by Gilberte as 'sûrement très *fast*', a clever *double entendre*; 'it is evident,' he asserts, 'that Proust chose the English word because of its double meaning: rapid movement through space and sexual promiscuity.'[94] The word foreshadows the fact that Albertine cannot be 'stilled', whether physically, emotionally, or sexually.

Moreover, Albertine is figured not just as in motion but as a geographical space. When he first catches sight of her with the *petite bande*, the narrator imagines their inner lives as spaces into which he would like to advance:

> C'était […] toute sa vie qui m'inspirait du désir; désir douloureux, parce que je le sentais irréalisable, mais enivrant, parce que ce qui avait été jusque-là ma vie ayant brusquement cessé d'être ma vie totale, n'étant plus qu'une petite partie de l'espace étendu devant moi que je brûlais de couvrir, et qui était fait de la vie de ces jeunes filles. (II, 152)

Albertine herself is frequently associated with the sea. The image of her 'silhouettée sur l'écran que lui fait, au fond, la mer' will remain one of the narrator's abiding memories (II, 186). Later, however, he will imply that Albertine's relation to the sea is considerably less easily contained than the flatness of a screen suggests, given that she seems in fact to contain the sea within herself: 'quand elle […] fermait [ses yeux], c'était comme quand avec des rideaux on empêche de voir la mer' (III, 528). At once almost infinitely expansive and unfathomably deep, the sea is a telling metaphor for an internal self that extends both synchronically and diachronically. Moreover, it is visibly continuous in a way that landscapes – littered with trees, mountains, buildings, and so on – are not, unless of course they are 'delivered' from fragmentation by movement at speed. Looking in from the outside, the narrator has only a limited, partial view of this continuous space. He is like one of the spectators in Metzinger's *vélodrome*, or a pedestrian who watches an automobile speed by, aware that what he is witnessing cannot be caught or contained, and that it exists in a spatio-temporal reality that must remain separate from his own. The difference is that the narrator, not content to hero-worship his cyclist from afar, cannot accept this state of outsidership even though he knows his attempts to overcome it are futile.

[94] Ibid., p. 52.

Precisely *how* he attempts to overcome it will be considered in more depth in the second half of Chapter 4.

# 4. Human Boundaries: Walls, Skins, Self, Other

## Introduction: The Self, Inside and Out

The second half of Chapter 3 considered the idea that a certain – mechanical – type of human exists on a separate, inaccessible plane that cannot be entered by those who do not belong to the same select group. Integral to this set-up is an absolute boundary that separates each party: one is fully 'inside' his or her own plane, and one is locked out, separated from the other as if by an unbreachable barrier. This opposition of outsidership and insidership was heightened, as we saw, by the sense that the other exists in a separate dimension or realm. Of course, we might think of this simply as an amplified version of what is already a fundamental aspect of self-other relations – namely that selfhood is a matter of interiority and 'otherhood' is a matter of exteriority. I exist inside myself; everything else is external to me and I am external to it. Learning as much is a normal and necessary part of a child's development, although it may be a distressing one. Sylvia Plath's short story 'Ocean 1212-W' beautifully illustrates the disappointment of this moment of realisation, which occurs after the birth of a younger sibling: 'as from a star I saw, coldly and soberly, the separateness of everything. I felt the wall of my skin; I am I. That stone is a stone. My beautiful fusion with the things of this world was over.'[1] And yet a human being is not entirely closed off, hermetically sealed like a fragment of space or time not yet delivered from its isolation by movement at speed or involuntary memory. We are exterior beings too: we communicate with each other in various ways, often as a means of externalising our inner experience. It is this interaction – or perhaps conflict – between states of interiority and exteriority that interests me here.

This chapter compares Proust's work to the paintings and writings of the Surrealist artist, Dorothea Tanning, and marks something of a shift in conceptual language. While Chapters 1 to 3 have centred, broadly speaking, around the ontological and the phenomenological – how human beings understand and perceive the wider world – here I move into the realm of the psychological, and more specifically the psychoanalytic. This shift enables me to examine what are still,

[1] Sylvia Plath, *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams and other prose writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), pp. 123-130 (p. 126).

essentially, relationships between the subject and the external world: in the first half, I argue that the subject's experience of selfhood is defined by a close interaction between the internal self and external, private architectural spaces, like bedrooms and apartments, with the latter providing, variously, a structure for self-identity, a projective extension of the self, its allegorical expression, or its protective – or oppressive – casing. In the second half, I consider the subject's experience of relating to another person – specifically a heterosexual partner and cohabitee – whose own self remains partially, if not totally hidden away. Both sections hark back to Chapter 2 by using architectural metaphors – rooms and walls, in this case – to articulate these relationships, while the second half expands on my investigation in the last section of Chapter 3 by continuing to explore the relevance of spatial metaphors in Proust's narrator's experience of Albertine's alterity. In doing so it interweaves the psychoanalytic discourse with an epistemological one, related to that used in Chapter 1, but asking a much more specific question: not 'how can I know the world?', but 'how can I know another person?'

### i. The spatial self

The quest to understand the self is often figured as a process of retreat, and of internal exploration: Freudian psychoanalysis, for example, is centred around just such an exploration. Indeed, Freud might seem particularly germane to this investigation, given that Surrealism owes its existence to his influence on André Breton,[2] while *A la recherche du temps perdu*, in Elisabeth Ladenson's words, has 'long provided something of a field day for psychoanalytic criticism' – partly, she writes, because 'much of "Combray" in particular sounds as though it might have been written by Freud himself, under a Gallic pseudonym, to dramatize his theory of the Oedipus complex.'[3] (This is in spite of the fact that Proust, as we know, had never read Freud.) It should come as little surprise, then, that both Proust and the Surrealists commit to a philosophy of introspection, conceiving of the self as an interior world or space to be explored. This sense of spatiality is indicated by a variety of metaphors. For example, the opening section of Breton and Philippe Soupault's jointly-written automatic text, *Les Champs magnétiques* (1919), is entitled 'La Glace sans tain', which in Katharine Conley's argument, 'suggests the possibility of looking through, instead

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[2] In the First Manifesto of Surrealism, Breton explains that the original Surrealist practice of automatic writing was an attempt to practice Freudian techniques on himself (see *Manifestes*, p. 33).
[3] Elisabeth Ladenson, *Proust's Lesbianism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 109.

of into, the reflective surface of a mirror, as though staring through glass from one state of consciousness into another'.[4] What she does not acknowledge is that a *glace sans tain* differs from a mirror in a crucial respect: it is a reflective window that conceals an inner room from which an observer can look out, unseen. Thus, if Surrealist practice is a means of looking through the reflective surface, the unconscious itself must be the *room*.

If Susan Harris Smith's contention (cited in Chapter 2) is correct, the same thing is implied in Surrealist visual depictions of figures who look through windows and into rooms that stand for unconscious spaces. Among Smith's examples are images from Max Ernst's collage novel, *Une semaine de bonté* (1934): in one, a woman looks in through a bedroom window at an Easter Island head atop a figure in Victorian dress, regarding itself in a mirror; in another, a sphinx stares into a train carriage at a besuited monkey and the prostrate legs of a woman. In Hal Foster's words, numerous images in this work and in Ernst's other collage novels (*La Femme 100 têtes*, of 1929, and *Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au carmel*, of 1930) cast nineteenth-century bourgeois interiors as 'an implicit mise-en-scène of the unconscious'.[5] Ernst's original source material for the collages – outmoded images from old books and magazines etc – are imperceptibly transformed and made strange, 'relocate[d] […] in psychic reality through the substitution of surrealist figures of the unconscious: an Easter Island head […], a lion head[…], and a general becoming animal'.[6]

The first section of Louis Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926) implies a comparable link between unconscious and architectural space. It is set in the ill-fated Passage de l'Opéra, a nineteenth-century commercial space soon to be destroyed by the tail-end of Haussmanisation, figured here as a dream-like realm: 'with its "lueur glauque, en quelque manière abyssale",' writes Johanna Malt, '[it] is a metaphor for the dark spaces of the unconscious, in which the surrealist *flâneur* roams.'[7] Here and there in the passage are objects that serve as something like physical and spatial Freudian slips or 'serrures qui ferment mal sur l'infini', which allow the unconscious to slip through into consciousness as if through a partially-open door.[8] As well as architectural space, the unconscious is also figured as landscape and a marine

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[4] Katharine Conley, 'Anamorphic Love: The Surrealist Poetry of Desire', in *Surrealism: Desire Unbound*, ed. by Jennifer Mundy, Vincent Gille, and Dawn Ades (Princeton, N.J. and London: Princeton University Press; Tate Publishing Ltd, 2001), pp. 101-118 (p. 103).
[5] Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1993), p. 176.
[6] Ibid., p. 177.
[7] *Obscure Objects*, pp. 43-44.
[8] Louis Aragon, *Le Paysan de Paris* [1926] (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), p. 50.

expanse ('toute la faune des imaginations, et leur végétation marine, comme par une chevelure d'ombre se perd et se perpétue dans les zones mal éclairées de l'activité humaine') and as an abyss that the passer-by, engaging with the 'serrures qui ferment mal sur l'infini', can explore: 'ce sont ses propres *abîmes* que grâce à ces monstres sans figure il va de nouveau *sonder*.'[9]

Proust uses a similar lexis to describe the unconscious mind as a limitless, unfamiliar expanse or depth (as Simon Kemp remarks, 'Proust's mind does comprise conscious and unconscious parts, with the latter figured, as in Freud, as a vast realm that both stores memories and motivates our actions for reasons unknown to us').[10] To recover memories, the narrator informs us, we should not alter our position in physical space – by revisiting a location from our childhoods, for example – but retreat into psychic space: 'il faut descendre pour […] retrouver' (II, 390). One such means of descent, sleep, is figured as a whole spatial world of its own, described variously as a garden, a room, an apartment, a cave, and a hole. Like Aragon, the narrator will later call on the verb *sonder*: the artist looking for material, he says, should not describe surface appearances, but should dive deep into the self, 'comme un *plongeur qui sonde*' (IV, 458; my emphasis). Dorothea Tanning also thinks of the spatial self as an artistic resource, describing her experience of grief as a force that cuts her off from her deep inner repositories of creative material:

> Still in the studio. Everything is there at the bottom of my crazy brain. Everything. But it's stone-heavy and will not rise. Most of the time it's all dark down there. You can stumble around for hours without joy. My mind is a cave and its words are hidden in boxes and trunks with lost or rusty keys.[11]

In the Proustian experience of involuntary memory, this material rises to the surface when we least expect it: in the madeleine episode, the memory (located in '[un] pays obscur') is described as 'quelque chose qu'on aurait désancré, à une grande profondeur', and which 'monte lentement' (I, 45). We might conclude, then, that such metaphors constitute a persuasive argument for studying both Proust and Tanning through a Freudian lens.

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[9] Ibid.; my emphasis.
[10] Simon Kemp, 'Postpsychoanalytic Proust', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 75 (March 2014), 77-101, p. 82.
[11] Dorothea Tanning, *Between Lives: An Artist and Her World* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), p. 297.

My intention in this chapter, however, is to move beyond Freud, with the exception of a brief side-note on the uncanny. There are two main reasons for this. For one thing, Tanning uses her memoir, *Between Lives: An Artist and Her World*, to speak out vehemently against reductive Freudian readings of her work, condemning

> the sad little procession of analyzers, trudging toward the altar of libido, singing their quavering hymns from the open books of people like Sigmund Sang Froid (Max's pun). […] Some paintings of mine that I had believed to be a testimony to the premise that we are waging a desperate battle with unknown forces are in reality dainty feminine fantasies bristling with sex symbols. Elsewhere, two rows of terrible teeth on one of my sculptures became, under these beady eyes, incredibly, a vulva. A statue that I thought was a moment of grace is the male member, this doubtless because it is standing up instead of lying down.[12]

This serves not just as a condemnation of past critics, but as a warning to future ones. Who, after all, would want to join this 'sad little procession'? As for Proust, there is already a huge body of critical work on the Freudian implications of his novel; documenting this in his article 'Postpsychoanalytic Proust', Simon Kemp argues for a discourse that moves beyond psychoanalysis as a means of elucidating the Proustian account of selfhood. This chapter follows his advice, but only up to a point: I do not bypass psychoanalysis altogether, but consider Proust and Tanning in relation to a later, post-Lacanian branch of it – Didier Anzieu's theory of the skin-ego or *Moi-peau*. To my knowledge, this has been critically applied to Proust in only one study (Thomas Baldwin's *The Material Object in the Work of Marcel Proust*, of 2005), and never to Tanning.

