MADELEINE TIME:  

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Abstract

Three female protagonists—Madeleine Elster of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958), Céleste Albaret of Percy Adlon’s *Céleste* (1980), and Ariane of Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive* (2000)—are considered as the three Proustian women who form the tripart body of this thesis. In approaching them as such, the research has at its origin in the sensory encounter of the notorious ‘madeleine moment’ of Marcel Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*, in which the taste of a morsel of cake dipped in tea expands memory, collapses linear time, and from which the voluminous novel blooms. Transcribed, translated, and transposed from the literary experiences of the reader’s encounter with Proust’s writing, text transcends the page and the encounter becomes visual in the form of the moving image of film. These three filmed women all differ: the first, Hitchcock’s dizzying, dazzling Hollywood siren of San Francisco, lifted from the pages of a Parisian detective novel; the next, a German reincarnation of Proust’s devoted housekeeper, drawn from her own words, recorded fifty years after his death; the third, a closely-watching memory-making woman-loving nomadic director’s nod to the *Search*’s captivating Albertine Simmonet. To experience this trinity in contiguous proximity to one another through Proust is to enter a sensorial spiral in which time, bodies, text, and vision press up against one another in a movement that has the power to be as unsteadying as it can be pleasurable. Immersed in Madeleine Time, the time of these three Proustian women, allows for a consideration of the author’s life-in-writing, the Narrator’s waiting, and the reader’s own place in relation to the textual encounter. Madeleine Time is shown to suspend and sustain, nourish and withhold, prevent and provoke, to move.
Declaration

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Author’s Note


With the exception of Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, the case study films are viewed and discussed with the aid of English subtitling (Adlon’s *Céleste* translated from its original German, and Akerman’s *La Captive* from French). All quotations, unless otherwise stated, will be presented in English.

The commitment to English traces most faithfully my own encountering of Proust’s *Search* and the three films, my own being transported across languages, both textual, and visual.
Introduction: Three Proustian Women

Madeleine Time is the experience of the feminine in Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* (first published in French in 1913), as read through three core films, Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958), Percy Adlon’s *Céleste* (1980), and Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive* (2000). The reading encounter with Proust’s *Search*, I argue, is always already cinematic. Proust’s writing brims full with visual images and depictions of sensory stimuli. Madeleine Time is multisensory, it can be read in terms that move beyond the literary into the realm of the visual, to film, collapsing linear time whilst drawing the viewer closer to the text.

For Mieke Bal, in her 1997 text, *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*,¹ Proust’s writing crosses over from literature in its visual strategies of representation, fantasy, and poetic thought. Working from Bal’s sustained reading of Proust, my emphasis is on Madeleine Time as holding the past in order that it be reawakened in the future. Alongside Bal, Eric Karpele’s *Paintings in Proust: A Visual Companion to In Search of Lost Time*² makes the case for Proust’s *Search* as one of the most profoundly visual works in modern Western literature, drawing attention to and close reading of the art works referenced in the text. My visual encounter with Proust stretches beyond Bal’s visuals and Karpeles’ paintings and contends that the *Search* is cinematic in its being moved by Madeleine Time. The cinematic here both holds time and moves time. ‘In Proust,’ writes Serge Doubrovsky, in his provocative and sensual 1975 essay, ‘what sets the writing in motion is what moves it.’³ I am moved by the madeleine.

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The madeleine in Proust, as has already been highlighted by Julia Kristeva in her *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature* (translated by Ross Guberman), and *Proust and the Sense of Time* (translated by Stephen Bann), is feminine, specifically maternal. The Proustian madeleine, for Kristeva, as Carol Mavor has noted in her *Reading Boysishly: Roland Barthes, J.M. Barrie, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Marcel Proust, and D.W. Winnicott*, ‘is a woman-cake.’ The madeleine cake is tied to the feminine as the first example of Proustian involuntary memory, collapsing linear time by cutting through the present to a moment of the past. The madeleine cake is imbued with the memory of a childhood past, returning to the Narrator of the *Search* to the unanticipated sensations of a remembered longing for his mother’s goodnight kiss, released as flavour of the cake’s crumbs touch his lips. The morsel of woman-cake thus holds within its sponge crumbs the future of the novel as moved by memories of the past. Madeleine Time is thus cinematic in its waiting to be reawakened, moved out its slumber, by the taste of the past through the form of a woman. Women are at the heart of Proust’s *Search*. Taking on the feminine as part of Proust’s involuntary memory, my Madeleine Time emphasizes film’s ability to both *hold* time and to make time *move*.

Despite his being alive during the period that witnessed the invention of film, there is no record to suggest that Proust ever visited a cinema. And yet, his writing is filled with a cinematic sensibility that makes for a reading encounter filled with imagery that appears filled with movement, animating the writing. Within the first opening forty pages of the *Search*, Proust’s writing is filled with allusions and references to photography, whilst suggestions of movement give form to content, illuminating the text. Brassaï, in his *Proust in the Power of Photography*, notes that Proust talks often of his writing in photographic terms,

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and shows a keen interest in the technical and visual optics, making references to Eadweard Muybridge and physiologist Étienne-Jules Marey. He notes too, that in Proust, the photographic often pre-empts a return to memory in the non-linear narrative of the novel. In the early childhood bedroom scene, for example, a scene preceding that of the goodnight kiss, the Narrator recalls being read to at night through the visual depiction of Golo riding ominously across his wall towards Genevieve of Brabant, the medieval legend projected outside of his own mind’s making by the magic lantern that had been installed in his bedroom. An early invention in the history of moving image apparatus, the magic lantern unites the still image with that of the viewer’s imagination. It projects the internal through the external, vision-making becomes a reading of the image enabled through the participation of both story-telling narrator and the viewer as listener or reader. Thus, in Proust, the visual is always a form of reading. Madeleine Time allows for both the movement and holding of this visual reading. Jonathan Crary’s *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* considers the problem of visuality through the historical construction of the observer during the development of visual apparatus and visual culture in the nineteenth century. Providing a historical context for Proust’s exposure to and understanding of notions of vision and representation, he discusses the significance of pre-cinematic devices such as the magic lantern, the stereoscope, and the cinematograph as inseparable from the operations of social power, situating the observer within the structures of discourse and practise that they generated. On screen, in the cinema, real bodies are filmed moving before the viewer, and they adopt a form of inhabiting in the bodies that are being watched. In Proust’s *Search*, the reader inhabits a particularly comparative state, the bodies presented on the page become inhabitants of the reader’s imagination. The exchange, like that experienced by the listener/viewer of Golo and the magic lantern, presents both a moving and a holding of time that is specific to the cinematic. In Proust’s writing there is a sense of continuum, comparable to the ‘reel-time’ of film’s

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durational framing. Involuntary memory in the Search enacts the filmic ‘cut’ that marks the experience of reading as moved by the senses. Memory that transcends continuum through the feminine is the marker of Madeleine Time.

Reading, in Proust, is multiple. To read Proust is to give oneself up to length, to accept duration, to surrender linear time to reading time. Reading is personal, individual, characterised by the reader themselves. It is, as has already been established, multi-sensory. Reading is the consumption of endless detail in the minutiae of the everyday—in Proust’s Search, a detail such as drinking a sip of tea is overextended, forming the basis for a vast and voluminous novel. Simultaneously, in Proust there is a sense that nothing at all happens. This, in part, is tied to the aforementioned of length, detail, and sensory accumulation—nothing appears to happen because the narrative is so layered and multiple that it is neither singular nor linear. In the Search, everything happens—from the bombing of Paris in the First World War to the Dreyfus Affair, to dinner parties at the Ritz, to holidays at Balbec, summers in Combray, deaths, marriages, heterosexual love, homosexual affairs, train journeys, trips to Venice, rude gestures, sleeping, walking, waking, remembering—all stemming from the ordinary moment of an adult Narrator taking tea. In his preface to John Ruskin’s Sesame and Lilies (first published in 1906), Proust writes not of the author or the work, but of reading. Pre-dating the first publication of In Search of Lost Time by some seven years, Proust’s preface to Ruskin proposes a memory of reading that is analogous with Madeleine Time’s moving and holding characteristics. Proust immediately situates his viewer in a position to imaginatively recall (to ‘conjure’, Magic Lantern style) a memory of childhood days of reading a favourite book. A scene of total immersion whilst being framed by the sights, sounds, smells, distractions, annoyances, habits of the everyday, reading, for Proust, is both a holding within chronological (clock) time (posited in the hours after breakfast and before lunch), and a movement

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away from the linear (in its recollection of reading as a period of personal and individual refuge from the continuum, requiring a return to the appearances of ordinary life at its close). Proust writes:

