
H-France Review Vol. 18 (August 2018), No. 164

Thomas Carrier-Lafleur, *L'Œil cinématographique de Proust*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015. 713 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. € 49.00 (cl). ISBN 978-2-8124-4930-7

Review by Marion Schmid, University of Edinburgh.

The rich interconnections between Proust and the cinema have been the subject of several publications, from Jacques Bourgeois's seminal 1946 article "Le Cinéma à la recherche du temps perdu" to more recent book-length studies, including Peter Kravanja's *Proust à l'écran* (2003), Martine Beugnet and Marion Schmid's *Proust at the Movies* (2004), and a collective volume edited by Jean Cléder and Jean-Pierre Montier, *Proust et les images. Peinture, photographie, cinéma, vidéo* (2003).^[1] Thomas Carrier-Lafleur inserts himself into this prolific field of scholarship with the weighty *L'Œil cinématographique de Proust*, a study which both revisits and extends the critical horizons of earlier publications. In the wake of Bourgeois, who first analysed cinematic techniques in *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the author proposes the concept of a Proust "cinéaste" whose writing is "virtuellement cinématographique" (p. 31). If reading the *Recherche* in cinematic terms is one of the book's main aims, the author equally reappraises the various screen adaptations of the novel and examines its legacy in literary and cinematic works that, while showing a strong affinity with Proust, are not adaptations *sensu stricto*. This double focus, in turn, is extended into a heuristic model for cinematically interrogating literary texts more widely and for reconsidering the question of film adaptation.

Behind a deceptively simple title focused on Proust, *L'Œil cinématographique de Proust* is an ambitious enterprise that takes the *Recherche* as a springboard to consider what Jean Cléder, in a seminal book, calls the "affinités électives" between literature and cinema.^[2] Carrier-Lafleur has chosen three main entry points to rethink the junction between these two media: adaptation, the image, and time. Structured like a film, but also emulating the meandering style of Proust's writing, the book is divided into three "Plan-Séquences" intercalated with a similar number of "Intermissions." While the "Intermissions" provide a more general exploration of the three key issues under discussion, the "Plan-Séquences" look at how a particular theoretical question is played out in Proust. Just like Proust and the cinema illuminate each other, so too the different sections are intended to shed light on one another while at the same time broadening the focus from Proust to wider questions regarding the practice of adaptation, the nature of the image in both verbal and audio-visual cultural production, and the literary and cinematic constructions of time.

The first "Plan-Séquence" considers to what extent the theme of adaptation is already present in the *Recherche* before revisiting the main cinematic reworkings of Proust: Visconti's and Losey's unfinished projects of the 1970s, Percy Adlon's *Céleste* (1981), which is not an adaptation of the *Recherche*, but a film inspired by Céleste Albaret's book *Monsieur Proust*, Volker Schlöndorff's *Un Amour de Swann* (1984), Raoul Ruiz's *Le Temps retrouvé* (1999), Chantal Akerman's *La Captive* (2000), and Nina Companéez's adaptation for French television (2011). Reading different adaptations in dialogue with one another, the author offers shrewd new readings. Thus, for instance, a comparison between Adlon's adaptation and its textual source reveals that the former respects Céleste Albaret's voice while the latter corrects her

grammatical and syntactic mistakes. Losey/Pinter and Companéez are read together in their respective attempts to adapt the whole of the *Recherche*. The corresponding “Intermission” draws on Slavoj Žižek’s notion of the “parallax” to propose new models of thinking about the nature and practice of adaptation.

The second “Plan-Séquence” investigates the image as the starting point of Proust’s literary enterprise. Focusing on the “devenir-image” in the *Recherche*, the author reads scenes from the novel as inscriptions of the magic lantern before revisiting the role of photography (via Brassai, Benjamin, and Barthes) and of painting (via Georges Didi-Huberman and Deleuze) in Proust. The Proustian image is conceptualized as a new vision of the world, in tune with Bachelard’s dictum: “[q]uand l’image est nouvelle, le monde est nouveau” (p. 382). The “Intermission,” drawing on Henry James’s *The Figure in the Carpet* and on Godard’s films *Passion* and *Scénario du film Passion*, posits cinema and literature as two “genres” of images where ideas are allowed to emerge and materialise. The discussion is rounded off by readings of Jules Verne’s *Le Château des Carpathes* and Villiers de l’Isle-Adam’s *L’Ève Future* as forerunners of the cinematic image.