As we shall see, Anzieu's model of selfhood places equal value on both inside (the mind) and outside (the surface of the body). It is thus ill-suited to metaphors of depth or expanse, which (like early psychoanalysis) stress the importance of the interior while erasing the exterior from the equation. It does, however, align with architectural metaphors – and more neatly, I would argue, than do Freudian models. In the Freudian 'room', the internal space takes precedence over the walls that demarcate it, and yet a room without its walls is not a room at all. A building, like the self as Anzieu defines it, is as much exterior as it is interior, as much container as

[12] Tanning, p. 336.

contents. To be human is to be like a building: to exist between inner and outer realities, to communicate and conceal through a series of boundaries, surfaces, thresholds, openings, and interfaces. It is a connection that is culturally and linguistically embedded. Language makes the comparison endlessly: as embodied humans, we are made of cells, have abdominal walls and pelvic floors, arches in our feet, and roofs in our mouths; as thinking, feeling humans, we are liable to hit the roof, get driven up the wall, come out of the closet, have bats in the belfry, hold the keys to someone's heart, or to have to talk to a brick wall. The connection also works the other way: in his book *The Architectural Uncanny*, Anthony Vidler describes 'the history of bodily analogy in architecture', remarking that in classical theory, 'the (idealized) body was, so to speak, directly projected onto the building, which both stood for it and represented its ideal perfection.'[13] This notion endured through the Renaissance and into the eighteenth century, during which time 'the body, its balance, standards of proportion, symmetry, and functioning, mingling elegance and strength, was the foundation myth of the building.'[14]

This chapter will weave a set of architectural metaphors and Anzieu's theory of the *Moi-peau* into a framework by which to compare two specific ways of being and interacting in the world. One is embodied by Proust's narrator; the other is implied in Dorothea Tanning's paintings and writings. My analysis here is intended partly as a more complete bringing together of the apparently contradictory notions of surface and depth, inside and outside. As we saw in Chapter 1, the period spanning the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be understood as the occasion for a transition to privileging *depth* over *surface*, driven partly by the discoveries of scientific processes invisible to the human eye and, in Douglas R. Nickel's words, by 'the antimaterialism and antiocularcentrism of Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud'.[15] This was a radical transition that played a formative role in modernism. Yet, as we have seen elsewhere, avant-garde pictorial developments also privilege the concept of the *surface* in no small way. My use of Anzieu's theory in this chapter, in combination with architectural metaphors, will allow me more fully to explore the importance of considering depth and surface, inside and outside, less as ideologically opposed states, than as a symbiotic pairings that inform and shape each other.

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[13] Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1992), pp. 70-71.
[14] Ibid, p. 71.
[15] Nickel, p. 39.

# I. Self Spaces

## i. Personal spaces: reciprocity, projection, containment

Part of my rationale for choosing Dorothea Tanning as a subject of my investigation here is the fact that she demonstrates an 'intense interest' in the relationship between interior and exterior, and expresses it in many of her paintings in architectural terms.[16] It is clearly implied in her depictions of incomplete walls, of landscapes containing incongruous elements of domestic spaces, and above all in her frequent use of the motif of the door. The more specific relationship between *human* interiority and spaces external to the body is implied in a particular subcategory of her work, produced mostly in the 1940s and early 1950s, in which the human occupants of domestic spaces appear to be coming into contact with the products of their own dreams and imaginings. Always female, often children, they appear next to, entwined, or in battle with other-worldly forms and nightmarish forces. In *Birthday* (1942; fig. 14), a representation of Tanning herself stands in her own New York apartment with an unidentifiable winged creature at her feet and a series of half-open doors behind her, which extend back towards the vanishing point of the painting, revealing increasingly distant and shadowy spaces and continuing, we suppose, onwards to infinity. In *Avatar*, a girl flies around her bedroom on a trapeze, high above the unmade bed she seems likely just to have left; her eyes are closed and she is accompanied by a faceless, wraith-like form, which clings to her back. Other paintings more explicitly convey the violence and hostility that such a meeting might entail: in *Children's Games* (fig. 15), two young girls are fighting against the monstrous, fleshy forms escaping from beneath the wallpaper; in *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* we seem to be witnessing a bizarre stand-off between a young girl and a giant sunflower, and in *Intérieur*, a girl pushes against an open door with all her might in an effort to keep out the monster (a giant, legless grasshopper, perhaps?) who is pushing the door from the other side. What is arresting in certain of these paintings is not only what is contained within the room, but what the room itself has become: in *Birthday*, for example, the main point of interest is the extension of the room into a never-ending passage full of half-open doors, while what is most unsettling in *Children's Games* is what lurks beneath the wallpaper – the very substance of the walls themselves. In *Avatar*, it is only thanks to a drastically

[16] Mary Ann Caws, *The Surrealist Look: An Erotics of Encounter* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 83.

heightened ceiling that the girl and her unidentifiable companion are able to swing from the trapeze, far above the floor below. In this respect Tanning differs from many of her Surrealist colleagues, for whom the room often serves as a neutral arena in which unsettling and fantastical occurences play out (as in Magritte's *La Condition humaine*), rather than as a structure and a space that is subject to the same strange forces as the people, creatures or objects that occupy it.

These improbable scenes of Tanning's might be understood as pure fantasy, depictions of dreamscapes *tout court*. But as we have seen, in Breton's definition 'surreality' is a state of resolution between dream and reality into 'une sorte de réalité absolue'.[17] Tanning's grounding of her paintings in recognisable (even if distorted) interior spaces – dingy bedrooms, eerie hotel corridors, her own apartment – implies a meeting of actual physical spaces with dream or fantasy realities, suggesting that the characters she portrays are projecting their own dreams, nightmares, and imaginings outwards into the rooms they occupy.

Several of Tanning's paintings thus imply a relationship according to which the room is changed and subjectivised by the outward projection of inner experience. But the case for the room's structural identification with the self is posited by one painting in particular: the much-lauded *Birthday*, of 1942, particularly when it is read in conjunction with Tanning's discussion of it in *Between Lives*. The painting, one of only two self-portraits Tanning produced over the course of her lengthy career, depicts not only the artist herself but also, as I have mentioned, the apartment she was living in at the time she painted it. In *Between Lives*, she recalls:

> It was a modest canvas by present-day standards. But it filled the place as if it had always been there. For one thing, it *was* the room.
>
> I had been struck, one day, by a fascinating array of doors – hall, kitchen, bathroom, studio – crowded together, soliciting my attention with their antic planes, light, shadows, imminent openings and shuttings. From there it was an easy leap to a dream of countless doors.[18]

A few pages later, Tanning explicitly suggests an equivalence between this space and her own self. Her account of the arrival of her new partner, Max Ernst, conflates self and apartment, blurring the boundaries between the two:

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[17] *Manifestes*, p. 24.
[18] Tanning, pp. 62-63.

**Fig. 14:** Dorothea Tanning, *Birthday*, 1942

It took only a few hours for him to move in. There was no discussion. It was as if he had found a house. Yes, I think I was his house. He lived in me; he decorated me, he watched over me. […] In no time at all, the last picture found a place by the door and the last mask was hung over my desk. […] A

glory of objects and pictures expanding my rooms, making other worlds out of my walls.[19] (64-65)

The questions raised by this paragraph concerning gender dynamics and self-other relations will be explored in due course. For now, however, it is enough to observe that a complex, intricate process of wrapping, enclosure, and containment is at play. The most basic expression of the relationship is that Tanning and the apartment *are* each other – that they form part of the same entity. But Tanning also contains within herself a dream version of that same apartment, which she externalises on a canvas that then fills the very room that inspired it. The apartment, then, contains its own dream-likeness as well as several versions of its inhabitant: the physical Tanning, the painted Tanning, and, in a more metaphorical sense, the painting itself.[20] And if Tanning 'is', or contains, both the physical and the dream apartment, the endless doors (which remind us of a literal depiction of Aragon's 'serrures qui ferment mal sur l'infini') must lead into the unseen, infinite spaces of her own self.

Reinforcing this connection between self and space is what appears to be a mirror behind the painted figure: a sharp change in the colour of the floorboards provides a break in continuity that implies the meeting of the floor with its own reflection. Its status as mirror, however, is in doubt: it does not reflect what we can see of the room in any logical way, and the painted Tanning's own reflection is conspicuously absent. There is no visible physical barrier that marks it out as pure surface rather than simply the delimitation of another area of space; there is nothing, it seems, to prevent the painted woman from turning around and walking through it, Alice-like. She might indeed be tempted to do so, since the 'mirror' contains a door of its own, although it is impossible to say whether this is an actual door or simply a reflection of one. In an additional quirk, the proliferation of doors behind Tanning are themselves reminiscent of the mise-en-abyme effect created when two mirrors are placed opposite each other. A collection of door-mirrors and mirror-doors thus

[19] Ibid., pp. 64-65.

[20] Of course, it is a commonplace to suggest that a creative work is a version or a part of its creator, but the space Tanning accords this painting in her memoir implies it is somehow special, particularly when it comes to her account of Ernst's refusal to let her sell it and his declaration that it must form part of their life together: 'That picture! Days later I was showing it to a would-be collector […] Max stood, hand on hip, in the doorway. He listened pleasantly until the visitor asked the price.

"The picture is not for sale," said Max. A modest silence, as his words sank into two brains.

[…] A brief moment of rapid phrases, high tension, a pause. I hesitated – was I dreaming? Because Max was saying quite distinctly:

"I love Dorothea. I want to spend the rest of my life with her. The picture is part of that life."

To this the collector had no reply. Nor did I.' (Tanning, pp. 70-72.)

dominates the background of the painting, suggesting it was this work Tanning had in mind when, in a 1974 interview, she reflected that in the early years of her career, 'I was painting our side of the mirror – the mirror for me is a door.'[21] The implicit connection between Tanning and her own apartment, which I have already discussed, suggests that all of these openings lead into psychic as well as physical space.

The idea of a mirror that does not *reflect* but offers a way *in* to the inner spaces of the self recalls Breton and Soupault's 'glace sans tain', or Breton's window that separates conscious from unconscious – the difference being that Tanning's mirror-door posits the self as a space not merely to be observed but to be physically walked into. Her painted alter-ego, then, is less like the early Surrealist automatists, observing their unconscious activity through a mirror-window, than the protagonist in Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un poète*, who jumps through a mirror and into a deserted hotel corridor (not unlike those depicted in *Children's Games* or *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*). In Tanning's hands the equation of the mirror with the door takes on gendered connotations, seeming deliberately to react against the consistent use of the mirror in Western art as a symbol of female narcissism and vehicle of self-objectification. Her original use of an old trope negates the mirror's role as a means of reducing the self to a two-dimensional image, seen from the outside; rather, by implying not merely a surface but a threshold, an opening into which she might retreat, it allows for the possibility of an extensive, spatial interiority rather than a self reduced to the spectral and the external.

### ii. The narrator's room-self

In Proust's novel, a comparable reciprocity between self and space is expressed. Bedrooms are hugely important spaces in the *Recherche*, as Jean-Pierre Richard has observed: 'le roman proustien glisse […] de chambre en chambre,' he writes; 'il ne cesse de manifester le choix d'une sorte de claustration domestique, d'un enfermement à la fois protecter et créateur.'[22] The opening pages of the novel famously describe the liminal state between sleep and waking – the parallel processes of falling asleep and waking up again. The ambiguity of this state causes the narrator to question his own identity. As he edges towards wakefulness he is, in

[21] Victoria Carruthers, 'Imagining the in-between: the art of Dorothea Tanning' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Essex, 2012), p. 16.
[22] Jean-Pierre Richard, 'Proust et la demeure', *Littérature*, 164 (December 2011), 83-92, p. 83.

Malt's words, 'denuded and "bereft" even of a self'.[23] All he has at such moments is 'le sentiment de l'existence comme il peut frémir au fond d'un animal'; he is 'plus dénué que l'homme des cavernes' (I, 5). As Georges Poulet observes, this lack of self is rooted in his inability to situate himself in space and time:

> Il ne sait plus [qui il est], et il ne le sait plus, parce qu'il a perdu le moyen de relier le lieu et le moment où il vit, à tous les autres lieux et moments de son existence antérieure. Sa pensée trébuche entre les temps, entre les lieux.[24]

It is a series of remembered bedrooms that draws him out of this strange liminal state in which nothing is certain. Before even the mind can identify the room, the body has momentarily recomposed certain of the bedrooms that it has slept in over the years – physical memories 'non encore du lieu où j'étais, mais de quelques-uns de ceux que j'avais habités et où j'aurais pu être' (I, 5). This succession of fleeting, fragmentary memories enables him to 'recompos[er] peu à peu les traits originaux de [s]on moi' (I, 6), to determine whether he is at that moment what Joshua Landy labels the 'moi-Combray, the 'moi-Balbec', the 'moi-Doncières' or the 'moi-Tansonville'.[25] A reversal of this process is (briefly) described later on, when the narrator wonders how it is that when we wake, we happen upon the very same self we were before we fell asleep. 'On n'est plus personne', he declares; 'comment, alors, cherchant sa pensée, sa personnalité comme on cherche un objet perdu, finit-on par retrouver son propre moi plutôt que tout autre?' (II, 387). At the beginning of the novel, the bedroom is cast as the end point in a chain of memories that culminates in self-recognition; here, however, it is the first link in such a chain. Even if we have only seen it once, it awakens 'des souvenirs auxquels de plus anciens sont suspendus' (II, 387), providing the context and the catalyst for the process of remembering that brings the narrator back to 'son propre moi'.

As Poulet's argument and Landy's labels imply, place is a primary determinant in the narrator's ongoing project of self-definition. Within the streets and landscapes that constitute these places, however, it is the singular space of the bedroom that provides the initial parameters by which the self is defined, an essential

[23] Johanna Malt, 'The Blob and the Magic Lantern: On Subjectivity, Faciality and Projection', *Paragraph*, 35.3 (2013), 305-323 <10.3366/para.2013.0096> (p. 318).
[24] *L'Espace proustien*, p. 13.
[25] Joshua Landy, '"Les Moi en Moi": The Proustian Self in Philosophical Perspective', *New Literary History*, 32 (Winter 2001), 91-132, p. 101.