There are perhaps no days of our childhood we lived so fully as those we believe we left without having lived them, those we spent with a favourite book. Everything that filled them for others, so it seemed, and that we dismissed as a vulgar obstacle to a divine pleasure: the game for which a friend would come to fetch us at the most interesting passage; the troublesome bee or sun ray that forced us to life our eyes from the page or to change position; the provisions for the afternoon snack that we had been made to take along and that we left beside us on the bench without touching, while above our head the sun was diminishing in force in the blue sky; the dinner we had to return home for, and during which we thought only of going up immediately afterward to finish the interrupted chapter, all those things which reading should have kept us from feeling anything but annoyance at, it has on the contrary engraved in us so sweet a memory of (so much more precious to our present judgment than what we read then with such love), that if we still happen today to leaf through those books of another time, it is for no other reason than that they are the only calendars we have kept of days that have vanished, and we hope to see reflected on their pages the dwellings and the ponds which no longer exist.⁹ (pp. 99-100)

Pre-empting Combray, the focus of Proust’s memory is here the ‘reading done during vacation time,’ at the family home in the countryside, with aunt and uncle and cook, and parents who would walk, and tables always being prepared for the next meal, and varicoloured skies ‘as if reflected from the stained-glass windows of the church seen at times between the roofs of the village’.¹⁰ A preface not just to Ruskin but to his own writing, Proust’s text here anticipates the Madeleine Time of the cinema and the three corpus films selected for this

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⁹ Proust, ‘Preface to John Ruskin’s Sesame and Lilies’, pp. 99-100
¹⁰ Ibid., p. 100
thesis. Returning to imagined memory, the past is awakened in a future reading, made personal by each encounter. The audio and visual stimuli that threatened to interrupt the child’s remembered reading are the very things that mark the reading encounter as cinematic, the buzzing bee, the interrupting friend, or the changing light outside, mark the holding and the moving of the reading. Here, time is both a construct of memory and imagination, experienced in both real and illusory terms.

Contemporary of Proust and cousin by marriage, Henri Bergson distinguished in *Matter and Memory* (1896) the duality of memory as being either tied to the body in habit (thus being automatic and purposeful, provoking action for purpose) or being of the imagination (in an unprovoked recognition of the past) in the form of memory-image, which is ‘already partly sensation’. ‘Matter,’ for Bergson, is ‘an aggregate of ‘images.’ ‘And’, he continues, ‘by ‘image’ we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less than that which the realist calls a thing,—an existence placed half-way between the ‘thing’ and the ‘representation.’

Taken up in *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (first published in French in 1983 and 1985 respectively), Gilles Deleuze works with Bergson’s theories to foreground his own approach to film theory: specifically that film unfolds in time, and that it is comprised of ever-differentiating layers of movement. Traced from Proust’s ideas of voluntary and involuntary memory, to Bergson’s dual reading of memory, Deleuze stands as a key writer in moving between the realms of literature and film through critical reading and the visual encounter of memory in both text and image. Key to Deleuze’s application of Bergson’s theories alongside his own is the notion that film

12 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, viii
13 Ibid., p. 175
14 Ibid.
possesses the potential to create its own movements or temporalities, rather than serving solely as representation. Madeleine Time, moving from Bal’s visual through Kristeva’s maternal, to Deleuze’s temporalities, invites a reading that is sensory and phenomenological in its approach. In his earlier *Proust and Signs*¹⁶ (first published in French in 1964), Deleuze addresses the signs left by characters and events in the *Search*, discerning that memory interprets the signs creatively, imaginatively, but without accuracy or truth. Instead, for Deleuze, the signs offered in Proust are both containers of emotion and response, and contained in the memories recalled by the Narrator. The madeleine is primary example of the multiplicities of the Proustian sign as experienced in the reading encounter. Following Deleuze’s movement between Proust and film through the sensory and emotional response to the experience of sign and time through image, my Madeleine Time is situated between literary and film theory towards a reading that is sensuous and sensed-at. Vivian Sobchack’s *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (1992) pre-empts the duality of my Madeleine Time in her proposal that the cinematic experience be dependent upon two viewers viewing: that the spectator and the film (or, in the case of Proust’s *Search*, the reader and the text) each exist as both subject and object of vision (or reading).¹⁷ Whilst Proust scholars and film theorists have worked between both subjects to explore the author’s relationship to film, there has been no developed inquiry into the Proustian reading encounter as cinematic, and, as such, read through key films. As mentioned earlier, Proustians have written of the *Search* and the author in sensory, visual, and historical modes (from Brassaï to Deleuze to Karpeles to Bal), whereas French visual and literary cultural scholars have approached Proust through their critical and analytical writings of Proust *on* film. Studies by Emma Wilson, Martine Beugnet and Marion Schmid are key resources in deliberating what it is to adapt Proust to screen and how this might be achieved, or what trappings or failings might be encountered in the attempt to realise the fullness of the

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My original approach in this research is to propose Madeleine Time as addressing the central element of the feminine in Proust, as encountered through the cinematic experience of reading the *Search* in both text and three specific films. These corpus works allow for a detailed and effective exploration of the feminine, the holding, and the moving in Proust as read through film. The three selected films are chosen for their individual merits, and their combined weight in proposing a reading of Proustian Madeleine Time. The first, Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958), is of interest to any Proustian reader given that the female protagonist’s name is Madeleine. As a character, she is an empty woman, recalled from a fictionalized past. As three women contained within one name—she is the ‘real’ Madeleine Elster, she is Judy as Madeleine, and finally, she is Scottie’s making Judy over into his memory of Madeleine—she disrupts linear time by both holding and moving fantasy. In the second, Percy Adlon’s *Céleste* (1980), a maternal, feminine figure is represented on screen, a transposition from memoir to moving image, made resonant through the sounds which give purpose to her actions. Based on a series of recalled memories, Adlon’s film moves text into the realm of cinema through the holding of the woman’s body. The final film, Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive* (2000), is closest to Proust’s *Search* in that it is a re-making of the book’s fifth volume from which it takes its name. The text becomes visual, Albertine becomes Ariane, whilst at the same time, it is marked by Akerman’s own femininity and moving Proust’s *Search* into the realm of her own history and filmmaking. One a fantasy memory-image, another a maternal holding, the third a movement in searching, the three corpus films draw attention to the significance of the refusal of linear time that is celebrated in the cinematic as a means to exploring the feminine in Proust. The three films concern three women under the banner of Madeleine Time, each three in one. Hitchcock’s Madeleine woman, as mentioned above, is three in one, Adlon’s *Céleste* holds close Proust’s own

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mother, the real Céleste Albaret, and the moving encounter with the filmed and held Céleste character, and Akerman’s Madeleine is Albertine, Ariane, and the return to the watery origins of the madeleine cake as traced back through Kristeva’s maternal and Akerman’s own missing mother. Contained within Madeleine Time and readers of it, these filmed women take on one another’s identities through the reading of memory held in Proust and moved by the cinematic. A first introductory film, Robert Altman’s 3 Women (1977), sets forth a means to approaching the Proustian feminine through three filmed women. Altman presents a film in which the central subject is the presentation of three women whose identities simultaneously layer over and become one another’s, in lingering slippages and projections. Transporting the magic lantern’s story from the walls of Proust’s Narrator’s bedroom at Combray to the toy-town and surreal landscapes of late 1970s Desert Hot Springs, California, Altman’s projected imaginary seems to put male protagonist Edgar as Golo in the saddle, pursuing of each of the three women in turn. Altman, however, refuses narrative convention, and subverts the male protagonist’s position through the application of dream images and incidents that culminate in a fatal killing. Altman’s 3 Women announces the duality of Proustian Madeleine Time, where the visual or reading encounter is both held and moved through a feminine that is necessarily central and multifaceted.