The third and final “Plan-Séquence” aims to show that “l’art cinématographique’ proustien [...] encourage une lecture médiatisée du roman, à l’époque de la reproductibilité technique et de la projection de l’imaginaire” (p. 461). The author “reframes” (*recadre*) selected passages from the *Recherche* in cinematic terms before proceeding to cinematic readings of texts by Zola, Kierkegaard, and Freud. There follow interlaced readings of Proust’s “pensée cinématographique” and a number of theoreticians of the moving image (Etienne Souriau, Edgar Morin, and Jean-Louis Schefer) as well as a series of filmmakers (Georges Méliès, Serge Eisenstein, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Michelangelo Antonioni and Jean Epstein). In the last section, seminal scenes from the novel are reinterpreted through the prism of Deleuze’s concepts of the “movement-image” and the “time-image.” The corresponding “Intermission” investigates Godard’s *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, Tanguy Viel’s *Cinéma*, and Alice Ferney’s *Paradis conjugal* (which all rework films by Joseph Mankiewicz), and Hubert Aquin’s *Neige noire* to explore the idea of cinema as “*un art du vivre-ensemble, de la coexistence et de la plurimodalité*” (p. 616). The book is framed by an extensive prologue which introduces the concept of a “Proust ‘cinéaste’” and an epilogue that, among other concerns, reassesses Proust’s critique of the cinema in *Le Temps retrouvé*.

As will have become clear from this brief (far from exhaustive) outline, the intellectual journey traced in *L’Œil cinématographique de Proust* is as broad as it is sinuous. The author himself acknowledges the “parcours baroque” of his book, claiming for himself the right to digress (p. 23). Revealingly, he describes his work as a *performance* situated at the convergence between Proust’s writing and the cinema (p. 23). Hence immersing oneself into the astonishingly complex map of this book requires a certain openness, rewarded by many an unexpected discovery or encounter. Proust specialists will be fascinated to learn about Jacques Leduc’s (now lost) film *Sommeil d’Albertine* (aka *Les Yeux d’Albertine*, 1945) and Jon Jost’s *All the Vermeers in New York* (1990). They will relish Carrier-Lafleur’s reading of André Bazin’s little known article “Paris 1900: A la recherche du temps perdu” and his discussions of André Maurois’s *Le Côté de Chelsea* and of Pamela Hansford Johnson’s *Six Proust Reconstructions* as examples of non-cinematic reworkings. They will be intrigued by the numerous films that are put into dialogue with Proust’s work through stills and their captions (even if one may have wished for some more explicit discussion of their relationship). The originality of this book lies precisely in its author’s willingness to forge connections across a wide range of cultural artefacts, be they literary, cinematic, or philosophical.

While the mastery and brilliance with which the author navigates such vast and rich materials is admirable, one cannot but help thinking that he has shoehorned several books into one. Though the book is packed with insight and erudition, one may have wished for a shorter, somewhat tighter format. Breaking up the material into several volumes and a series of articles would have certainly made it more accessible to a wider audience, not least students. What is more important, one would have expected a more sustained engagement with existing scholarship from an academic monograph. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, *L’Œil cinématographique de Proust* makes for stimulating reading. It adds a bold new

vision to a question that, as is amply shown by the author, is far from being exhausted.

NOTES

[1] Jacques Bourgeois, "Le Cinéma à la recherche du temps perdu," *La Revue du cinéma* 3(1946):18-37; Peter Kravanja, *Proust à l'écran* (Brussels: La Lettre volée, 2003); Martine Beugnet and Marion Schmid, *Proust at the Movies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Jean Cléder and Jean-Pierre Montier, eds., *Proust et les images. Peinture, photographie, cinéma, vidéo* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2003). For screen adaptations of Proust's work see also Anna Masecchia, *Al cinema con Proust* (Venice: Marsilio, 2008) and Gianni Olla, *Alla ricerca del cinema proustiano. Film, sceneggiature, linguaggi, autori* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2010). On the relationship between Proust's work and individual directors see Florence Colombani, *Proust-Visconti: Histoire d'une affinité élective* (Paris: Philippe Rey, 2006) and Miriam Heywood, *Modernist Visions, Proust's A la recherche du temps perdu and Jean-Luc Godard's Histoire(s) du cinéma* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011).

[2] Jean Cléder, *Entre littérature et cinéma. Les affinités électives* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012).

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ISSN 1553-9172