*point de repère* in the narrator's journey from a state of spatial and temporal dispersal towards a unified self that knows – for a while, at least – both where and when it is. But the relationship between self and bedroom is twofold: the room grounds the subject in a stable, recognisable identity, but it also has the potential to be transformed by the internal workings of the narrator's memory. Just as Tanning's painted subjects seem able to structurally transform the spaces they occupy with projections from their own imaginations, so the chain of physical memories described at the very beginning of the novel set the narrator's surroundings into motion, liberating them from their fixed and static locations and causing invisible walls to swirl in the shadows ('tout tournait autour de moi dans l'obscurité, les choses, les pays, les années [...] les murs invisibles, changeant de place selon la forme de la pièce imaginée, tourbillonnaient dans les tenèbres' (I, 6)). And as Tanning's description of *Birthday* implies, the blurring of this boundary – the dual process of internalisation *of* the room and projection *onto* the room – creates an intimate link between the subject and the space it occupies. A more complete assimilation between self and room is described a page or so later, when the narrator remarks that his childhood bedroom at Combray, site of the [in]famous *drame du coucher*, was 'une chambre que j'avais fini par remplir de mon moi au point de ne pas faire plus attention à elle qu'à lui-même' (I, 10). The bedroom contains, in Malt's words, 'the projective extension of the narrator's own consciousness, the limit of which falls not at the boundary of his body, but at the boundary of his room'.[26] Like Tanning's apartment, it is a site of interdependence betwen *soi* and *chez soi*, in which subject and space are part of the same entity. In the narrator's case, it is habit that has enabled this connection, rendering the room imperceptible and unnoticed to the point that there is no longer any clear distinction between the two. So fully permeated is the room with the narrator's 'moi' that he no longer notices it is there.

One problem with this intense connection between self and room is that it risks making the subject dependent on a familiar space, and thus vulnerable to trauma when that space is altered or left behind. For the sensitive narrator, habit encloses the self in the comfort of the everyday, shielding it from all that is hostile and unfamiliar; it is a protective casing that envelops the consciousness as the skin does the body, a psychological boundary that protects the self from the outside world. The experience of being in an unfamiliar or a defamiliarised bedroom strips away this protective outer layer of habit: the newness and strangeness of everything forcibly exposes the

[26] 'Magic Lantern', p. 319.

'raw' self beneath, as the narrator discovers when he is provided with a magic lantern in Combray, in an attempt to ease the anxiety that plagues him before bedtime. The display tells the story of Geneviève de Brabant and her husband's *intendant*, Golo, whose false accusations of adultery result in her banishment and eventual death. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the content, it fails to comfort the anxious narrator. It is not the story, however, that is blamed for his unease, but rather the projection itself, which overlays his familiar space with a virtual one and replaces the solid, opaque walls with 'd'impalpables irisations, de surnaturelles apparitions multicolores' (I, 9). In appearing to compromise the solidity of the walls, the projection also destroys the 'wall' of habit that had shielded him from the world. The appearance of Golo is as an invasion, a forced entry into this once-familiar space. The narrator remarks that his anxiety is akin to that he feels 'dans une chambre d'hôtel [...] où je fusse arrivé pour la première fois en descendant du chemin de fer' (I, 9), anticipating his later arrival in Balbec in *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*. There, in his unfamiliar hotel room, with no habit to protect him, he must 'faire entrer en contact avec les choses ce "moi" que je ne retrouvais qu'à des années d'intervalles' (II, 381). In the absence of an architectural boundary between self-space and world-space, the narrator's inner self is as exposed and as vulnerable as a room from which the walls have been violently removed.

Both the Combray and the Balbec experiences are inherently uncanny. In its Freudian definition, the uncanny is an eruption of the unfamiliar into the familiar; Anthony Vidler notes that historically, 'its favorite motif was precisely the contrast between a secure and homely interior and the fearful invasion of an alien presence', and that for Freud, '"unhomeliness" was more than a simple sense of not belonging; it was the fundamental propensity of the familiar to turn on its owners, suddenly to become defamiliarized, derealized, as if in a dream.'[27] Simply being present in an unfamiliar space, as the narrator is in Balbec, would not classify as 'uncanny' were it not for the inherent connection between self and space, according to which the new room is not experienced as external to the narrator, but as an invasive psychological force, and thus as a vehicle of 'self-defamiliarisation'. The body is implicated in this process of invasion, the sensory organs functioning as entry points by which the room can launch its 'offensive': the narrator is disorientated by the incessantly-ticking clock (the clock in his own room has been silenced by habit), while the smell of vetiver launches a sensory attack on the innermost spaces of his self ('c'était *presque*

[27] Vidler, pp. 3, 7.

*à l'intérieur de mon moi* que celle du vétiver venait pousser dans mes derniers retranchments son offensive' (II, 27-28; my emphasis)). They contrast starkly with the objects in his bedroom in Paris, which 'ne gênaient pas plus que ne faisaient mes propres prunelles, car ils n'étaient plus que des annexes de mes organes, un agrandissement de moi-même' (II, 28). It is not just an expanded consciousness, then, that is enclosed by the room, but an expanded body. This casts an additional uncanny light over the act of changing bedrooms: the experience, by this token, is akin to being removed from the body and placed in a new one. In the magic lantern episode, the surrealistic interplay between the familiar bedroom and the virtual reality with which it has been overlaid is rendered more disquieting by the idea that the image of Golo, which merges with and absorbs every object it touches through a process of 'transvertébration', is attaching itself not just to the narrator's consciousness, but to his body. At best, he is a parasite, and at worst, a physical invader, troubling the narrator's sense of bodily identity by making an unwelcome, defamiliarising inscription on the representational surface of his 'skin'.

### iii. The *Moi-peau* and gender

The negativity with which these experiences are depicted is a little surprising: watching a visual narrative display or arriving at one's holiday destination are more commonly thought to be enjoyable, or at least benign. The extremity of the narrator's reactions to these experiences can be elucidated by Anzieu's theory of the *Moi-peau*, which offers us a framework by which to understand him not just as oddly oversensitive, but as the victim of a developmental failure that provides a possible explanation for certain of his subsequent behaviours, including his over-attachment to interior spaces. My point here is not to pathologise or diagnose the narrator, per se; rather, I use a degree of 'metaphoric licence' in my application of Anzieu's theory, which can be briefly summarised as follows. Psychoanalysis as a discipline, he writes, has traditionally only attended to the detection and assessment of psychic *contents*, while largely ignoring the mechanisms by which they are *contained*. This is problematic because the human psyche is as much container as it is contents; 'un contenu,' he writes, 'ne saurait exister sans un rapport à un contenant.'[28] Indeed, many of the problems that he and his fellow psychoanalysts have encountered in

[28] Didier Anzieu, *Le Moi-peau* (Paris: Dunod, 1995), p. 33. Anzieu's interest in surface is partially informed by the structure of the brain itself: the position of the cortex as an outer layer of grey matter means, paradoxically, that the 'centre' of the brain is in fact 'situé à la périphérie' (p. 31).

their patients, he says, are rooted in a problematic relation between these two entities. His own theory shifts the focus away from inner depth and towards the external surface of the body, foregrounding the skin as a fundamental component in both the development and maintenance of the self. As the infant develops, its experience of touch leads it to understand itself as an individuated 'container of contents' that exists separately from its caregiver. Its physical skin, imagined as a differentiating outer membrane, becomes an 'inner pictogram', in Marc Lafrance's words, that serves also to differentiate the psyche, figuring the self as contained and individuated by a 'skin' that is both psychic and somatic. This is what Anzieu terms the skin-ego or *Moi-peau*. The prominent role of the infant's skin in the development of a fully-fledged thinking ego means that 'la pensée [est] autant une affaire de peau que de cerveau';[29] in Lafrance's succinct summary, Anzieu's work asserts that 'subjectivity is at once completely psychic and utterly somatic and, as a result, that mind and body must be viewed as both produced by and productive of one another'.[30]

According to Anzieu, a crucial stage in the evolution of mature subjectivity is the development and subsequent severing of what he terms the 'peau commune', or common skin, an imagined membrane that links the baby to its caregiver. In Anzieu's words, mother (or mother-figure – the 'entourage maternant') and baby form 'une dyade mère-nourisson', or 'un seul système formé d'éléments interdépendants se communiquant des informations entre eux et dans lequel le feed-back fonctionne dans les deux sens, de la mère vers le bébé et du bébé vers la mère'.[31] This system of 'double feed-back' results in a fantasy on the part of the baby of 'une interface, figurée sous la forme d'une peau commune à la mère et à l'enfant, interface d'un côté de laquelle se tient la mère, l'enfant étant de l'autre côté'.[32] Healthy development requires the eventual separation of these two entities: 'l'étape suivante requiert l'effacement de cette peau commune et la reconnaissance que chacun a sa propre peau et son propre Moi, ce qui ne s'effectue pas sans résistance ni sans douleur.'[33] This painful stage of separation can cause traumatic fantasies of the skin, including of 'la peau arrachée'.[34] But if these fantasies can be surpassed, writes Anzieu, the infant will acquire a skin-ego of its own via 'un processus de double intériorisation',

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[29] Anzieu, p. 31.
[30] Marc Lafrance, 'From the Skin Ego to the Psychic Envelope: An Introduction to the Work of Didier Anzieu', in *Skin, Culture and Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Sheila Cavanagh, Angela Failler, and Rachel Alpha Johnson Hurst (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), pp. 16-44 (p. 39).
[31] Anzieu, p. 78.
[32] Ibid., p. 85.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

in which both the interface and the 'entourage maternant' are internalised, the first becoming 'une enveloppe psychique contenante des contenus psychiques', the second becoming 'le monde intérieur des pensées, des images, des affects'.[35]

When we read the *Recherche* through Anzieu, we are presented with numerous signs that the narrator has not successfully overcome this crucial stage. The famed (and much psychoanalysed) scene of the *drame du coucher* suggests that he does not yet regard his mother as a separate entity to himself, even though he is no longer a baby. Her initial refusal to kiss him at bedtime, only to grant him the kiss later after much distress on all sides, can be read as a splitting and then a regrafting of the common skin. When, unable to sleep, the narrator sends a note to his mother, begging her to come to him, he envisages it as a means of repairing the severed link between them, describing it in terms of a literal splitting of skin:

> 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; puisque cette salle à manger interdite, hostile [...] s'ouvrait à moi et, comme un fruit devenu doux *qui brise son enveloppe*, allait faire jaillir, projeter jusqu'à mon cœur enivré l'attention de maman tandis qu'elle lirait mes lignes. Maintenant je n'étais plus séparé d'elle; les barrières étaient tombées. (I, 30; my emphasis)

The narrator imagines the arrival of his note causing the room that contains his mother to split open like a ripe fruit, allowing her to project her self outwards towards him. It is not pushing the point too far to suggest that he also desires the splitting of his mother's own 'skin', which, like the walls of the dining room, contains her and excludes him, as if starting to 'heal over'. In a reversal of the process described by Anzieu, the image of a 'peau arrachée' is not a step towards the necessary separation between child and mother, but towards a regressive reunion in the narrator's bedroom, which will mark the restoration of their threatened *peau commune* and their status as two parts of a single whole. Yet when this hard-won reunion finally occurs, the narrator is acutely aware of his mother's reluctance to be there, realising sadly that his need of her is 'trop en opposition avec les nécessités de la vie' (I, 42) – one such necessity being 'the recognition that an original commonality of skin has been effaced', in Baldwin's words.[36]

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[35] Ibid., pp. 85-86.
[36] *The Material Object*, p. 156.

Since severing the common skin is an essential step towards developing an individuated skin-ego, it follows that the narrator's neurotic tendencies might be attributable to a skin-ego that is somehow incomplete or underdeveloped, precisely because this process of severing has not fully occurred. The narrator's 'skin' seems inadequately equipped either to *contain* or *protect* his self – two of its basic functions, in Anzieu's definition. And since the latter's theory implies that the unsevered common skin will have impeded the development of 'une enveloppe psychique contenante des contenus psychiques', it is logical to conclude that the narrator's attachment to interior spaces and his need to be doubly enclosed – by both the physical second 'skin' of his own bedroom walls and the psychological second 'skin' of habit – are part of an attempt to replace the missing or incomplete internal 'enveloppe' with an exterior equivalent.[37]

An easily-missed detail in the embryonic version of the *drame du coucher*, in *Jean Santeuil*, suggests that this early failure to sever the common skin and thus to develop a fully-functioning skin-ego is attributable not to parenting, but to gender. Explaining her son's inability to go to sleep without a goodnight kiss, Mme Santeuil tells the doctor that 'nous ne voulons pas qu'il garde ces habitudes de petite fille. Trop longtemps sa mauvaise santé nous a obligés à des ménagements qui lui rendraient plus tard la vie impossible, et nous voulons, mon mari et moi, l'élever virilement.' (*JS*, 202) The version of the scene that appears in the *Recherche* omits this explicit reference to normative conceptions of gender, but two later episodes are more subtly suggestive of the narrator's failure to live up to these norms. At Balbec, for example, he implicitly compares his own dislike of new bedrooms with that of a woman: the aristocratic Mme de Villeparisis, who unlike him has the means to prevent this *mal de pays* by travelling surrounded by 'la cloison de ses habitudes' (II, 39) and filling her hotel room with her own familiar belongings. Later, when he visits Robert de Saint-Loup at the latter's barracks in Doncières, Saint-Loup seeks special permission from his captain so that the narrator can spend the night with him rather than alone in the hotel. The contrast between the latter's nervousness and the former's easy confidence is stark, and the implication of this episode, particularly

[37] Baldwin has compared the narrator's tendency to fill a familiar room with his self to Anzieu's description of the patient in the therapy room: 'le patient, seul dans une pièce familière et valorisée, vit une expérience d'accroissement et d'élation du Soi, avec une extension des limites du Moi corporel aux dimensions mêmes de la pièce.' (Anzieu, p. 198.) The entrance of the therapist, however, 'représente une effraction traumatique dans cette enveloppe [Moi-peau] trop large et trop fragile' (ibid.). In Baldwin's analysis, the effect of entering the Balbec hotel room 'is the same as that of the entrance of the psychotherapist' (*The Material Object*, p. 160).

when it is considered in the light of the previous one, is that the tendency to look to the bedroom as a form of protection, as well as the anguish that results when such protection is felt to be lacking, are ultimately unmasculine afflictions.