Robert Altman’s 3 Women

Shelley Duvall, Sissy Spacek, and Janice Rule play the protagonists who give Robert Altman’s 1977 film, 3 Women, its title. The characters of Millie Lammoreaux (Duvall), Pinky Rose (Spacek), and Willie Hart (Rule) observe, press upon, steal from and collapse in upon one another across traumatic events, and culminate in a final scene of 3 Women convened, making a space for their identity, made whole from a trinity of figures. (Fig. 1) A film built from a dream, 3 Women, is fluid and slippery, haunting and unsettling, tainted by music, driven by the dust of its Desert Hot Springs, California location, contrasting against by the too-powerful properties of water. In Altman’s film, pools are all-at-once for hydro spa treatments, for swimming and socializing at
the apartment complex, later to be darkened by Pinky’s attempted suicide, and empty of water in order to be filled up by pregnant Willie’s sweeping, grimacing painted murals. As Robert Self has noted:

The hazy quality of the opening shot; the bizarre, serpentine images of the murals; the haunting sounds of a woodwind quartet—all suggest a reading of meditation or hallucination. And the sharp clarity of the second shot, a close-up of legs in a pool, recuperated at last as Pinky’s (Sissy Spacek) as she stares in trance-like fixation at Millie (Shelley Duvall) at work with patients in a geriatric center, establishes a range of at least four points of view: external and perhaps dreaming narrator, Pinky as the subject of mediation, Millie as the dominant object of attention, and Willie (Janice Rule) as a silent, elusive figure whose murals nevertheless obtrude enigmatically everywhere in the diegetic spaces of the film.\textsuperscript{19}

\textit{3 Women} is a film of floating (Millie and Pinky with their patients at the spa, Pinky face down in the pool), of surfaces (‘thoroughly modern Millie’ with her magazines is preoccupied with appearances, aspirational beauty and the commercial ‘Image of Woman’ desired by men, whilst silent Willie marks her surfaces with sweeping gestures of narrative bodies), and of collapse (Pinky’s leap into the void of the swimming pool, Millie’s identity consumed by Pinky’s, Willie’s miscarriage, and her husband Edgar’s\textsuperscript{20} body falling to the ground after being shot dead). Life and death are always in close proximity to one another in Altman’s time-collapsing film. ‘\textit{La petite mort}’ of the space between dreaming and waking is the location of \textit{3 Women}. In interviews, Altman tells the tale that the genesis for the film was conceived in a dream:

\begin{quote}
I didn’t dream the movie, but I dreamed I was making it. […] I had a lot of people working for me at the time, and I was, literally, out of money.
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{20} Willie’s husband, Edgar Hart, played by Robert Fortier.
And I was quite worried, I went to bed. My wife was in the hospital. My son, Matthew, came and got in bed with me, and I had this dream. I dreamed the title for 3 Women. I dreamed of the people: Shelley Duvall and Sissy Spacek. I dreamed that it was a film about personality theft, and I would wake up in the middle of the night, and I’d take a pad from the side of my bed, and I’d write down this thing […] Then I would go back to sleep, and I would come back up and write more notes, and then finally, in the morning I woke up. Of course, I didn’t write anything in the middle of the night. There’s no notepad at my bed. But my bed was full of sand from Matthew sleeping in the bed [They lived in a house right on the beach in California at this point] […] And I dreamed that I was just making this film, and got up and became very depressed. So I called Scotty Bushnell, who worked with me, still. I said, “Listen, I read a short story last night, and I think it’s pretty good. How does this sound to you?” And I kind of vamped this thing. They said, “Can you get the rights to it?” And I said, “You bet.” And I really developed it. Nine days later we had a deal and we were on our way to Palm Springs. That’s how 3 Women was born.21

Self addresses the collapse of knowledge and convention in Altman’s film: ‘its advertising sold ambiguity in the first place when it proclaimed: “1. woman became 2; 2 women became 3; 3 women became 1.” The trailers promised, “It will make you examine everyone you ever wanted to be.”’22 Identity, Time, Space, and Memory are all wound up in the unit of Altman’s 3 Women.

Born in 1925, Robert Altman was raised in Kansas City. ‘He attended Wentworth Military Academy, dropped out of college, piloted B-24s in World

22 Self, ‘3. Art-Cinema Narration’, p. 64
Working for Calvin Company from 1947 ‘for six years as a writer, director, photographer and editor’, he then made an independent feature, The Delinquents, in 1955, and later co-directed a documentary feature, The James Dean Story. On the strength of these films, Alfred Hitchcock gave Altman the opportunity to direct TV mysteries. Altman directed two half-hour episodes of the Alfred Hitchcock Presents television series, which ran from 1955-1962. The Young One (1st Dec., 1957) and Together (12th Jan. 1958) were episodes from the show’s third season, and aired on the American station CBS. Altman then went on to develop a career in directing television series such as The Whirlybirds, Bonanza, and The Detectives, before making his commercial movie breakthrough directing M*A*S*H in 1970. A film career followed, from psycho-drama Images (1972), The Long Goodbye (1973), Nashville (1975), and Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or, Sitting Bull’s History Lesson (1976) before 3 Women (1977).

Proust and Film

Born in Paris on 10th July 1871, Valentin Louis George Eugène Marcel Proust was raised in the capital and spent his holidays in the village of Illiers (today Illiers-Combray), just south of the cathedral city of Chartres. The son of a Catholic physician, Adrien Proust (1834-1903), and a Jewish mother, Jeanne Clémence Weil (1849-1905), and the eldest of two sons (his brother, Robert Proust, a physician like their father, lived from 1873-1935), Marcel the asthmatic cultivated a cultural and social life for himself in Paris, then devoting his time to becoming an author. Dying at the age of fifty-one on 18th November

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23 David Sherritt, ed., Robert Altman: Interviews (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2000), p. 28
24 Sherritt, Robert Altman, pp. 28
26 Sherritt, Robert Altman. See ‘Chronology’, xv-xxi, for full list of works, and Altman’s filmography, which continues to grow to this day. ‘1977: Directs the highly surrealistic 3 Women, based on a dream, with backing from Alan Ladd, Jr. at Twentieth Century-Fox, earning many respectful reviews and a best-actress prize for Shelley Duvall at the Cannes filmfest.’, xviii.
1922, Proust is today best known for his seven-volume life-work *A la recherche du temps perdu*, translated in English as *In Search of Lost Time* (the first volume of which was first published in Paris by Gallimard, in 1913). Lifting tales from his childhood, his life, his own experiences, Proust’s writing became his life, his vocation was the pursuit of language. The image of Proust the writer is a familiar one. Holed up in bed, writing propped up by pillows, scratching away with his pen by candlelight, working by night so as not to be disturbed, his bedroom walls lined with cork to block out noise, the windows and curtains drawn keep out dust and all manner of allergens from the world outside, the much-biographied, parodied, analysed, investigated Proust has become a nocturnal muse of his own making. And from this image pour forth the visions of the *Search.*

Endeavouring to become the reader of himself, Marcel Proust’s *Search* invites reading, re-reading, and remembrance. ‘Every reader,’ writes the Narrator, ‘as he reads, is actually the reader of himself. The writer's work is only a kind of optical instrument he provides the reader so he can discern what he might never have seen in himself without this book. The reader's recognition in himself of what the book says is the proof of the book's truth.’

But what if one were to film Proust? To attempt to transpose this voluminous work from pages and pages to film? To utilise the writer’s optical instruments and to transform them to create a site for visual encounter? Surely it would take cans and cans of film, just as it took reams and reams of paper, notebooks pasted and glued, cahiers filled with years of writing to create? Unsurprisingly,

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27 From hereon in I will refer to *A la recherche du temps perdu* as ‘the Search’, an abbreviation of the title of the novel in standard English translation, *In Search of Lost Time*. This is in correlation with this thesis’ approach to a translating of Proust through film, from text to moving image. Page references, unless otherwise stated, will be taken from C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin’s translations, revised by D. J. Enright, and reproduced in six printed volumes by London publishers, *Vintage* (2000). Again, in the case of film quotes, two films, Percy Adlon’s *Céleste* (1980) and Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive* (2000) in particular have been viewed with English subtitles, thus quotations will be in English translation.

there have been very few attempts. As Martine Beugnet and Marion Schmid note in their survey introduction to their *Proust at the Movies* (2004): ‘The sheer length of the text (more than 1,300,000 words), the huge cast and expensive sets a traditional adaptation would require, as well as the novel’s associative narrative structure which defies conventional cinematic chronology and, not least, the “intellectuality” and cultural elitism often associated with Proust make the adaptation of *A la recherche du temps perdu* not only a difficult, but also a risky venture.’

The 1970s saw the adaptation of Proust’s novel for various television channels, and a series of radio broadcasts celebrated his centenary year. An attempt to move Proust to cinema was first conducted by Luchino Visconti, ‘who, in collaboration with Italy’s leading scriptwriter Suso Cecchi d’Amico, produced a screenplay in 1970, then by Joseph Losey, who commissioned a screenplay from his regular collaborator, the British dramatist, Harold Pinter.’ Yet, both directors, met with funding difficulties, were forced to abandon their projects. Beugnet and Schmid’s study focuses on three partial adaptations of Proust: Volker Schlöndorff’s *Un Amour de Swann* (1984), Raoul Ruiz’s *Le Temps retrouvé* (1999), and Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive* (2000).