Here we can turn back to Tanning, whose work, I would argue, provides a counterpart to these instances, particularly her painting *Children's Games*, of 1942. The sense of the uncanny that is implied in the narrator's experience of bedrooms seems here to be pushed into the realm of nightmare: a pair of young girls in Victorian-style dress are seemingly ripping away strips of wallpaper to reveal a pair of ambiguous – yet still almost certainly female – fleshy orifices. Numerous critics have noted the connection between this painting and Tanning's remark that her hometown of Galesburg, Illinois, was a place 'where nothing happens but the wallpaper'.[38] Carruthers asserts that this remark refers to Tanning's own childhood game of looking for recognisable shapes in the wallpaper of the rooms in which she

**Fig. 15:** Dorothea Tanning, *Children's Games*, 1942

[38] This phrase is frequently cited by critics engaging with Tanning's work; she herself used it on more than one occasion – for example, in her short story of 1976, 'Dorothéa, ses jeux, son enfer…', which begins 'Galesburg, où rien ne se passe, sauf le papier peint' (via https://www.dorotheatanning.org/life-and-work/view/525/ [accessed 23/11/2017]; originally published in *XXe Siècle*, 1977).

spent her childhood, as if to consciously evoke an uncanny scene in which the walls are teeming with unfamiliar life forms, the like of which would terrify Proust's young narrator.[39] In *Children's Games*, the game of the title has escalated out of control: the children have been forced into contact with the actual malevolent forces that lurk within the walls. Ragged strips of the wallpaper are blown back by the force of the life forms beneath; the long hair of the girl on the right is being pulled upwards and sucked into the orifice, while in the foreground of the painting, the prostrate legs of an earlier casualty highlight the fact, in case there were any doubt, that this is a game of life and death. What the narrator experiences as a psychological invasion has here been transposed into the realm of physical attack.

In *Compulsive Beauty*, Hal Foster argues that the bourgeois rooms portrayed in Ernst's *Une Semaine de bonté* are fundamentally uncanny spaces, into which repressed elements erupt in a process of 'becoming-hysterical'.[40] The 'stuffed interiors', he writes, are 'literally convulsed'.[41] He does not discuss Tanning's work – yet *Children's Games* seems to render this process explicit, representing a hysterical, uncanny space *par excellence*, in which a force that is normally hidden or 'repressed' behind wallpaper quite literally erupts into the room. Foster remarks on the Surrealists' gendering of such spaces as feminine, arguing that the confinement of women to interior spaces had developed 'a system of spatial oppositions [...] – eg., office and home, public and private, exterior and interior – that were coded as a gendered opposition of male and female'.[42] Surrealism, Foster argues, 'does nothing to disturb this coding'. The three Surrealists who form the subject of his chapter – Aragon, Ernst, and Dalí – 'feminize the passage, the interior, and art nouveau, as they do the unconscious: they hystericize the former as they historicize the latter'.[43] Foster does not, however, consider what such a coding might become in the hands of a female Surrealist painter. *Children's Games* troubles this coding in multiple ways. For one thing, in its violence and fleshiness, the scene evokes pregnancy and birth (indeed, one of the forces beneath the wallpaper resembles a rounded belly).[44] Birth

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[39] See Carruthers, p. 32.
[40] For example, 'images evocative of "perverse" desires (e.g., sodomy, sadomasochism), erupt in those rooms, most often in the spaces of representation – in paintings or mirrors on the walls' (Foster, p. 177).
[41] Foster, p. 177.
[42] Ibid., p. 190.
[43] Ibid., p. 191.
[44] Carruthers's interviews with Tanning herself have revealed a marked hostility towards the idea of childbirth: 'Tanning explained that she never liked celebrating her actual birthday and was shocked and upset that anyone would wish to remember that on that fateful day, "my darling mother experienced such pain and horror trying to get me out of her body that she almost died".' (Carruthers, p. 118.)

has its own place in Freud's theory of the uncanny: he observes that certain of his male patients receive an uncanny impression from the sight of female genitalia, which he attributes to repressed memories of being born: 'what they find uncanny ['unhomely'] is actually the entrance to man's old "home", the place where everything once lived.'[45] Foster's account of rooms as uncanny spaces would seem to map neatly onto this painting: the corridor is an uncanny, convulsive space because a repressed memory of birth is quite literally erupting into it. This argument is supported by what Carruthers terms the 'umbilical' connection between the girl and the wall, effected by 'the unstoppable wave of her own auburn hair' (55).[46] But Carruthers also remarks that the girl, through this same connection, seems to be *becoming* the wall. It is precisely this that a Freudian reading ignores: what these girls are set to *become*, the future that is mapped out for them. Birth is not just a repressed memory for them but also a trauma that likely awaits them when they are older, when it will figure as a decidedly uncanny force – an unfamiliar invader into a space of safety, as well as a sometime bringer of death. If the wall-forces are representative of childbirth, the girls are confronting not only the entrance to their own 'old "home[s]"', but also the idea of themselves *as* home, for if the womb is the home of the foetus, the mother, logically, is the house – literally, in this case, since the painted building seems actually to have been constructed from female flesh.

It is not only a repressed past, then, that erupts into the room, but also the signifiers of an oppressive future that will cast each girl *as* a house and contain her *within* a house, Russian doll-like. As Katharine Conley argues, their attack on the walls 'serves as a challenge to the conventions society imposes on their bodies, particularly the convention that assumes a correlation between a tidy house and a pure, inviolate female body'.[47] I would add that it also serves implicitly as a challenge to nineteenth-century clothing conventions, which render female flesh static and rigid, like the imagined process of sculpting it into walls. As if in an earlier attack on a literal item of clothing, part of one girl's dress has already been cut away, leaving a gap the shape of a strip of wallpaper. Their challenge, then, is to the many structures – biological, textile, architectural – by which their bodies are contained and controlled, and it is borne out in their own partial nakedness and in their long,

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[45] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' in *The Uncanny* [1919], trans. by David McLintock (London, et al.: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 123-162 (p. 151).
[46] Carruthers, p. 55.
[47] Katharine Conley, *Surrealist Ghostliness* (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), p. 125.

unkempt hair, which recalls tropes of female sexuality, hysteria, and madness. By peeling away the wallpaper, the girls help the forces in the walls to reveal themselves, symbolically liberating the 'inviolate female body' by destroying the claustrating material surface that had suppressed it. For Mary Ann Caws, this act 'reveal[s] what we might have known all along: [the wallpaper] was really the skin of a body' – and indeed, the latter is rendered in a very similar colour to the greyish skin of the nearest girl's back.[48] I would argue, however, that it is symbolic not just of a literal skin, but of the multiple 'skins' or layers by which women and girls are restrained, whether physical (walls, clothing) or social (marriage, decorum).[49] Their problem is the opposite of the narrator's: they are not exposed by a lack of 'skin' but stifled by an excess of it. After all, for those in possession of a fully-fledged skin-ego, no further 'layers' are required to keep the self intact and protected. And when such layers are externally imposed, rather than actively sought, their function is no longer to enclose, but to suppress. In perfect opposition, Tanning and Proust have their characters push against the normative gender expectations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: one depicting a young boy who lacks the protective outer surface that society expects him to possess, and who seeks to replace it by taking refuge *inside*, in specific domestic spaces, the other depicting two young girls frustrated by the excess of protective layers that society imposes on them, and who transform a domestic space in an attempt to break *out*, symbolically ripping these layers away.

## II. Other Spaces: Caregivers and Love Objects

### i. The narrator and Albertine: *prolongement*, *multiplication*

I return now to Proust, and the behavioural consequences of the narrator's failure to sever the common skin. Since doing so should have resulted in the interiorisation of the 'entourage maternante', the fact that this cannot fully have happened might go some way to explaining the narrator's perpetual desire to find a replacement *entourage* by 'merg[ing] with a source of strength outside of himself', as Leo Bersani puts it (15). This need will shape his relations to others, and will, in one notable case,

[48] Caws, p. 84.
[49] Recalling the earliest days of her friendship with Ernst, Tanning refers to decorum in comparable terms: 'thin laminae of an old husk, decorum, kept me sitting in the prim chair instead of starred on the bed.' (Tanning, p. 64.)

transform him into a force of oppression and containment, the like of which Tanning's young girls appear to be attacking.

That the older narrator still has need of a maternal *entourage* is in evidence when he travels to Balbec as a teenager, realising belatedly, and with alarm, that 'il était possible que ma mère vécût sans moi, autrement que pour moi, d'une autre vie' (II, 9). In Balbec, the grandmother will take her place. When the former comes to him in his unfamiliar bedroom in the Balbec hotel, dressed for the task of caring for him, he is comforted by the knowledge that however vast his sorrow, she will receive it 'dans une pitié plus vaste encore':

> que tout ce qui était mien, mes soucis, mon vouloir, serait, en ma grand-mère, étayé sur un désir de conservation et d'accroissement de ma propre vie autrement fort que celui que j'avais moi-même; et mes pensées se prolongaient en elle sans subir de déviation parce qu'elles passaient de mon esprit sans changer de milieu, de personne. (II, 28)

This sense of oneness with his grandmother is a primary example of the process of merging that Bersani describes. It is as if they are two parts of a single unit; she is an open vessel into which the narrator can project himself without obstacle, standing in for his mother and functioning as a human replacement for the familiar bedroom that had provided the site for his externalised self. Their unity is manifested physically in the rooms they inhabit: their bedrooms abut each other, separated only by a thin wall or 'cloison' through which they are able to communicate in a swiftly-developed language of knocks and taps. Indeed, since a *cloison* is defined as both a 'paroi plus léger que le mur, qui limite les pièces d'une maison' and 'ce qui divise l'intérieur d'une cavité, détermine des compartiments', it would be more appropriate to describe this wall as a *partition* – a means not of enclosing a singular spatial entity, but of dividing two interdependent parts of a whole.[50] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick echoes Anzieu when she calls this partition 'as eloquent a membrane as if it demarcated the chambers of a single ear, or heart';[51] Baldwin is explicit, arguing that

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[50] *Le Petit Robert: dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française*, ed. by Josette Rey-Debove and Alain Rey (Paris: Le Robert, 2012), p. 453. Ingrid Wassenaar has also pointed this out, demonstrating that the word 'originally designat[ed] what surrounded and protected the whole', before eventually '[coming] to refer to internal division' (*Proustian Passions: The Uses of Self-Justification for* A la recherche du temps perdu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 100. Oxford Scholarship Online ebook).

[51] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'The Weather in Proust', in *The Weather in Proust*, ed. by Jonathan Goldberg (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 1-41 (p. 14).

the permeable architecural 'membrane' – 'pénétrée de tendresse et de joie, devenue harmonieuse, immatérielle' (II, 30) – seems in fact to *constitute* a *peau commune*.[52]

This physical arrangement is strikingly similar to a later one. When in *La Prisonnière* Albertine comes to live with the narrator in Paris, their adjoining bathrooms are separated by a *cloison* thin enough to allow them to talk to each other as they wash ('les cloisons qui séparaient nos deux cabinets de toilette [...] étaient si minces que nous pouvions parler tout en nous lavant chacun dans le nôtre' (III, 521)). Does this in its turn symbolise a relationship analogous to what the narrator shares with his grandmother, centred around an unmediated connection or 'peau commune' between self and other that diminishes the latter's 'otherness'? Certainly, the narrator has previously expressed a *desire* to extend his self into Albertine (and her friends) in a manner that echoes this relationship: at the moment when he first sees the *petite bande* on the beach, he imagines knowing them with an intimacy that would allow him 'ce prolongement, cette multiplication de soi-même, qui est le bonheur' (II, 152). Tellingly, however, the words 'prolongement' and 'multiplication' imply markedly different means of connecting with the other, despite being used here as if they were interchangeable. The analysis that follows will consider the differences between the two terms, and their implications for the narrator's relationship to Albertine.