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30 ‘Before the centenary of his birth in 1971, which was accompanied by a flood of programmes based on his life and work, none of the seven volumes of the *Recherche* had been adapted for television and before 1984, when Volker Schlöndorff’s *Un Amour de Swann* had its general release, none had been shown in the cinema.’ Beugnet and Schmid, *Proust at the Movies*, p. 1

31 Ibid., pp. 3-4. ‘It is unsurprising, then, that the first films on Proust were largely of a documentary nature. […] The first adaptations of Proust’s novel for television also start in the 1970s […] Radio similarly discovered Proust in the year if the centenary with a series of broadcasts […] The stage arts followed suit with numerous theatre productions since the 1970s, most importantly perhaps the much acclaimed Royal National Theatre production based on Harold Pinter’s film script of the *Recherche* staged in London in 2000/2001, and a small number of ballets […] More recently, Stéphane Heuet’s comic book adaptation of the novel has been a great popular success in France.’ See full text for comprehensive list of works.

32 Ibid., p. 4

33 The authors note that ‘Italian director Fabio Carpi, though not directly adapting the *Recherche*, has made two films, *Quartetto Basileus* (1982) and *Le
Their focus, on the ‘significance and role’ of Proust, coupled to ‘the denial of linear time and narrative organization, the mixing of media, the use of collage, as well as the problematisation of the narrative voice/gaze and point of view’ in their selected films, gives a solid foundation to the approach adopted in this thesis. How to approach a film concerned with the life and work of a man who never saw a movie in his own life?

My approach comprises three films, only one of which overlaps from Beugnet and Schmid’s study: Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958), *Céleste* (1980), and Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive* (2000). None of these three, it can be argued, are ‘Proust Movies’ per se. They do, however, evoke a Proustian referent, a sensibility that allows for a reading between text and moving image, the two presented within together in writing. My chosen three are selected for their women. In each, the image of woman, a selected character as both subject and object, allows for a movement between literary and filmic realms that makes space for writing and reading of the image. Women are at the heart of the *Search*, creating the space for its telling. Space here, has its origin in Proust’s notorious madeleine cake. Madeleine Time, it will be argued, is present in each of the three women of Proust as filmed in *Vertigo, Céleste*, and *La Captive*.

Written in the same year that Chantal Akerman made *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, Laura Mulvey’s 1975 ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ established the place of ‘male-gaze’ in cinema studies, and

*Intermittenze del cuore* (2003), which are loosely inspired by the Proustian novel’, but these works are not the focus of their study. See Beugnet and Schmid, *Proust at the Movies*, p. 4.


35 Indeed, as is shown in Chapter 3, Akerman herself is the first to contend that hers is not a translation film, but born of reference and memory and transposition.
made the space for it to be challenged, questioned, provoking change, questioning ‘scopophilic’ norms.\textsuperscript{36} Featured prominently in the essay was Alfred Hitchcock’s Hollywood blockbuster \textit{Vertigo} (1958), with its central characters of Scottie Ferguson (James Stewart) and Madeleine Elster (Kim Novak). Voted ‘Greatest Movie of All Time’ in \textit{Sight & Sound}’s 2012 poll, \textit{Vertigo}, in film studies could almost be as prolific, as frequently referenced as Proust’s \textit{Search} is in literary studies. Beginning, as Hitchcock does, with the image of a woman and the theme of double-identity, Chapter 1 of this thesis trails ‘Madeleine’ across the film and the \textit{Search}. Indebted to Julia Kristeva’s \textit{Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature},\textsuperscript{37} the chapter locates the madeleine passage of Proust and floats with it alongside Madeleine’s floating body as she drops into the waters of San Francisco Bay. Her lure, it is argued, has the same pull, same enigmatic quality of the ‘involuntary memory’ of Proust’s madeleine cake, and takes a pilgrimage from land to water across the soundscape of Hitchcock’s \textit{Vertigo} to the religious figure of Mary Magdalene to the scallop shells of Santiago de Compostela and back to Illiers-Combray, and the desire for the mother’s kiss goodnight. The Narrator’s waiting is tied to the madeleine memory.

In the second chapter, waiting is the vocation of Céleste Albaret, Proust’s housekeeper, and the subject of Percy Adlon’s \textit{Céleste} (1980). Reluctant Time is a strand of Madeleine Time that joins Albaret to Proust, as Françoise the cook is tied to the Narrator of the \textit{Search}. A study of the ties that bind in the apron tapes of domestic service, Proust’s devotional Albaret is quietly centred as the subject of Adlon’s film. Born of Adlon’s reading of Albaret’s memoirs (translated from her French into his native German), \textit{Céleste} unites the maternal figure of the care-giver of the \textit{Search} to Proust’s own biography, his enclosed life with her in his various Paris apartments from 1914 (at the outbreak of the First World War) until his death in 1922. Her service allows for the creation of


Madeleine Time and the making of the novel. They are tied by mothers and mothering, a strange compression of lives and loves that makes for a tender sharing within a complex, nocturnal life of writing. Proust, tied to his writing, is opened up by Albaret.

In the third and final chapter, the late Belgian-born filmmaker Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive* (2000) comes into focus. Her retelling, her remembrance of Proust’s novel draws upon the movement between writer and reader, between author and director, between life and life-writing. In an oeuvre bound up in the complex histories (and false histories) of her own life—her Jewish heritage, her mother’s silence after Auschwitz, her sexuality, her gender, her film practice—the chapter moves from Akerman’s first film to her final one, *No Home Movie* (2015). In all, and absolutely in *La Captive*, Akerman’s love of women demarcates the space for time outside of time in her screened women. Proust’s Albertine, rendered anew as Ariane (played by Sylvie Testud) is as slippery as her kin-sister in writing. *La Captive* draws each of the films together with its stylistic references to Hitchcock’s pursuits in *Vertigo*, to its representation of woman, to the seaside where Proust’s Narrator first encountered Albertine and wrote Céleste’s character into his novel. The slippages between each character, each woman, draw them together, and returns space of the film-reading back to the liquid origins of (the) madeleine’s inception. Time collapses, falls, floats, makes dizzy, startles, unsettles and ignites Proust’s *Search*. Each of these three films in turn draws upon the time-image. As Gilles Deleuze notes in his *Cinema 2*:

[T]he direct time-image always gives us access to that Proustian dimension where people and things occupy a place in time which is incommensurable with the one they have in space. Proust indeed speaks in terms of cinema, time mounting its magic lantern on bodies and making the shots coexist in space. It is this build-up, this emancipation
of time, which ensures the rule of impossible continuity and aberrant movement.38

Madeleine Time, as read through the three filmed women of Proust, is the coexistence of bodies and shots in a space that both shares and transcends the novel’s pages and the films’ screens. Madeleine Time is multisensory, can be read in terms beyond the visual, is heard, touched at, and collapses linear time, as in Christian Marclay’s photograph Boston, 2000 (2000). This collapse, or lack, creates the space for the filling up of reading. In the unresolved memory of Proust’s three trees, the space of missing can be traced. The image touches as the words move. Madeleine Time is the space that moves the reader to read themselves in the dreamy spaces between, the madeleine bobs and bubbles on the surface.

Three female protagonists—Madeleine Elster of Alfred Hitchcock’s Vertigo (1958), Céleste Albaret of Percy Adlon’s Céleste (1980), and Ariane of Chantal Akerman’s La Captive (2000)—are considered as the three Proustian women who form the tripart body of this thesis. In approaching them as such, the research has at its origin in the sensory encounter of the notorious ‘madeleine moment’ of Marcel Proust’s A la recherche du temps perdu, in which the taste of a morsel of cake dipped in tea expands memory, collapses linear time, and from which the voluminous novel blooms. Transcribed, translated, and transposed from the literary experiences of the reader’s encounter of Proust’s writing, text transcends the page and the encounter becomes visual in the form of the moving image of film. These three filmed women all differ: the first, Hitchcock’s dizzying, dazzling Hollywood siren of San Francisco, lifted from the pages of a Parisian detective novel; the next, a German reincarnation of Proust’s devoted housekeeper, drawn from her own words, recorded fifty years after his death; the third, a closely-watching memory-making woman-loving nomadic director’s nod to the Search’s captivating Albertine Simmonet. To experience this trinity in contiguous proximity to one another through Proust is

to enter a sensorial spiral in which time, bodies, text, and vision press up against one another in a movement that has the power to be as unsteadying as it can be pleasurable. Immersed in Madeleine Time, the time of these three Proustian women, allows for a consideration of the author’s life-in-writing, the Narrator’s waiting, and the reader’s own place in relation to the textual encounter. Madeleine Time is shown to suspend and sustain, nourish and withhold, prevent and provoke, to move.

On awakening and beginning to write, Robert Altman’s dream movie sets us afloat into the liquid world of Proust’s ‘3 Women’. Millie, Pinky, Willie, or Madeleine, Céleste, Ariane (or Mother, Grandmother and Aunt), three women as a trinity are bound in a single unit, the madeleine morsel. But just what is a Madeleine anyway?
Chapter 1
‘What is (a) Madeleine?’: Alfred Hitchcock’s Vertigo (1958)

Madeleine Time in Alfred Hitchcock’s Vertigo (1958) is the projection of Proustian fantasy through the film’s female protagonist Madeleine Elster. A culmination of three female identities drawn together from a fictionalized past into a single filmed woman, Madeleine in Vertigo is the name which both controls the film’s narrative and disrupts the experience of reading the moving image. In Madeleine Time, ‘I want to claim for the image the humility and powers of a madeleine.’

Translated and adapted from Boileau-Narcejac’s (co-authors Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac) French detective novel D’Entre les Morts (1956) (From Among the Dead) (re-titled as Sueurs froides ‘Cold Sweats’ after the film’s release in France), Alfred Hitchcock’s 1958 film Vertigo is the central site of this chapter.

Seeking to answer the question ‘What is Madeleine?’ — from its French literary origin, to its English film director, through to its American setting (shot on location in San Francisco and at Paramount Studios, Hollywood — Vertigo is read as a site that moves through image, time, space and memory, through a language that questions what it means to write of its central subject, a woman who is both known and unknown. (Fig. 2)

Vertigo’s Madeleine Elster, it is argued, is both key female protagonist, but absent subject. She never truly exists as a physical presence, and yet her construction, her staging (by actress Kim Novak), and her story (both Hitchcock’s and Boileau-Narcejac’s), gives the film its spiralling, dizzying, form.

As the film’s female protagonist, Madeleine is the subject of a passionate and obsessive following. Ex-detective, and sufferer of vertigo, James ‘Scottie’ Ferguson pursues her as he seeks to unravel the mystery of her trance-like

39 Chris Marker, Immemory, CD ROM, liner notes from original English edition, 1998
wanderings. After her death, for which he holds himself responsible, he becomes fixated by another woman (also played by Kim Novak) who looks uncannily like his lost love. Transforming her into the image of her likeness, the truth is finally revealed, but as he conquers his vertigo, she falls to her death, he is freed from his affliction and his false belief, but is left alone, his love departed.

In *Swann’s Way*, the first volume of Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time (A la recherche du temps perdu)*, the Narrator bites into a tisane-dipped madeleine cake, triggering the memory of a childhood past, of Sunday mornings in Combray, sharing tea with his Aunt Léonie. This episode of jolting a moment of the past into the present, without premeditated action or intent, is the narrator’s first involuntary memory. ‘Hitchcock’s “Madeleine, like Proust’s,” writes Richard E. Goodkin, ‘is thus the embodiment of the central experience of reliving the past.’ Coupled to Julia Kristeva’s tracing of the origins of Proust’s madeleine, this morsel is central in attempting to find a history that is both sensory and symbolic, the morsel as object imbued with the experience of memory:

> What if we tried to acquire a taste for it? With our sensitized mouths, tongues, and palates and our rekindled dreams and memories, would we not be in search of all those discarded and forgotten pages where the madeleine’s counterparts, doubles, echoes, and metaphors lie dormant, heightening or diminishing its enigmatic taste while bringing it to life and making it last?  

Kristeva, in *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature* (1994), makes the case for space, as both time, place and sign for addressing the meaning of Madeleine, through Proustian language and her own meticulous analysis of linguistic enterprise. She reads senses through writing, as *Vertigo*  

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can be read through the symbols of its own time inside and out of its San Francisco of 1958. From Combray to Paris to California, through taste, a teacup and slices through real time, the reel-time of Vertigo—for the film reel is a looping spiral like those ripples roused by crumbs dropping into a full teacup, or the dizzying whirls of Saul Bass’s hypnotic graphic designs that make the film art work so instantly recognisable—is the space for addressing the returned-to memories of many madeleines in a single bite.

The question of Madeleine is not simply a ‘who’, it is a reading of ‘how’, ‘why’, ‘when’ and, ultimately, ‘what’ is entailed in a search for the ‘impossible memory’—to borrow Chris Marker’s phrase—that she both embodies and represents on screen and in its retelling through analysis.\textsuperscript{42} Thus, Madeleine is the centre, she marks the point of crossing between the present moment—of the experience of memory and the desire for its return. She is the intersection that is marked by both the emptiness of an open space, and the fullness of a longing to reclaim it once more, to consume and be consumed by memory held in the present once more.

‘The Image Pours Forth’: On Writing Madeleines

‘[…] the mystery of how a written thing first begs to be written and then comes into being.’\textsuperscript{43}

In Julia Kristeva’s close scrutiny of Proust’s ‘humble biscuit’, she traces its origins from his earlier writings, the re-worked manuscripts and the multiple ‘madeleines’ that hold a lasting power over the future novel.\textsuperscript{44} From George

\textsuperscript{44} My first encounter with Proust’s madeleines came in reading C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin’s translation of the first volume of \textit{In Search of Lost Time, Swann’s Way}, revised by D. J. Enright and produced in a six volume edition (London: Vintage, 2000). In a newer English translation, Lydia Davis’ \textit{The Way By Swann’s} (the first in a six volume collection edited by Christopher Prendergast, with a different translator for each volume (London: Penguin, 2003)), the same madeleine passage appears with her own alterations,
Sanda’s François le champi, to the name of the Guermantes, the tower it suggests, the biblical reference to Mary Magdalene (the sinner turned saint), the representation of woman-as-object is read through the Narrator’s maternal lineage, from the mother, aunt, grandmother, and, in turn, to his adopted mistress Albertine Simonet. This approach establishes a feminine reading of the text that both embodies and disrupts the fiction of woman that can be located in the experience of Proust’s novel. The dizzying effect of the sheer scale of Proust’s output mirrors the unbalancing experience of viewing Hitchcock’s film. In biting into the little shell (the lining case to the kernel of language) the madeleine becomes a fragment through which comes the desire to preserve memory through the passage of literature. ‘Having drunk the very lees of renunciation’, writes Roland Barthes in ‘Proust and Names’, ‘the narrator will rediscover, under his hand, the power to write.’

The “petite madeleine,” which is flavorful, incestuous, delicate, elusive, and diluted in tea although it links the various parts of Combray, offers a taste of Proust even to those who have never read him. Or perhaps, like a cliché obscuring a cathedral, the image becomes flat, loses its crumbliness, and lays a coat of opaque ennui over those unending Proustian sentences teeming with odors, sounds, colors, shapes, tasty delicacies, and tactile pleasures, all of which have been soaked right up into this notorious madeleine.

inflections, and interpretations. Whilst I maintain my use of the Moncrieff translation throughout the thesis, I have reproduced the ‘madeleine moment’ extracts from each of these two translations as a means to touching on the individual, personal, and complex endeavour of what it might mean to translate Proust. See Appendix 1, p. 226 and Appendix 2., p. 231. As Kristeva works her way through the madeleine’s prehistory, tracing its origins through Proust’s own transformations, so too, the translator of Proust joins a long line of devoted pilgrims, each touched and marked by their own reading encounter.

45 More of her to come in Ch. 3.


Madeleine cake batter, poured into special shaped tins, fills the moulds with its rising forms. Kristeva reminds us of the origins of the shell-shaped formation. Saint-Jacques scallop shell badges worn by pilgrims travelling the Way of Saint James would have journeyed through Proust’s Illiers-Combray en route to Santiago de Compostela. As travel writer Rob Neillands wrote of his own experience of the pilgrimage:

This Road to Compostela […] is not like other roads. It flows out of the past certainly, covering time as well as distance, but the Road itself remains the constant link. For other pilgrims or pilgrimages, the shrine at the end is the objective, but the attraction of the Road to Santiago was and remains, the Road itself.