I turn first to the idea of 'prolongement', which maps neatly on to the narrator's emotional connection with his grandmother, as he has described it; indeed, his account uses the word itself, in its verbal form ('mes pensées *se prolongaient* en elle'). A self that is *prolongé* is not clearly demarcated; it is permeable, fluid, like liquid spilling out of its container. Its contact with the other is a process of blending, such that the boundaries become blurred between the two. We might also expect it to receive the other in an inverse process of *prolongement*, although no such reverse process is described by the narrator. Either way, it is a model that would seem to rely on the presence – whether imagined or physical – of a mediating connective surface, like a *cloison* or a *peau commune*. The narrator's professed desire to extend his self into the lives of Albertine and her friends seems cast of the same mould. After all, it is uncontroversial to suggest that love relationships echo earlier relationships between

[52] See *The Material Object*, p. 157. The *cloison* as it figures here stands in opposition to Richard's description of the *paroi* in his discussion of Proustian bedrooms. 'Toute paroi est bien d'abord comme une coupure,' he writes, 'comme une césure névralgique du lieu: elle y inscrit et y dessine deux régions, un ici et un au-delà de l'ici, un lieu du *moi*, et un lieu de l'*autre*' ('Proust et la demeure', p. 84). This can be partly attributed to the fact that the word 'paroi' does not have the same specificity of meaning as the word 'cloison', given that the former can refer to either an exterior wall or an interior partition.

children and their parent-figures, and as if to illustrate this, Albertine's goodnight kiss is described as 'un pouvoir d'apaisement tel que je n'en avais éprouvé de pareil depuis les soirs lointains de Combray où ma mère penchée sur mon lit venait m'apporter le repos dans un baiser' (III, 585).[53]

But while Albertine might provide something of what the narrator originally found in his relationships with his mother and grandmother, their relationship is very far from allowing the same fluid interchange of selves via a permeable *peau commune*. Baldwin cites the passage from *Le Côté de Guermantes* that was also analysed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, in which a series of differing Albertines is revealed by the narrator's attempt to kiss her. The kiss, we recall, '[fait] surgir de ce que nous croyions une chose à aspect défini, les cent autres choses qu'elle est tout aussi bien, puisque chacune est relative à une perspective non moins légitime' (II, 660). In Baldwin's analysis:

> moving closer to – or even touching – Albertine's face does not create a 'peau commune' between her skin and the narrator's. With his lips pressed against Albertine's cheek, the surface of her body becomes multiple, and while he may feel a contiguity between the surface of his own body and that of one of the Albertines he encounters, this does not constitute a commonality of skin between him and the remaining 'cent autres'.[54]

In one regard, then, the possibility for a *peau commune* is negated by Albertine's unfathomable multiplicity. But this passage of the novel also implies that her skin itself functions as an impermeable barrier beyond which the narrator cannot penetrate. The kiss is motivated by the narrator's desire for 'connaissance par les lèvres', as if he believes it will allow him to take a quasi-intuitive step inside her mind. But he discovers that the lips, part of the physical apparatus designed to assimilate external objects by consumption ('faites pour amener au palais la saveur de ce qui les tente') are not made to assimilate external objects by *penetration*: '[elles] doivent se contenter, sans comprendre leur erreur et sans avouer leur déception, de

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[53] In Anzieu's words, the stage that precedes the fantasy of the 'peau commune', the 'fantasme d'inclusion réciproque', is 'ravivé plus tard par l'expérience amoureuse, selon lequel chacun des deux, en le tenant dans ses bras, envelopperait l'autre tout en étant enveloppé par lui' (p. 85). In the *Recherche*, the similarity between the narrator's desire for his mother at bedtime and Swann's desire for Odette is explicitly stated in the opening pages of the novel: 'une angoisse semblable fut le tourment de longues années de sa vie, et personne aussi bien que lui peut-être n'aurait pu me comprendre; lui, cette angoisse [...] c'est l'amour qui la lui a fait connaître.' (I, 30.)

[54] *The Material Object*, p. 167.

*vaguer à la surface et de se heurter à la clôture de la joue impénétrable* et désirée' (II, 659; my emphasis). In an inversion of Plath's formulation ('I felt the wall of my skin') the narrator's lips come up against the wall of *Albertine's* skin, which, rather than a semi-permeable membrane that mediates a 'système de double-feedback', functions as the inviolable surface of a human 'vase clos'.

Albertine's eyes, on the other hand, are better characterised as windows – not Leonardo's 'windows *of* the soul', but the 'windows *to* the soul' of the anonymous cliché. Though hackneyed, it fits; indeed, the narrator uses it obliquely himself, remarking (in a passage already cited in Chapter 3) that when Albertine's eyes close, 'c'[est] comme quand avec des rideaux on empêche de voir la mer' (III, 528). In contrast to the opaque impenetrability of her skin, her eyes offer a partial, tantalising view into her inner world, hinting at the existence of secrets, memories, and desires that will never be fully revealed.[55] While her self is concealed completely by her skin, it can be perceived within and behind her eyes, disappearing towards an unreachable horizon or a non-existent vanishing point.[56] I suggested in Chapter 3 that her eyes function as something akin to *tinted* windows (a 'glace sans tain'), or perhaps half-open doors like those in Tanning's *Birthday*, and I would add here that we could also think of them as a sort of *cloison*, since they constitute the point at which two separate but interdependent spaces meet – that is to say, the internal 'spaces' of the mind and the physical, external spaces that the body inhabits. But they are less reminiscent of the *cloison* that separates the narrator's bedroom from his grandmother's than of the one that separates his bathroom from Albertine's, which differs from the former in a

[55] When he first sees her on the beach at Balbec, the narrator suggests that it might be possible to 'possess' the contents of Albertine's eyes: 'je savais que je ne posséderais pas cette jeune cycliste si je ne possédais aussi ce qu'il y avait dans ses yeux.' (II, p. 152.) Later, he questions this assumption: 'comment n'avais-je pas depuis longtemps remarqué que les yeux d'Albertine appartenaient à la famille de ceux qui […] semblent faits de plusieurs morceaux à cause de tous les lieux où l'être veut se trouver – et cacher qu'il veut se trouver – ce jour-là? Des yeux, par mensonge toujours immobiles et passifs, mais dynamiques, mesurables pas les mètres ou kilomètres à franchir pour se trouver au rendez-vous voulu, implacablement voulu, des yeux qui sourient de la tristesse et du découragement qu'il y aura peut-être une difficulté pour aller au rendez-vous.' (III, p. 599.)

[56] This simultaneous process of display and concealment correlates directly to the very phenomenon that Albertine may or may not be at pains to hide: her supposed desire for other women. As Elisabeth Ladenson has shown, a paradox exists at the heart of Proust's portrayal of lesbianism, or 'Gomorrah'. His lesbians are much less concerned with discretion than their male counterparts, much more given to public displays of their homosexuality (in the voyeuristic Montjouvain scene, for example, Mlle Vinteuil's lover initially determines to keep the shutters open, leaving them visible to passers-by: '"Et puis quoi? […] quand même on nous verrait ce n'en est que meilleur".' (I, p. 159).) And yet, despite this current of exhibitionism, lesbianism is nonetheless 'impossible to actually see': while the narrator is 'consistently able to witness spectacles of male homosexual debauchery in all their depraved grandeur, […] his efforts to see what women do together ends, as does the Montjouvain scene, with the blinds being drawn at the crucial moment' (Ladenson, pp. 68, 63). Albertine is doubly unknowable, then, since even if the narrator could be certain of her lesbianism, her lesbianism would nonetheless remain on the margins of visibility.

crucial respect. While the narrator and his grandmother had communicated in a way that was only possible because the partition was there – by knocking on it – Albertine and the narrator communicate *in spite* of the presence of the *cloison*, not because of it. The latter does not prevent all interaction, as a more substantial wall would, but their conversation is undoubtedly hindered by the barrier between them, particularly since they are frequently interrupted by the sound of running water.[57] In this case, then, the *cloison* is less the symbol of a common skin, than of the glassy barrier or 'liséré' that separates the narrator from the self he glimpses in Albertine's eyes, which impedes the passage of their selves as the *cloison* impedes the passage of their conversation.

The narrator's relationship with Albertine cannot therefore be characterised as a 'prolongement de soi', since the metaphorical permeable membrane that allows such a *prolongement* between the narrator and his grandmother is replaced in the later relationship by a thin but impenetrable barrier. Whether or not it can be characterised as a '*multiplication* de soi', however, is a different story. A self that multiplies is discretely replicated and repeated rather than continuously extended; a self that multiplies *into* the other invades and dominates, transforming it into its own replica. And in stark contrast to the unity that underpins the self he 'shares' with his grandmother, the narrator's relationship with Albertine is invasive rather than reciprocal, structured around a dynamic of attack and of forced entry. The narrator spends much of their time together trying to break through the *liséré* that separates them, pursuing the sort of knowledge that he believes will enable him to possess her to the point that, in Bersani's words, 'the activity of loving turns out to be something like a compulsive intellectual investigation'.[58] This investigation is largely futile, but there are occasional moments when he feels that Albertine is truly his own, as if his self has successfully 'multiplied' into hers. One such occasion is when she is asleep – that is to say, when her eyes are closed and her internal 'sea' is so effectively screened that he can momentarily forget it ever existed. Plant-like in her unconsciousness ('animée [...] de la vie inconsciente des végétaux' (III, 578)), the sleeping Albertine is finally reducible to her body ('elle avait rappelé à soi tout ce qui d'elle était au dehors;

[57] It is not the grandmother who is said to respond to the 'dialogue rhythmé' of the narrator's three knocks but the wall itself, as if it is an extension of her own body and an active participant in the process of communication (II, 30).
[58] Bersani, p. 46.

elle s'était réfugiée, enclose, dans son corps' (III, 578)).[59] Her self no longer escapes 'par les issues de la pensée inavouée et du regard'; he has before him 'toute la personne, toute la vie de la charmante captive, étendue là sous mes yeux' (III, 178-179). At the same time, her deepest state of sleep is imagined by the narrator first as a landscape ('son sommeil, [...] c'était pour moi tout un paysage' (III, 579)) and then, curiously, as the sea (he lies down next to her as soon as he can be certain that any potential 'écueils de conscience' are 'recouverts […] par la pleine mer du sommeil profond' (III, 580)). His subsequent impression of having 'set sail' ('je m'étais embarqué sur le sommeil d'Albertine' (III, 580)) indicates that this cannot be the same 'sea' as the one that lies behind the impenetrable *liséré* of her eyes; rather, when she is sleeping, Albertine's inaccessible internal spaces are overwritten with unrestricted, colonisable ones into which the narrator's own self can encroach and multiply. It is a physical as well as a metaphorical colonisation; her unconscious body is later turned into a sort of subsidiary of his conscious one, which touches her and moves her head and limbs as if she were a doll:

> Je pouvais mettre ma main dans sa main, sur son épaule, sur sa joue, Albertine continuait de dormir. Je pouvais prendre sa tête, la renverser, la poser contre mes lèvres, entourer mon cou de ses bras, elle continuait à dormir comme une montre qui ne s'arrête pas. (III, 620)

The sleeping woman becomes a sort of uncanny, automatic puppet, under the narrator's control and devoid of the ungraspable interiority that otherwise confounds him. More disturbingly, he will also allow himself to 'goûter un plaisir moins pur' as he kisses and touches her unconscious body (III, 580). Bersani argues that this is the moment at which the narrator 'can best express his real tenderness for Albertine' – that 'he can love her most gently now because it is really he who is at rest'– despite acknowledging that this behaviour is nevertheless 'abstractly sinister'.[60] Now, however, three waves of feminism after Bersani's book was first published, it is difficult to see anything abstract here, and problematic to read the narrator's actions as anything but sexual assault. The episode almost bears out Carter's assertion that 'the naïve narrator envisages the beloved as terrain to be

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[59] She is, the narrator says, disturbed only occasionally by 'une agitation légère et inexplicable, comme les feuillages qu'une brise inattendue convulse pendant quelques instants' (III, p. 578).
[60] Bersani, p. 64.

conquered by the metaphorical planting of a flagpole or the actual insertion of a penis' – almost, because the sexual act itself is not penetrative (in fact, it is surprisingly benign; he needs only to trail his leg against hers like an oar trailing in the water (III, 580)).[61] But by contemporary standards, he comes murkily close to matching his metaphorical colonisation of Albertine's unconscious seascapes with a physical, sexual 'colonisation' – to physically 'multiplying' himself through an unwanted act of reproduction.[62]

### ii. Consumption of the other

No less troublingly, the narrator will later kiss the sleeping Albertine on the lips, seemingly inserting his tongue into her open mouth: 'j'avais son souffle près de ma joue, dans sa bouche que j'entr'ouvrais sur la mienne, où contre ma langue passait sa vie.' (III, 580.) In one respect, this is a penetrative act of physical colonisation. But it also indicates another model of assimilation with the other: neither 'prolongement' nor 'multiplication', but consumption or envelopment – a process not of extending or multiplying outwards into Albertine, but of bringing Albertine inwards into himself. The act of bringing his tongue into contact with Albertine's 'life', capturing her breath in his mouth in a manner that allows him to consume something of her essence, inevitably suggests hunger – that he is in some sense trying to 'eat' her. Bersani remarks on 'the abundance of eating and digestion metaphors' in the novel, which 'suggest possession not only by becoming something else, but also by transforming what is desired into Marcel's system'.[63] The desire to consume Albertine is an echo of his 'consumption' of his grandmother, after the arrival in Balbec has rendered him so miserable that he has declared himself ready to die.[64]

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[61] Carter, p. 34. Carter also observes that 'although Proust usually presents a woman as a landscape the Narrator yearns to possess, occasionally the exploration of the terrain itself is presented as an erotic experience.' He cites both the narrator's assessment of the ability of the car 'de nous aider à sentir d'une main plus amoureusement exploratrice [...] la véritable géométrie, la belle "mesure de la terre"', and one of Proust's own letters, in which he speaks of an urge to 'rape' cities seen from a train at dawn: 'Au matin, un désir fou de violer des petites villes endormies (lisez bien ville et non des petites filles endormies!)' (Carter, p. 32.)

[62] Mieke Bal offers us another way of looking at this. The fact that the narrator is satisfied by touching Albertine's leg with his own supports Bal's contention that his model of love is 'lesbian', in that it is predicated on 'two bodies rubbing against each other', rather than on penetration ('Family', p. 68). At such moments, she points out, he feels he possesses her 'plus complètement, comme une chose inconsciente et sans résistance de la muette nature' (III, p. 581). In this argument, then, Albertine's actual skin might in fact be thought of as a permeable membrane that enables him to 'enter' her. This conclusion troubles the distinction between 'prolongement' and 'multiplication', suggesting this singular sexual act lies somewhere between the two.

[63] Bersani, pp. 16-19.

[64] 'N'ayant plus d'univers, plus de chambre, plus de corps que menacé par les ennemis qui m'entouraient, qu'envahi jusque dans les os par la fièvre, j'étais seul, j'avais envie de mourir.' (II, 28.)