The same can be said of the experience of travelling through the ways of Proust’s great novel. The madeleine is the first marker along the way. As symbols of memory and devotion, the badges are recognised as devotional, displaying their desire to move along a path of experience and reconciliation. The Narrator is a devoted pilgrim, his symbol pinned to his pages, its uses multiple, its mysticism plentiful. Kristeva returns the madeleines to their damp

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49 Rob Neillands, The Road to Compostela (Ashbourne: Moorland, 1985), p. 19. Neillands recalls one account of the association of the scallop-shell with St James: ‘accompanied by an angel of the Lord, took the body to Jaffa, where they found ready a miraculous ship, which bore them to the harbour of Iria Flavia on the coast of Galicia in Spain.’ As this ship approached the shore, those on board saw a man riding a horse along the beach, which took fright at the cortège and plunged into the sea to reappear with horse and rider covered in white scallop-shells, which then became the emblem of St James. Galicia was ruled at the time by a pagan queen, Queen Lupa, so James’s followers concealed the body somewhere close to the coast, and there the apostle rested for over eight hundred years.’, p. 15
50 The shell is not just a symbol but has its practicalities too: ‘As I soon discovered in my role as a true pilgrim, the scallop-shell is a useful item in its own right. Mine served as a plate, a cup, and a shaving dish, most useful for scooping a trickle of water from a half-dry ditch, though unlike the medieval
origins; from the tea cup to the sea, the little shells of desire are ‘watery’, fluid, liquid, they cannot be held for very long before they slip away. Their construct allows them to be inhabited, to be desired, to be stroked, touched, picked up. The scallop shells have the salty scent of the sea in their grooves and curves and their double-identity as objects allows them to be regarded as both enclosure and enclosed. The grooves of the madeleine mould echo these forms, the cake retaining the memory of the impression. As both formation and container of the plot (to borrow from Kristeva), these shell cakes fill the Narrator with the precious essence of his own self-awareness. The taste of the crumbs drive the narrative path—having been pried open, the shell forms an open mouth through which the Narrator falls, returning him to memory, urging him to write. The taste of cake crumbs envelopes the Narrator in the memory of Aunt Léonie’s tea-cup on Sundays in Combray, and puts him to bed in his childhood room, where he waits longing for touch of his mother’s goodnight kiss. From the seawater grooves of the scallop shell, to the little morsel of cake, to the salty tears of childhood want, in the madeleine cake grief and desire return the Narrator to his memory.

An Image of Consumption

The one who eats the madeleine is both the explorer and the ‘dark region’ through which he must search; both consciousness, and the unconscious memories that ‘overtake’ it.\(^{51}\)

Returning with Kristeva to Proust’s novel recalls the origin from which the ‘insatiable desire’ of the Narrator pours forth:

Softened in the tea, the mouthful of cake touches the palate, and this contact—which is the most infantile and archaic that a living being can possibly experience with an object or a person, since food like air is the exquisite necessity which keeps us alive and curious about our fellows –

\(^{51}\) Silverman, ‘Je Vous’, pp. 453-454
sets off an ‘extraordinary process in me’ […] ‘An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses […]’

Both infantile and archaic, Proust’s Narrator moves from the moment of first recognizable contact, taste, and pleasure, to that of the recollection of a life lived through the memories of experience, and the identification of pleasures with those objects or persons from which the flavour exuded. Yet, for the despairing Narrator, after the pleasure of encounter follows the shattering of illusion. The pleasurable object disrupts, curtails, fantasy:

And yet one knows that this first rendezvous will bring the end of an illusion. No matter: as long as the illusion lasts one wants to see whether one can convert it into reality […] Amorous curiosity is like the curiosity aroused in us by the names of places; perpetually disappointed, it revives and remains for ever insatiable.

In Proustian cyclical sensibility, the amorous curiosity of the taste of madeleine perpetually disappoints and yet its crumbs revive the insatiable appetite for a future curiosity as remembered, recalled, revived through contact with another enamoured object. The taste of the madeleine sparks a transcendence of the Narrator’s experiences of sensation both within and beyond the realm of the tangible. As Kristeva explains:

Since taste is a taste for tea and cakes, it is unquestionably rooted in the things of this world. Taste is of the world in just the same way as the experience that restores both taste and all the other forms of sensation. And yet at the same time the narrator is convinced that his experience has ‘infinitely transcended’ taste and sensation: it ‘could not, indeed, be of the same nature’. Right from the start, in fact, this joy born of experience is a meaningful one: ‘What did it mean?’ asks the narrator.

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53 Proust, *The Captive*, p. 156
54 Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, p. 45
In the image that surges forth from the tea-soaked madeleine cake, it is ‘taste,’ which ‘has opened up the doors on representation.’\textsuperscript{55} Thus it is that taste and vision are the ‘inseparable paramours’ of the experience of reading Proust.\textsuperscript{56} The visions that pour forth from the taste of the madeleine, rather than resolving memory, instead announce more resoundingly still the misfit between ‘what is perceived and what is signified’. It should be the task of the Narrator, argues Kristeva, to resolve this divide, but his ‘cowardice, stemming from boredom and desire,’ succeeds instead in always deterring him from his task.\textsuperscript{57} Thus, the Narrator as both the ‘explorer’ and the ‘dark region’ through which he must search, tastes in the madeleine both the conscious reality and unconscious memories of his future writing.\textsuperscript{58}

For the Narrator, Aunt Léonie’s madeleines recall the ‘name of the cake as woman and bring the house of his birth to life again’, whilst recalling too their ‘origin’ in the ‘notable lady who believes her son to be indifferent without suspecting […] that indifference is fostered by vice.’\textsuperscript{59} Taste, for the Narrator in Kristeva’s reading, has changed into an ‘elusive whirling medley of stirred-up colours’ in which a ‘form in gestation’ becomes confused, incapable of translation.\textsuperscript{60} In bringing the house of his birth to life again, the Narrator pre-empts its death through the recollection of the cake, which holds the memory of his mother and her goodnight kiss. The conjoined sensory experiences of taste and vision thus make the claim for the Narrator’s writing experience as being,

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 18
\textsuperscript{56} Kristeva, \textit{Proust and the Sense of Time}, p. 47
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Kaja Silverman, ‘Je Vous’, \textit{Art History}, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Jun., 2007), pp. 451-467, p. 453. The following quote from Kristeva further supports this line. She writes, ‘Take note of the process: actual experience (the mother’s madeleine) is imbued with a disabling intensity and gives rise to states of emptiness and confusion which would be ungovernable, if the narrator were not able to stabilize his pleasure through a displacement.’, Kristeva, \textit{Proust and the Sense of Time}, p. 47
\textsuperscript{59} Kristeva, \textit{Proust and the Sense of Time}, p. 44
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p. 46
Kristeva argues, ‘oral by origin’. The spoken name of Madeleine (Blanchet), the miller’s wife and adoptive mother of the waif in George Sand’s *François le champi*, as read aloud by the Narrator’s mother, empowers the image of the little cake, and will succeed, Kristeva argues,

[…] in ousting the unfortunate rusk and in granting her maternal flavour, which is at the same time blandly inaccessible and delightfully exciting, to a little madeleine which lurks tasteless in my mouth, but also has the power to arouse insatiable desire.

She continues:

[…] ‘the madeleine episode’ – framed as it is by the memory of the mother rejected because she does not offer herself […] serves as a special invitation to us to reinstate the oral link which holds the narrator to a woman he loves, who is yet capable of remaining indifferent to him.

‘You don’t have to be a genius,’ write Serge Doubrovsky, ‘to see that an excess indicates an instable lack; if the madeleine’s “exquisite pleasure” resembles “the effect which love has” (I, 34) – the madeleine of course is not love, it is the lack of it. The madeleine’s place: it satisfies in place of. It is the masking of a

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61 Ibid., p. 41
62 See Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, ‘In its unusual, moulded form, a kind of mushroom born of a shell, the madeleine stands between the narrator and his mother in the same way as George Sand’s *François le champi* had done a few pages before (I. 42). For the madeleine scene is a sequel to a story which has already begun – one in which, immediately before our episode, the reading of *François le champi* by the mother to the Narrator (at this point, a pampered child) forms a bond in voice and sensation between the future novelist and his progenitor […’], p. 32. *François le champi*, Kristeva notes, is the story of the country waif who ‘serves as Blanchet’s unconscious love object and then goes on to become the lover and eventually the husband of his adoptive mother when he returns to the village as an adult and discovers that she is a widow’, p. 8. The lips that kiss the Narrator goodnight already tell tales of an incestuous mother-son relationship.
63 Ibid., p. 39
64 Ibid., p. 40
lack." In his inability to completely possess his mother, the Narrator recognises his lack and attempts to reclaim the past as a remedy for the loss of the maternal figure. In the encounter, Kristeva reads a sensory and emotional impact that works vertiginously upon the Narrator's body:

The flavour of the past, still slumbering in the depths of the memory, which had been thought, quite wrongly, to have disappeared, comes back again to endow with image and body the narrator's mounting sense of vertigo.  