When his grandmother enters, she provides not only an open self into which his own can be extended, but a source of strength that can be consumed: 'quand j'avais ainsi ma bouche collée à ses joues, à son front, j'y puisais quelque chose de si bienfaisant, de si nourricier, que je gardais l'immobilité, le sérieux, la tranquille avidité d'un enfant qui tète' (II, 28). Contact with the grandmother replenishes him and restores him to life, as if assimilation with another being is a necessary form of nourishment, without which the narrator cannot function as a living subject. Perhaps because he has never fully been able to accept the separation between himself and his mother, he sees his own self as incomplete and unable to exist on its own. This, as my earlier analysis has suggested, can be seen as the root not only of his desire to assimilate with 'a source of strength outside of himself', but also of his habit of seeing familiar bedrooms as part of himself: he needs to assimilate with these familiar spaces in order to make himself whole.

Clearly, the act of 'consuming' Albertine is more explicitly sexual. Jean-Pierre Richard has linked the experiences of eating and of sex as they are presented in the novel: 'vis-à-vis du terme charnel,' he writes, 'le terme comestible tient donc lieu tout à la fois de métaphore et de métonymie: il est tantôt voisin, et tantôt substitut, souvent les deux en même temps. Entre embrasser les joues d'Albertine et les manger, point vraiment de différence.'[65] This final sentence is a reference to the episode considered above, in which the narrator sees ten Albertines as he moves his lips towards her cheek. Yet there *is* a difference between the two acts Richard describes. The narrator specifies that kissing Albertine's cheeks is essentially a *failed* attempt to 'eat' them: at the moment his lips make contact with her skin, they enter into 'cette zone désolée où elles ne peuvent trouver leur nourriture', unable to 'goûter davantage la saveur que la nature les empêche actuellement de saisir' (II, 659). But kissing Albertine on the mouth while she sleeps seems to rectify the previous failure, breaking through the 'wall' of her skin. In Chapter 3, I quoted Boccioni's declaration in the 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting' of 1910 'that movement and light destroy the materiality of bodies', which I argued is borne out in his painting, *Dynamism of a Cyclist*. Here, the opposite has happened. Albertine is no longer a cyclist; she no longer inhabits the inaccessible realm or dimension of the practitioner of speed. Her materiality is restored – her physical and psychological stasis render her *substantial*, and thus 'edible', consumable. No longer an 'être de fuite', she

[65] Jean-Pierre Richard, *Proust et le monde sensible* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974), p. 16.

becomes an unconscious object of consumption at the same time as being an unguarded space to be colonised.

This combination of consumption and colonisation is a two-way process of assimilation that reaches its epitome in the subsequent paragraph, in which the narrator describes the still greater pleasure of watching Albertine wake up:

> Il [m'était doux] que, quand du fond du sommeil elle remontait les derniers degrés de l'escalier des songes, ce fût dans ma chambre qu'elle renaquît à la conscience et à la vie, qu'elle se demandât un instant 'où suis-je?', et voyant les objets dont elle était entourée [...] pût se répondre qu'elle était chez elle en constatant qu'elle s'éveillait chez moi. Dans ce premier moment délicieux de l'incertitude, il me semblait que je prenais à nouveau plus complètement possession d'elle, puisque [...] c'était ma chambre, dès qu'elle serait reconnue par Albertine, qui allait l'enserrer, la contenir. (III, 582)

In one sense, this is an amplification of the idea of consumption by eating. The logic of the spatially dependent and architecturally constructed self dictates that by waking up in the narrator's bedroom, Albertine is also, to some degree, waking up both in and as *him* – that if the narrator's bedroom encircles and contains her, then so too does he. The objects that surround her, we remember, are so familiar to him that they are effectively annexed organs. The narrator himself functions as another of the restrictive layers that the girls in *Children's Games* seem to be ripping away, engulfing Albertine in his externalised body and consciousness. This is not just a process of bringing the other into the self, but also the reverse: if, like the narrator, Albertine must work to recompose 'les traits originaux de [s]on moi' as she ascends from sleep, it is the narrator's self-space that provides the *point de repère* in her journey towards a whole, waking self. Casting an externalised part of the self as a building block in the other's process of self-reconstruction is perhaps the ultimate act of 'multiplication de soi' – a means of inserting the self into the very fabric of the other.

## III. Other Spaces: Tanning and Ernst

### i. Shared spaces, shared selves

An alternative model of self-other relations is offered in Dorothea Tanning's account of her marriage to Max Ernst, as given in her memoir, *Between Lives*. There are inevitably some tricky gender dynamics at play in a relationship between a male artist of great renown and a younger woman whose own art has never been accorded equal recognition; in the memoir Tanning is frank about this imbalance and the frustrations it caused.[66] The book itself is also founded on an inherent imbalance: Max Ernst himself having died some years before its publication, it can only recount the relationship from the perspective of a single participant. Nevertheless, it offers an encouraging alternative to the narrator's conception of heterosexual love and cohabitation, challenging the idea that such relationships must be based on models of colonisation and consumption, but nevertheless drawing on comparable metaphors to elucidate the complex processes that play out in romantic relations between two people.

Tanning's description of the moment Ernst moved into her New York apartment has been considered earlier in this chapter for its alignment of the self and the domestic space it inhabits, in a manner comparable to Proust's narrator's notion that his bedroom is an extension and a part of himself. But it also demonstrates an openness to the entry and influence of another that runs counter to the narrator's later attitude to Albertine. I quote again:

> It took only a few hours for him to move in. There was no discussion. It was as if he had found a house. Yes, I think I was his house. He lived in me; he decorated me; he watched over me. […] In no time at all, the last picture found a place by the door and the last mask was hung over my desk. […] A glory of pictures expanding my rooms, making other worlds out of my walls.[67]

There are parallels here with the narrator and Albertine's domestic set-up: in both scenarios, one lover moves into the apartment that belongs to the other and that

[66] 'Has there ever in the world existed an artist (poet) who has been for the greater part of adult life so relentlessly condemned to listen to, to read of, to watch at close range – I almost said rage – the overwhelming attention paid to a fellow poet?' (Tanning, p. 277.)

[67] Tanning, pp. 64-65.

doubles as a spatial extension of his or her self. But the comparison is muddied by a complication of the roles in each relationship: Tanning herself combines qualities of both the narrator and Albertine without fully equating to either of them. Like Albertine, she is the woman in a heterosexual partnership, but there the similarities end. Unlike her, she has both a voice, since she is telling her own story, and power, since the apartment in question is hers, not her male lover's. As the apartment's 'gatekeeper', her role is closer to that of the narrator, but they are set apart in turn by their respective attitudes to their new cohabitees. Tanning does not attempt to colonise or consume Ernst, and nor is she colonised or consumed by him; she 'receives' Ernst as the narrator is 'received' by his grandmother, or his childhood bedroom, but she is not taken over. Although changed by having met him, she remains herself – she is both plastic and stable, like a building that preserves its structural integrity despite having been qualitatively altered by the entrance of a new resident and his possessions. And in a reversal of the oppressive gender dynamics explored in my discussion of *Children's Games*, it is Tanning who is described as providing an additional 'skin' or casing for Ernst, and not the other way around.

Unlike Proust's narrator, Tanning's account suggests she had always thought of her self as stable and contained. An artistic child, she was an anomaly growing up in her small, Midwestern town; later, as a female painter, she was an anomaly in the masculine world of 1940s Surrealism. The memoir recounts that as a teenager – that is to say, at a comparable age to Proust's narrator on his trip to Balbec – Tanning used her own money to rent a cabin next to a lake in Illinois, where she retreated for two weeks, alone, to paint. Her physical isolation was matched by a sense of separation from her family – 'baffled, hurt' – and friends, 'who had thought I was one of them until this'.[68] In contrast to the narrator's chronic need to merge with or digest an external source of strength, Tanning displays a need to withdraw, to be 'self-consciously, uncompromisingly alone'.[69] The solitary cabin is a potent symbol of this conscious and deliberate apartness, and stands as a counterpart to the narrator's room in the hotel, with its *cloison* that links him to his grandmother. As the *cloison* stands in for a *peau commune* that has not been successfully dissolved, the walls of the cabin suggest the kind of fully-fledged skin-ego that develops only *after* the dissolution of the shared skin. One function of the skin-ego is *individuation*; it allows the subject to 's'affirmer soi-même comme un individu ayant sa peau personnelle',

[68] Ibid., p. 25.
[69] Ibid., p. 24.

thus creating 'le sentiment d'être un être unique'.[70] Tanning's childhood independence implies just such a strong sense of clearly-defined psychic and somatic borders, in stark contrast to the narrator, whose 'elastic, permeable boundaries of individuation', in Sedgwick's words, are suggestive of the incompleteness and inadequacy of his own *Moi-peau*.[71]

Testament to these clearly-defined boundaries of the self, I would argue, is Tanning's preservation and assertion of her artistic individuality over decades of living with one of the most renowned painters of the twentieth century. And indeed, her sense of childhood apartness persists into her eventual union with Ernst, both psychologically and architecturally, and matched by a sense of apartness in her partner. She and Ernst both have their own studios, each painting 'in our own shimmering four walls', to which the other has only limited access: 'Max did not welcome unannounced irruptions into his studio. Nor for that matter did I. Studio visits even between us were by invitation.'[72] Later in the memoir, Tanning is frank about the existence of unknown, unseen parts of her husband's psyche that she will never know or understand:

> There was something about him I came to recognize as time went on, and with trepidation. Now, to speak of it at all I must dig deep for words that, as they surface, turn brown and dry as clods, leaving me agonized, embarrassed, inadequate. The presence of this profound and absolutely impenetrable something, this incalculable something – was he carrying some special burden of knowledge beyond the things in books, a heavy arcanum? – removed him ever so slightly from where he stood, so that his gentleness, his elegance, and the whole amalgam of his being spoke of apartness. Apart from the studio, from people; from even me, for I saw it clearly and did not panic: why should I want to plumb his very depths? Why bore behind the cool, faraway gaze directed straight through my eyes? – for at times his regard was of such distance that I was unsettled and had to swallow a rising knot in my throat. […] It is well to remember that deep-diving absence, hinting at a place I could never hope to fathom. […] The great bulging bag of his past slumped

[70] Anzieu, p. 126. The other functions of the skin-ego are *maintenance*, *contenance*, *pare-excitation*, *inter-sensorialité*, *soutien de l'excitation sexuelle*, *recharge libidinale*, and *inscription des traces* (see Anzieu, pp. 121-129).
[71] Sedgwick, p. 14.
[72] Tanning, pp. 144, 274.

> unopened. Its charms and hideousnesses […] moldered dankly in their dark nowhere, lost, unfound, and unclaimed.[73]

Although Tanning is unsettled by this visible absence, she expresses no desire to penetrate into the mysterious 'arcanum', aware that human beings contain spaces and truths that are accessible to no one but themselves. There are parts of her, after all, that are equally closed off to him. 'To share the fundamental wild truth that wrapped him close, ah, that was not for me,' she writes. 'Why should it be? He could not share mine.'[74] In a reversal of the narrator's desire to penetrate the other's essence as a means of 'self-completion', it is perhaps Tanning's stable, independent sense of self that allows her to accept Ernst's right to a private self-space of his own.

But notwithstanding this natural and inevitable apartness, there is also a complex interdepence. In the later chapters of her memoir, she recounts Ernst's death and her subsequent period of grief, retrospectively implying that they had functioned as two parts of an interdependent whole, their partnership itself forming a sort of external casing. 'For thirty-five years, life was love, a second skin,' she writes. '[…] Now life is life, an absolutely polished structure of skeletal simplicity.'[75] Without this second skin, she is 'hardly more than a diagram of anatomy, the stringy crimson-blue of nerves without epiderm', craving the protective outer shell that she now lacks: 'during this period, there wasn't a fiber of my being that didn't long to be enfolded and consoled.'[76] This word 'enfold' is revealing. Rather than a multiplication of the self or a consumption or absorption of the other, Tanning's relationship with Ernst is based on a process of mutual 'enfolding' – of layering, wrapping – that can be elucidated by a further Proustian image. In *Du Côté de chez Swann*, the narrator watches the local children dipping jars into the Vivonne river to catch fish, remarking that a process of mutual containment is at play:

> Je m'amusais à regarder les carafes que les gamins mettaient dans la Vivonne pour prendre les petits poissons, et qui, remplies par la rivière, où elles sont à leur tour encloses, à la fois 'contenant' aux flancs transparents comme un eau durcie, et 'contenu' plongé dans un plus grand contenant de cristal liquide et courant. (I, 166)

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[73] Tanning, p. 269.
[74] Ibid., p. 271.
[75] Ibid., p. 317.
[76] Ibid., pp. 303; 298.

The jars are both the containers *of* the water and contained *by* the water, and vice versa. The metaphors Tanning employs to illuminate her relationship with Ernst imply that it follows an analogous dynamic: Tanning is the 'architectural' space that contains Ernst, and is herself contained by the 'wrapping' of the second skin that their relationship provides. We recall that in her description, Ernst does not just inhabit the 'house' she provides, but also watches over her/it: his relationship to the 'house' is thus one of externality as well as internality. Like a more reciprocal version of the narrator's relationship with his grandmother, then, each provides a receptacle for the other's prolonged, extended self. If we take the Vivonne metaphor to its logical conclusion, we might also conclude that the descriptions of the water as 'cristal liquide' and of the jar as 'eau durcie' implies a privileged unity shared by Tanning and Ernst, as if they are different forms of the same essential 'substance'. This, arguably, is one way of looking at the rather mawkish idea that as well as a coupling between two essentially autonomous beings, their union is a meeting of minds, a consolidation of two related, painterly ways of looking at the world. Yet ultimately this 'sameness' is restricted to the realm of simile: the jar is not *actually* solid water, and nor is the river liquid glass. Moreover, as well as containment, the scene also evokes impenetrability and the *impossibility* of containment – as the jar's solidity renders it impermeable to the water, so the water exceeds the jar's capacity to capture and contain it. Ultimately, the underlying, irrevocable difference between them will always prevent complete assimilation. In any case, complete assimilation is not the purpose of the exercise: the jar has not been submerged in the water with a view to capturing the whole river, and the river does not flow into the jar with the intention of penetrating the glass. So it is with Tanning and Ernst. Proust, it seems, has unwittingly provided a metaphor for a mode of sexual partnership that runs counter to that observed by his own narrator, who brings Albertine to live with him precisely so that he might 'capture' and 'penetrate' her.

## IV. The Aesthetics of Partnership

The two contrasting relationships I have considered in this chapter can be elucidated by different epistemological models. These epistemological models, in their turn, can be mapped onto different aesthetic models; to do so is to bring the my argument full

circle, back to the question of the picture surface with which this thesis began.

The narrator's relationship to Albertine follows a centuries-old approach to knowledge acquisition that in Lafrance's words 'privileg[es] inside over outside and depth over surface', and which Anzieu explicitly rejects.[77] Since the Renaissance, he writes,

> la pensée occidentale est obnubilée par un thème épistémologique; connaître, c'est briser l'écorce pour atteindre le noyau. Ce thème arrive à épuisement, après avoir produit quelques réussites et quelques dangers: la physique du noyau n'a-t-elle pas conduit savants et militaires jusqu'à l'explosion atomique?[78]

This model is familiar to us: a version of it – Bergsonian intuition – was examined in some depth in Chapter 1. The narrator's attempts to know and possess Albertine follow the same logic: not content with his analytic, external view of her many facets, their relationship is underwritten by his chronic desire to break through her outer surface in order to 'intuitively' access the essential truth within. This model is problematic – partly, of course, because it comes close to the dynamics of rape and forced entry, but also because of its inherent limitations. As Sedgwick points out, the narrator's desire for Albertine is impossible and paradoxical; he 'can desire another only as she makes him jealous, but experiences jealousy as the spiraling demand for a total control that cannot be achieved and would terminate his desire if it ever were'.[79] We can go further, and suggest that the achievement of total control would also 'terminate' Albertine herself. Given that her identity within the novel revolves around her status as an object of desire, it follows that if this desire were negated through the eventual attainment of the knowledge the narrator so desperately

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[77] Lafrance, p. 22.

[78] Anzieu, p. 31.

[79] Sedgwick, p. 10. As Katja Haustein puts it, 'Marcel's desire must not be fulfilled, as the total alterity of the other is the very spur of his desire. And yet, his desire is motivated by, not directed at the total alterity of the other and its aim remains possession. Therefore, Albertine's constant withdrawal can at no point turn into giving and Marcel's look leaves no space for hope.' (*Regarding Lost Time: Photography, Identity, and Affect in Proust, Benjamin, and Barthes* (Oxford: Legenda, 2012), p. 48.) Ladenson has also commented memorably on this phenomenon, pointing out that 'the gist of the *Recherche*' is rendered most successfully by Groucho Marx, 'who in a telegram to the Friars Club famously captured the very essence of Proustian psychology with the observation that he didn't want to belong to any club that would have him for a member. This neo-Marxian dictum accounts for almost everything that happens over the course of the novel's 3,000-odd pages.' ('Proust and the Marx Brothers', in *Proust and the Arts*, ed. by Christie McDonald and François Proulx (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 213-222 (pp. 217, 218).)

pursues, she would, in a certain sense, cease to exist. (Indeed, on the occasions that the narrator feels satisfied that he *does* possess Albertine, his desire begins to wane and he determines to end the relationship, to write her out of his narrative – before his jealousy returns, and with it, his desire for knowledge.) The intuitive ideal is thus condemned to cancel itself out: its attainment doubles as its negation, cutting subject off from newly-effaced object at the very moment of their epistemological assimilation.

**Fig. 16:** Dorothea Tanning and Max Ernst in Sedona, Arizona, 1946 (Lee Miller)

By contrast, Tanning and Ernst embody a post-Bergsonian model of self-other relations: not quite intuitive, not quite analytic, refusing to accord the same value to the distinction between inside and outside, surface and depth. The process of mutual enfolding and wrapping that Tanning's text implies is reminiscent of Anzieu's argument for a congruence between these elements rather than a privileging of one over the other. This is perhaps best illustrated by Tanning's descriptions of Ernst, cited above: she refers to the hypothetical process of searching for his essential self as 'plumb[ing] his very depths', but two pages later, that same essentiality is termed 'the fundamental wild truth that *wrapped him close*' – a formulation that suggests not so much depth as an external, enveloping surface. The other's essential being does not just exist beyond the surface; the pursuit of full knowledge of the other, were it to be attempted, would not simply be a matter of diving deep until the secret is found and grasped, but would take in the more complex interplay between inner and outer truths. This understanding aligns with Anzieu's theory that the self is as much container as contents – itself anticipated in the narrator's observation that the jar in the Vivonne is at once 'contenant' and 'contenu'.

Fittingly for a relationship between two painters, Tanning and Ernst's Anzieu-esque transcendence of these distinctions is reminiscent of the broader aesthetic question that was discussed briefly in the introduction to this thesis and addressed in depth in Chapter 2: whether a picture is primarily representational surface or primarily represented space, or both at once, or a fluctuation between the two. If their life together were an image, it would hover between simply representing and drawing attention to its own status *as image*. In fact, moments from their life in Sedona, Arizona, are documented in a series of photographs that make just such a meta-pictorial commentary. Tanning and Ernst collaborate with the photographer, their friend Lee Miller, to comment visually on their status as both images and image creators, and on the nature of images themselves. In one, Miller makes a wry comment on their respective stature in the art world by playing with perspective to create a giant Ernst, in the foreground, who appears to be crushing a smaller Tanning, in the middle distance, with his fist. In another, Tanning and Ernst are back to back, she looking at her seemingly recently-completed painting *Maternity*, still on its easel, he staring out of the window, the symmetry of the set-up positing an equivalence between the two. In another, Tanning and Ernst are photographed from the other side of a window, so that they appear framed, an image within the image (fig. 16). The most explicit meta-pictorial reference occurs when Ernst nonchalantly holds up an empty picture frame, which surrounds himself and Tanning as they concentrate on their game of chess (fig. 17). Tanning and Ernst's willingness to be, as it were, 'imagised', is also demonstrated by the fact that they both posed for their own portraits, notably her 1947 painting of Ernst, *Max in a Blue Boat*, and his 1960 *Portrait of Dorothea*.[80]

**Fig. 17:** Dorothea Tanning and Max Ernst in Sedona, Arizona, 1946 (Lee Miller)

[80] In a documentary made in 1996 about her life and work, Tanning displays her portrait of Ernst, for which, she remarks, he 'posed, very nicely, for several days' (Horst Mühlenbeck, *Birthday: Die amerikanische Malerin Dorothea Tanning* (1996) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1edrxYABGW8&t=508s> [accessed 15/8/2017]).

The narrator explicitly compares Albertine to a painting more than once, at one point relating the unknowable quality of her expression to that of a woman in a Latour portrait,[81] and elsewhere congratulating himself on possessing 'un oeuvre d'art' more precious than any painting: 'Albertine elle-même' (III, 884). On both occasions, the narrator is the viewer, and Albertine is either a work of art or its subject; there is no fluctuation between the roles of image and image creator or viewer. What changes is his relationship to the work of art – whether he feels satisfied he possesses it, or whether its subject matter confounds him. I would argue that there is another, implicit aesthetic model at play in the text, which again casts Albertine as image and the narrator as viewer. The desire to penetrate the wall or 'liséré' of Albertine's skin sidelines the surface of the body in a manner comparable to mimetic painting's sidelining of the surface of the canvas: the first treats the surface as an obstacle to be broken through, while the second treats it as an irrelevance to be ignored. Both are then faced with a problem: once past the surface, what then?

'Beyond' the surface, the perspectival mimetic painting terminates in a vanishing point. But as Tanning observes in her memoir, this is an arbitrary, intangible point that does not correspond to anything spatially real. Trying to pinpoint the beginning of her story is pointless, she says, because:

> the beginning is an impossible place, as meaningless as that dot on my drawing in a class perspective lesson, the spot in the middle of the paper where all lines – roads? – came together at a place called Infinity. Only, supposing out of curiosity you tried to go there, you'd never make it. The spot would have gone, would have streaked ahead, and you would have to start all over again.[82]

For Tanning, painting is an explicit metaphor for an anti-perspectival mode of relation and of being in the world. It would be foolish, she implies, to try and pursue life's 'vanishing point'. Her relationship with Ernst, she suggests, plays out somewhere between the surface of the 'canvas' and the infinity of this point:

> on this diagram of my own devising, the lines, instead of converging, open to

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[81] 'Il eût été impossible de dire qu'elle blâmât, qu'elle approuvât, qu'elle connût ou non ces choses […] elle avait l'air d'un pastel et de ne pas plus avoir entendu ce qu'on venait de dire que si on l'avait dit devant un portrait de La Tour.' (III, p. 851.)

[82] Tanning, p. 61.

> reveal a middle distance where we contend, Max and I, with all kinds of ardent ferment […] we blend our lives as easily as the colors in our pictures, we scoff at perspectives which are, after all, so false.[83]

Her perspectival approach to her actual painting, she suggests, has been a remedy for or an escape from a perspectival approach to life. The retreating doors of *Birthday* are among the perspectives she scoffs at – 'half open like Venus's flytraps, irresistible snares inviting me in. Yes, I had painted them as if doing so would liberate me from a doom of perspective, the beckoning nowhere that had dogged my errant life so far.'[84]

The narrator does not have this insight. His attitude towards his relationship with Albertine is doggedly perspectival: his role is like that of a frustrated pursuer, trying in vain to chase down the ever-retreating horizon or the non-existent vanishing point. In one regard, his desire is simplistic and straightforward: he is one of a number of characters whose quest to pin down the 'truth' about the love object, Sedgwick observes, 'always and only means demanding to know one single thing: whether or not that person is unfaithful'.[85] In this conception, truth, like a vanishing point, is singular, contained, and seemingly attainable. But, also like a vanishing point, which recedes with every imagined step towards it, so each piece of information that should lead to this truth only raises further questions, opening out the 'space' of the investigation until the truth begins to seem impossible to know or encompass. In an episode already cited in Chapter 3, the narrator realises that possession in the shape of total knowledge and control is impossible because the love object is not, in fact, 'un être qui peut être couché devant nous, enfermé dans un corps', but:

> l'extension de cet être à tous les points de l'espace et du temps que cet être a occupés et occupera. Si nous ne possédons pas son contact avec tel lieu, avec telle heure, nous ne le possédons pas. Or, nous ne pouvons pas toucher tous ces points. (III, 607-608)

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[83] Ibid., p. 62.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Sedgwick, pp. 4-5.

The task becomes even more untenable if we challenge the narrator's un-Bergsonian assumption that space and time consist of a series of points. Just as an imagined pursuer would discover that the vanishing point is not a 'point' at all, but a continuous extension of space, the knowledge the narrator desires is neither a singular kernel of truth nor a series of such truths, but a fluid, multidimensional, uncontainable expanse.

This is a failure of the linear-perspectival model akin to that already examined in Chapter 3, when it becomes clear that the narrator's 'perspectival' ideal of train travel does not stand up under scrutiny. He is as misguided in his pursuit of absolute knowledge and total control of Albertine as he was in his belief that a train journey could carry him to the essential heart of a town as he had conceived of it in his imagination. As in that instance, the older narrator seems to distance himself from his own earlier position when, in the sentences immediately following the passage quoted above, he remarks that: 'nous tâtonnons sans les retrouver. De là la défiance, la jalousie, les persécutions. Nous perdons un temps précieux sur une piste absurde et nous passons sans le soupçonner à côté du vrai.' (III, 608.) His failure to capture Albertine seems, implicitly, to make the case for a non-perspectival model. Albertine is not a mimetic subject, but, in her very unfathomability, asserts herself as an avant-garde one. We saw in Chapter 3 that her inner spaces can be characterised as four-dimensional landscapes in motion, and, in Chapter 1, that she appears to the narrator as a collection of cubistic, analytic surfaces. If her eyes figure as a seascape seen through a window, as I argued earlier in this chapter, the window in question is surely a Magrittean aperture, which does not simply reveal, but highlights the inaccessible otherness of what lies beyond. Faced with these unfathomable manifestations, the younger narrator is like a conservative viewer at an exhibition of avant-garde paintings, consistently confounded in his attempts to understand a modernist subject by applying the rules of realist mimesis. But Proust himself, we might conclude, makes a compelling argument for the essentially 'avant-garde' nature of human beings.

# Conclusion

This thesis has explored points of thematic overlap between Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* and the artworks and theoretical writings of the historical avant-gardes. It has considered Proust's work in relation to the paintings and writings (and in one instance, sculpture) of movements with which his work overlaps chronologically – the aesthetically similar but philosophically divergent Cubist and Futurist movements – and to visual works completed after his death, but which fall under the banner of Surrealism, a movement that began towards the end of his lifetime. It has brought these works together via their engagement with broader cultural phenomena, such as mechanised movement technologies and photography in its various forms; via the theory of a contemporary thinker, Henri Bergson, and a later one, Didier Anzieu; and via a set of culturally-embedded spatial and architectural metaphors (the work of art as a 'window on the world'; the body as a 'building').