Proust's Narrator supports this image of life positioned precariously at a vertiginous outlook:

Sweet, gay, innocent moments to all appearance, and yet moments in which there gathers the unsuspected possibility of disaster, which makes the amorous life the most precarious of all, that in which the unpredictable rain of sulphur and brimstone falls after the most radiant moments, whereupon, without having the heart or the will to draw a lesson from our misfortune, we set to work at once to rebuild upon the slopes of the crater from which nothing but catastrophe can emerge. I was as carefree as those who imagine their happiness will last.  

The Narrator sites his memory of the madeleine at what he believes to be the maximum remove from his childhood goodnight. Recalling the magic Japanese pieces of paper that take their form once being dipped into bowls of water,

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66 Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, p. 47. The Narrator confronts his past: ‘When we have passed a certain age, the soul of the child that we were and the souls of the dead from whom we sprang come and shower upon us their riches and their spells, asking to be allowed to contribute to the new emotions which we feel and in which, erasing their former image, we recast them in an original creation.’ Proust, *The Captive*, p. 82

67 Proust, *The Captive*, p. 83
Kristeva recognises the distance taken by the Narrator to attempt to separate his memory from his sensory capabilities.

As it were necessary to set up a maximum distance, a foreign country, to enable us to see, again to the maximum extent, how evanescent is the object of desire that the little madeleine offers to be sensed. Both elsewhere and here at hand, past and also present, a sensation and an image at the same time, just as it is both a name and a meaning – our madeleine is kneaded out of all of these and excites a taste for one as much as for the other.68

Kaja Silverman locates in the Narrator’s writing a ‘utopian sexuality’ that can be found ‘precisely where it consistently situates its more quotidian counterpart – at the site of the mouth.’69 She continues:

That orifice consequently functions not only as the preferred site for erotic reception, but also as the imaginary locus for an organ capable of penetrating other bodies. It represents the narrator’s erotogenic zone of choice, in other words, both when he identifies with the youth he once was, and when he identifies with the mother.70

Echoing Kristeva once more:

No, all I can taste is an indifferent madeleine, the deferred recollection of another thing, of another woman, a woman you could have been or have been but are no longer […] all we have is the polite indifference of a cup of tea. And my imaginings, in secret.71

68 Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, pp. 48-49
70 Ibid.
71 Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, p. 40
The Goodnight Kiss

As psychoanalyst Adam Phillips notes in *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored*: ‘Truly infectious, kissing may be our most furtive, our most reticent sexual act, the mouth’s elegy to itself.’\(^{72}\) The Narrator recalls the communion of his possessive wanting child self and his submissive maman, the longed for maternal goodnight kiss. To quote Phillips again:

> There is the return of the primary sensuous experience of tasting another person, one in which the difference between the sexes can supposedly be attenuated – the kiss is the image of reciprocity, not of domination – but one that is also unprecedented developmentally, since it includes tasting someone else’s mouth.\(^{73}\)

As ‘threat and a promise’, the ‘signature as cliché of the erotic’, Phillips reads in the kiss a resonance that leads, as in the moment of realisation after the bite of the madeleine, always to disappointment.\(^{74}\) Yet, because it leads always to disappointment, the kiss, like the little cake ‘as the object of desire’ that presses against the lips, can ‘always be returned to’.\(^{75}\) The taste is bittersweet—salty tears and sugared lips. Thus, ‘With the mouth’s extraordinary virtuosity, it involves some of the pleasures of eating in the absence of nourishment.’\(^{76}\) Phillips remarks that stories, in contrast to films, often ignore the intrinsic power of the kiss.\(^{77}\) The kiss, for Phillips, is ‘a story in miniature’.\(^{78}\) In Proust’s *Search*, the kiss is a story in miniature writ large. In *Vertigo* too, the too-closeness of the Hollywood kiss is emblazoned across the narrative of desire imparted onto the body, the face, and the head of a woman who cannot be held longer than the duration of the pressed kissing embrace is held. Scottie and Madeleine’s kiss is shown in 360° embrace. Stewart and Novak were placed on

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\(^{72}\) Phillips, *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored*, p. 100

\(^{73}\) Ibid., p. 96

\(^{74}\) Ibid., p. 100

\(^{75}\) Ibid., p. 96

\(^{76}\) Ibid., p. 94

\(^{77}\) Ibid.

\(^{78}\) Ibid.
a pedestal that was rotated as their kiss was filmed, allowing the fixed camera to capture them in their entirety. The trickery of shot allowed too for the change in backdrops of the scenes behind them – transporting the couple from Judy’s room at the Empire Hotel, across time and memories and already filmed encounters. Thus, their kiss both contains and projects the narrative thus far, the reawakening of once-dead Madeleine in the eyes of Scottie, and fate of the deceptive Judy to come. Proust’s Narrator’s pilgrim kisses will journey across the pages from Balbec, to Montjouvain, to Combray, Paris, Albertine, the mother, the sea and beyond.

In a sense, the kiss is the compression, collapse, and containment of Time in Proust’s Search. The source of the Narrator’s ‘exquisite pleasure’ is the mother who withholds, ‘the noble woman who assumes her son to be indifferent though she does not imagine—or does she already suspect?—that indifference feeds on vice.’ In her withholding of and his longing for the goodnight kisses, the “cause”, argues Kristeva, ‘was brewed into the madeleine’, all along, the amorous body pours, a communion between the two.

From the madeleine which was always all at once outside of time and container for it, a tiny vessel that collapses linearity in its little shell-shaped folds, opens up, dizzyingly, magically like a little Japanese flower. The Narrator recognises Time in the space of the absorbing sponge of madeleine:

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79 Olivia Laing is haunted by this kiss. Of it, she writes: ‘They kiss, and as the camera circles around them she swoons backwards until it seems that he’s embracing a dead body, a prefiguration of what will shortly come to pass… That embrace is one of the loneliest things I’ve ever seen, although it’s hard to tell who’s worse off: the man who can only love a hologram, a figment, or the woman who can only be loved by dressing up as someone else—someone who barely exists at all, who is travelling from the moment we first see her towards death.’ Olivia Laing, The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone (Edinburgh and London: Canongate, 2016), p. 127.

80 Kristeva, Proust and the Sense of Time, p. 41, quoting Proust, Swann’s Way, p. 48

81 Ibid.
And I felt, as I say, a sensation of weariness and almost of terror at the thought that all this length of Time had not only, without interruption, been lived, experienced, secreted by me, that it was my life, was in fact me, but also that I was compelled so long as I was alive to keep it attached to me, that it supported me and that, perched on its giddy summit, I could not myself make a movement without displacing it. A feeling of vertigo seized me as I looked down beneath me, yet within me, as though from a height, which was my own height, of many leagues, at the long series of the years.\textsuperscript{82}

Hitchcock’s \textit{Vertigo}

[...] I always remember one night at the Chelsea Arts Ball at Albert Hall in London when I got terribly drunk and I had the sensation that everything was going far away from me.\textsuperscript{83}

What it is about the spiral that marks it as simultaneously without end, and yet continually open to investigation beyond the confines of the film reel itself? Location, both geographical and historical, is important. Hitchcock, the Briton in America, transported \textit{Vertigo} from the politics of inter-war Paris to 1950s San Francisco. Whilst the city and surrounding locations are utilised, adopted and writ large in panoramic, VistaVision display, there is little to no reference to the historical context of 1950s America—no post-war social shockwaves, no mention of Eisenhower, no sense of ominous foreboding of the Cuban Missile Crisis, no reference to Civil Rights or race relations. In Hollywood, Hitchcock in his directorial role as the man behind the movie camera, controls what the viewer sees, to mediate and manipulate.