From this expansive corpus has emerged the central thematic debate of the thesis: can and should subjects 'enter into' the objects they perceive, the processes they witness, and the beings with whom they interact, or do – should – they remain in a marginal position, cut off from what is ultimately an inaccessible interior domain? These two opposing positions have reappeared in various guises – analysis vs. intuition, awareness vs. immersion, surface vs. depth, exterior vs. interior. The terms 'insidership' and 'outsidership', however, work as umbrella terms that encompass these various states. In many instances, a hierarchy is implied between the two, as when the state of being 'outside' is imbued with negative epistemological implications: outsiders, it has often been suggested, cannot hope to truly *know* the object or person to whom they relate. An 'analytic' relation to an object in the world is, in Bergson's view, a state of epistemological incompleteness inferior to the absolute knowledge that would be afforded if the subject were intuitively to 'enter' the object in question. Those who travel by organic means or who remain static are cut off, to their detriment, from an 'inside' that belongs to the practitioner of speed, and which figures as a sort of 'beyond' space, with new conditions of possibility, in which categories are transcended and contradictions are resolved. In his relationship with Albertine – herself a practitioner of speed – the narrator tries to break through into a hallowed interior domain precisely because his position as the eternal outsider is so epistemologically unsatisfying.

But the idealisation of insidership can rapidly degenerate into more sinister territory. The step required to relate the narrator's attempts to 'enter' Albertine to the dynamics of rape and forced entry is a very small one indeed. The message I discerned from Tanning's *Children's Games*, on the other hand, is that being *too much* of an insider ultimately amounts to a state of claustration and imprisonment. Anzieu, meanwhile, points out that the centuries-old approach to knowledge acquisition as an attempt to 'briser l'écorce pour atteindre le noyau' led, ultimately, to the development of the atom bomb.[1] Aspiring to a state of insidership may be misguided not only because of its potential to cause harm, but because such a state frequently fails to realise its epistemological promise. After all, as we saw towards the end of Chapter 4, 'entering' Albertine would ultimately serve no purpose for the narrator, since this very act would cancel itself out by negating his original desire to understand her inner world. And while Bergson explains the superiority of intuition by likening it to the sort of absolute knowledge we have of ourselves, the theories of his contemporary, Freud, trouble this comparison by illustrating that even our own selves are not truly known to us: the mysterious domain of the unconscious is, on the contrary, largely unseen and unknown. Moreover, the narrator's consistent attempts to 'complete' his self by merging with a 'source of strength outside of himself',[2] and the notion that his self 'spills out' of the boundary provided by the body and colours the spaces and objects of the external world, are an amplified illustration of the fact that selfhood might not, after all, be a state of unambiguous insidership.

Insidership, then, is perhaps not all it is cracked up to be. In some of the accounts considered in this thesis, it is harmful; in others, it is no guarantee of epistemological satisfaction; in still others, it does not seem truly to exist at all. The Cubist method, on the other hand, with its endorsement of an analytic, relativistic mode of relation and its implicit dismissal of the possibility of intuition, can be read as a celebration of outsidership. Indeed, outsidership is cast as a state of epistemological superiority in the representative model that Cubism is often seen to endorse, whereby the art object's status *as object* outdoes its potential as a transparent portal through which the viewer can 'enter' the represented reality. This is indicated by the terminology used to elucidate the dichotomy: a realistic representation in which the viewer might become immersed is 'deceitful', a 'fascination', an 'illusion',

[1] Anzieu, p. 31.
[2] Bersani, p. 15.

while acknowledging the object as object is 'awareness' or 'consciousness' – a clear-sighted act of distancing, of seeing the object for what it is.[3]

But as we saw, the positions that champion a single side of the dichotomy, arguing that the viewer can only ever be immersed in *or* aware of the work of art, have limitations of their own. I argued, via the works studied in Chapter 2, for a position that acknowledges the possibility of looking both *through* and *at* the work of art, and which suggests, by implication, that states of insidership and outsidership are not mutually exclusive. What is offered in Chapter 4, by Didier Anzieu's theory of the *Moi-peau* and by the Tanning-Ernst relation as it is portrayed in *Between Lives*, is a further possibility for transcending this binary, for taking inside and outside as two interdependent parts of a whole. Elsewhere, the crossover between insidership and outsidership becomes a fertile ground from which a new term can emerge: the implications of my exploration of the Martinville episode, for example, are that the complex troubling of the boundary between analysis and intuition creates a productive interstitial space from which a new art object can grow. The same idea is implied by the narrator's changing attitude towards train travel: where once he wanted to 'enter' the virtual space of the destination, the shift in focus to the train journey itself – an interstitial space in between an 'outside' domain (the point of departure) and an 'inside' one (the point of arrival) – provides the conditions for the development of a new mode of seeing and an imagined set of paintings. Taken together, these instances suggest that the most epistemologically sophisticated positions arise out of a troubling of the insider-outsider dichotomy, a symbiotic pairing or layering of the two.

A paper by Adam Watt, given in 2013 and cited in my introduction, compares Proust's layering of papers and ideas, in redrafting his manuscript proofs, to Picasso's layering of materials to create his guitar sculptures – suggesting, thereby, that the idea of layering might be a useful point of departure for a study of Proust and the avant-garde. This, I would suggest, could be a fruitful area of investigation for a future study. Meanwhile, a different manifestation of the idea of layering has proved an important factor in my own methodological approach to Proust's novel. What has emerged over the course of this investigation is the fact that Proust's processes of narrative and diegetic layering are central to his 'avant-gardism'. While

[3] Marian Hobson uses the terms 'fascination', 'illusion' (p. 3), 'awareness' (p. 5), and 'consciousness' (p. 3); W. J. T. Mitchell uses the term 'deceitful illusion' (p. 156).

the moving Martinville belltowers can be and have been related to the avant-garde in and of themselves, my argument in Chapter 1 demonstrated that a more intricate, illuminating connection to the avant-garde, via Bergsonian epistemology, can be made when we consider not simply the towers themselves, but the ways in which the narrator sees them, the way he represents them in writing, and moreover, the way he uses the mature text to represent the first representation. Considering the intricacies of a layered textual whole can be a means of detecting an avant-garde impulse in Proust's work even when the 'raw material' of an episode seems to align more naturally with nineteenth-century aesthetic or perceptual values. Thus, in Chapter 2, I engaged with the ekphrastic paintings attributed to Elstir, not because they themselves embody an avant-garde aesthetic, but because the textual whole of which they are part presents us with some intriguing complexities that can be linked to broader avant-garde ideas about the nature of perception and representation. We inevitably arrive at a more complex verdict than the standard 'Elstir is Turner/Monet/Whistler' when we take into account the fact that the painter espouses a multifarious and incompatible set of aesthetic positions; that the paintings and the way the narrator responds to them bring our attention back, in various ways, to the text in which they are situated; and that Proust and his narrator use the paintings to comment both on the way the *artist* sees and the way his works *are seen* by their viewers.

Sometimes the 'raw material' to which I refer is something the younger narrator says or does, or an attitude he adopts, at the level of the diegesis, and which is not borne out by what the older narrator says at the level of narration, or what Proust himself implies through the whole ensemble. Often the novel's avant-garde impulse emerges in the moments when the older narrator distances himself, whether explicitly or implicitly, from an opinion or action of the younger. The younger narrator is often more concerned with looking *through* than looking *at*, for example – as when he tells Elstir he would like to visit Carquethuit without realising that what appeals to him is a quality of Elstir's representation rather than of the place itself, or when he looks through the window of the train ('collant mes yeux à la vitre') to try and pin down the essential quality of the sunrise. In the first instance, a wiser narrative voice comments explicitly on the naïveté of this earlier position; in the second, the events that follow make it clear that what is important is the manner of looking, not the essential qualities of the view itself. Later, he comments retrospectively on the folly of having tried to relate to Albertine according to what I

term a 'linear perspectival' model. But it is not always the older narrative voice that dismisses a flawed way of thinking on the part of the younger; sometimes, the reverse is the case. The 'linear perspectival' assessment of train travel in *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, for example, is a retrospective one ('ce voyage, on le ferait sans doute aujourd'hui en automobile, croyant le rendre ainsi plus agréable'); it is only the events that follow, at the level of the diegesis, that call this assessment into question.

This complex slippage between diegetic levels has been crucial to my investigation. It would have been much harder to detect an avant-garde impulse in Proust's work by taking account of only one such level at a time; the avant-garde impulse might, in that case, have been restricted to the 'collection Marcel Proust' – the set of passages in which the events of the narrator's life play out as if they were happening in a Cubist or Futurist painting. These passages play an important role in any study of Proust and the avant-garde, and I have considered certain of them in my investigation here: the Martinville episode, the 'Cubo-Futurist' view from the train window, the attempt to kiss Albertine on the cheek. But what I conclude is that Proust's avant-garde impulse does not only manifest itself in passages that seem obviously to share avant-garde concerns, or to reference avant-garde visual practices: sometimes it is hidden in the cracks between hypotheses and events, between what is said and what is done, what is stated and what is implied.

The episodes in which an avant-garde undercurrent seems to play against a more overt suggestion of *dix-neuvièmisme* lead us, perhaps, to the sort of conclusion we might expect from an investigation into this material: that Proust is more radically modern than we generally give him credit for. But the reverse might also be the case. Sometimes, aligning his work with that of the avant-gardes points to contradictions in the assumption that the latter invariably sits at the most extreme end of the 'modernity spectrum', and that 'avant-gardeness' should be a benchmark against which other manifestations of modernity are judged. Indeed, the only artist whom I consider in this thesis to be significantly *more* forward-looking than Proust is Dorothea Tanning, who was, in any case, nearly forty years his junior, and unsurprisingly more progressive in her gender politics. Elsewhere, however, I note instances in which a link emerges between the culture of the past and the theory and practice of the avant-gardes. In Chapter 1, for example, I argued for a trajectory between the perceptual processes that are represented in the novel by Elstir and the

Futurists' ideal of artistic perception – an argument that inevitably also posits a connection between Futurism and a real-life proponent of these Elstirean processes, John Ruskin, whom the younger artists would surely have deemed even more 'old and worm-eaten' than Proust himself. I also suggested, in the same chapter, that while Proust's narrator's explicit dismissal of photography masks a more implicit appreciation of its ability to demonstrate the inherent multiplicity and relativism of the world, Boccioni's outspoken hostility towards the medium masks a deeper underlying conservatism, an adherence to traditional artistic hierarchies that sits uncomfortably with his professed desire to break with the art of the past. In Chapter 2, I drew attention to the importance for Robert Delaunay of aesthetic values more commonly associated with Impressionism and post-Impressionism, which forestalls the idea that Proust's own interest in these movements precludes or outweighs a more avant-garde impulse in his work. In Chapter 3, I quoted an extract from Apollinaire's *Zone* that combines references to cutting-edge technology with biblical and classical imagery, a usage that fits with an implicit cultural tendency to imagine technology as a means of 'deifying' the human.[4] The avant-gardes, then, do not unequivocally disavow the past, even when they might wish to. This means that we do not necessarily have to look to the most straightforwardly modern aspects of the *Recherche* in order to posit a connection to the artistic developments of his contemporaries. Proust's affinity for Ruskin and Impressionism, his apparent hostility to photography, and his use of metaphors of antiquity do not, in this context, mark him out as a *passéiste*, out of step with the creative developments of his day; rather, in some instances, it is the very aspects of his work that seem to cement him in a nineteenth-century artistic lineage that allow us to align him more closely with avant-garde values.

Ultimately, the relationship between Proust and the avant-garde can be elucidated by a return to the thematic terms of this thesis. Proust, by most accounts, was an 'outsider' in his relation to avant-garde activity – an interested but marginal observer. Yet in a certain sense, *all* the artists I have considered here were outsiders.

[4] This use of the tropes and figures of the past as a means of integrating the new into existing systems of understanding is seen elsewhere in avant-garde practice, particularly writing. Louis Aragon, for example, introduces *Le Paysan de Paris* as a 'mythologie du moderne' (*Paysan*, p. 35). Blaise Cendrars makes use of the juxtaposition between the modern and the ancient in his long poem about a journey on the Transsiberian Railway, *La Prose du transsibérien* ('L'ancêtre préhistorique aura peur de mon moteur | J'atterrirai | Et je construirai un hangar pour mon avion avec les os de mammouth.' ('La Prose du transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France', in *Blaise Cendrars: Poésies complètes* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1944), pp. 65-80 (p. 74).)

The Italian Futurists were geographically isolated from the formal innovations, driven by artists based in Paris, on which the pictorial developments of their own movement relied. It does not take a wild imagination to detect something of an inferiority complex in Boccioni's vehement declarations of Cubism's irrelevance. Yet in Paris, the division between the Montmartre Cubists (Picasso, Braque, Gris) and the Salon Cubists (Gleizes, Metzinger, et al.) meant that even the members of this pivotal avant-garde centre were isolated from each other and thus, in a sense, 'outsiders', even within their own movement. Meanwhile, Robert Delaunay, although associated with Cubism, was something of lone wolf who wanted to restrict the Apollinaire-coined epithet 'Orphism' to his own style of painting, as we have seen. Magritte only officially belonged to the Surrealist camp for three years, while Tanning was distanced from core Surrealist activity by age, gender, and geography. 'Mainstream' Surrealism was, moreover, riven with divisions and disavowals. Can we still think of Proust as an outsider, then, in the knowledge that the 'inside' is neither so cosy nor so homogeneous as the term might imply? It would be a mistake to assume that there is a way to be truly 'inside' the avant-garde, to fully and purely embody the essence of 'avant-gardeness'. Perhaps, then, an investigation into Proust and the avant-garde should begin and end with a troubling of the term 'avant-garde' itself, a misleadingly singular turn of phrase that bears no small part of the responsibility for the divisions that are assumed to exist between them.

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