\textsuperscript{82} Proust, \textit{Time Regained}, pp. 450-451

The spiral narrative in film and novel is not exclusive to *Vertigo*. Loops and cycles in stories allow for plot development, returns and echoes of events, characters and consequence. A brief synopsis of the film:

In San Francisco, bachelor James ‘Scottie’ Ferguson (James Stewart)—a recently retired ex-police detective—is attempting to cure himself (with the help of his friend and one-time fiancée, Midge, played by Barbara Bel Geddes) of his acrophobia that had left another detective dead, having fallen from the rooftops on a city skyline chase. When contacted by Gavin Elster, an old friend from his police training days, he is asked to follow his wife, Madeleine (Kim Novak), whom Elster believes to be possessed by the spirit of her great-grandmother, Carlotta Valdes (a girl of the Spanish Missions who was thrown out by the powerful rich city man who fathered her only child), who committed suicide. Having fallen for her ethereal beauty, Scottie follows Madeleine across San Francisco, visiting a florist, a graveyard and an art gallery, where she sits before a work, he learns, is titled ‘Painting of Carlotta’. (Fig. 3) Saving her after she appears to be possessed to jump into the Bay at Old Fort Point, Scottie falls in love, desiring to be the man to help Madeleine out of her troubles. On a visit to the Mission San Juan Bautista, Madeleine escapes Scottie’s embrace, climbs the bell tower and throws herself from its heights, to her death. Scottie, consumed by grief and guilt, slips into a silent numbness at a sanatorium, whilst Midge, unable to help, slips away. On his release, he returns to the sites he shared with Madeleine. One day, outside the florists, he sees a woman whom he follows to her room at the Empire Hotel. She is not Madeleine but Judy Barton, from Salina Kansas. That Hitchcock’s viewer learns before Scottie that Judy is both Madeleine and imposter (a flashback reveals that she acted the part in Gavin Elster’s plot to murder his own wife) only serves to heighten the obsessive desire Scottie imparts upon the body the Judy, making her over into someone, who, for he and the viewer (in ‘reel-time’, cinema time) has never truly existed. Scottie wants to make her love him, and makes her over in the likeness of his memory of Madeleine, forcing her to wear the grey suit and to dye her red-brown hair back to blonde. When finally, she pins the hair back into a coiled bun, the memory is complete in the image, and he loves her. But the
transformation is too successful—when she fastens the necklace belonging to Carlotta around her neck, Judy reveals her true identity. He recognises the jewellery, the truth unravels, he learns that he has been a pawn in Elster’s plot to kill his wife, Scottie’s suffering of vertigo (his inability to climb the tower) was the key to crime’s success. Judy has donned the guise of Madeleine before, she has fooled Scottie twice over. He drives Judy back to San Juan Bautista, to replay the scene, this time he can climb the tower, his vertigo conquered. His overcoming of his fear of heights is coupled to Judy’s declaration of love for him, but, before the screen can fill with a black fade towards any hope of a life reconciled together, a nun emerges from the bell tower shadows and Judy, startled, plummets to her death. Thus, Vertigo ends without a future, the final shot, resounding with the bell-tolls of alarm, filled with the image of man left free but alone, standing once again at a great height (a spiralling reminder of the opening roof-top scene), no longer afflicted but marked by the traumas of the past two hours of the film’s run time.

Vertigo and the spiral are mirrors, doubles, of one another. The medical affliction that destabilises both body and mind also proposes that there may be hope of a return, of a retreat, a relaxation and an end to the traumatic sensation. “I look up, I look down”, the recovering Scottie repeats three times atop a stepping stool, until he looks just one glance too far, through the apartment window, and is forced to retreat to the safety of a chair. So too, as in the example of the spiral staircase of the San Juan Bautista bell tower, we can look up to the challenge presented by its shape and stature, or down from the journey already made in climbing up to its dizzying height. The centre of the spiral, the loops and forms, can only be experienced through engagement, through action and movement, whilst contradictorily, the experience of watching the film is conducted from a fixed seated position, either in the movie theatre, on print or in digital format, at home, or elsewhere, on DVD, or streamed online. Audience fixed, the images move around the vision, playing out for the viewer.
“The audience must be God”

Suspense
1. The audience must be God
“What is going to happen?”
This applies almost to all stories
“Will that man get that girl?”
“Will that man save that girl?”

Conventional suspense.
The race to save the victim of the scaffold or guillotine.84

The audience must play their part today in producing the maximum suspense.
(a) By identifying themselves with one character-
either the victim
or the rescuer

This necessitates only a glimpse of one or the other.85

The space of the audience, the site of fantasy through sight and sound, the viewer is approached as a vessel through which Vertigo continues to spiral.
Personal narratives, accounts and encounters allow for a reading into the film.
In its return to the screen, in its remastering and reproduction, Vertigo has gone beyond Hitchcock’s own life span and continues to turn, to turn heads, and to invite response.

Privileging the viewer and elevating them to the status of ‘God’, of omnipotent awareness, the audience becomes, through their own anonymity as the viewer,

85 Hitchcock, ‘Early 1940s Handwritten notes by Hitchcock’, p. 5
like the all-seeing open eye of the film’s opening credits. Yet, it will be argued, Hitchcock’s is a highly controlled and selective privileging of the viewer. He allows them to access the future narrative (divulging Judy’s secret first to the screen, and then only later to Scottie), whilst continuing to control their engagement with the characters’ own identities, their attributes as well as their failures.

From his resistance to change and his determination to keep the original, intended title, Hitchcock challenges the viewer to make the film their own, whilst giving only the slightest of nods to their own ability. Paramount initially doubted that the viewing public would be capable of readily engaging with the film, because they considered *Vertigo* to be a somewhat difficult and problematic title that did not seem to fit the requirements and desires of the cinema experience.

What makes it so special that it has just topped the 2012 *Sight and Sound* poll of greatest films of all time? Multiple viewings are tainted by experience—the viewer re-enters the spiral in full knowledge that there can be no resolution, no change in Scottie’s affliction, no salvation or final happiness for Judy. Pinned to the spot, frozen in horror, whilst forever falling, *Vertigo’s* movement, its framing of gestures and signs, its deliberation of traumatic suspension, combine to keep the film in continual motion. Moving from set to screen and out into the staging of the real, *Vertigo*, in its bleakness, suspends the viewer. Though there are “many such stories”, *Vertigo’s* is the one that goes in search of something that cannot be, and without triumphant resolution, it is its very nothingness, its empty-handed proffering, that continues to spiral, to resound, to repeat, to fall again into the eye of the beholder. Michael Wood notes that, with its ‘curious authority,’ the film ‘redefines the very idea of the job it might do.’ 86 ‘It doesn’t get lost,’ he continues, ‘but it mimics the lostness of characters caught between

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conspiracy and desire, between sobriety and fascination, and leaves us wondering why we care so much about these wavering people.'

‘Double entendre?’ echoes Chris Marker, as in Proust’s Search, ‘All the gestures, looks, phrases in Vertigo have a double meaning.’ The effect is dizzying, all-encompassing, captivating, and destabilising. For with vertigo, in Vertigo, it all begins in the ear.

The word vertigo is derived from the Latin word vertere, to turn; it reflects the mistaken impression that our surroundings revolve round us, but also the false impression, that it is we ourselves who, having lost our balance, keep spinning involuntarily.

In Emotional Vertigo: Between Anxiety and Pleasure (1997), psychoanalyst Danielle Quinodoz foregrounds case studies of her analysands by first defining vertigo in both medical and etymological contexts. She locates her diagnostics within the history of linguistic definition as applied to the readings of its symptoms. In so doing, she presents vertigo not simply as a single condition per se, but as a series of factors and sensations which culminate in a destabilising and unnerving experience played out between the body, the psyche and the space in which it finds itself at the moment of imbalance. In much the same way, this determines this project’s own particular approach to accessing Hitchcock’s Vertigo.

The sense of balance or of vertigo of somatic origin depends on the coordination of data supplied by three sensory systems: the optokinetic apparatus (optical data), the proprioceptive apparatus (which supplies data about muscles and tendons, and tells us about the position and changes in the position of the body) and the vestibular apparatus (which

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87 Ibid., p. 87
88 Chris Marker, ‘A free replay (notes on Vertigo)’, originally published in Positif 400 (June 1994): 79-84
comprises the otolithic system and the semi-circular canals located in the internal ear, and keeps us informed about the static position of the head, about bodily movements and about gravitational pull). These three systems help us to take stock of our position and of our equilibrium in space, and to act accordingly.90

Thus, broken down into the simplest of terms, Quinodoz locates three systems that determine an awareness and interpretation of points of sensory encounter. The ‘optokinetic’, ‘proprioceptive’, and ‘vestibular’ correspond accordingly to the data identified and transmitted via the ‘eye’, ‘body’, and ‘ear’. Determining vertigo as a means of ‘alerting us to a possible defect in one of the three systems that combine to help us to establish our equilibrium’, Quinodoz locates the alarm of the sensation at the moment when the sufferer realises a ‘discrepancy between the data’ that destabilises both mind and body.91 It is this ‘incoherence’- or miscommunication- between person and surroundings that renders the sufferer both anxious and vulnerable.92 Moving from the medical to the psychic, from the somatic to the internal, Quinodoz states that a similar process occurs: ‘the ego’, she writes, ‘defines itself by differentiation from its environment.’93

Cutting to the scene, Scottie Ferguson hangs from the buckling rooftop guttering, clinging on for dear life. As his co-worker, the uniformed police officer with the outstretched arm, tries to save him (“Give me your hand”), he loses his own balance and falls past, beyond, and down, down down, onto the street below. Scottie, open mouthed, glances down, wide-eyed, terrified, horrified, immobile. Nostrils flaring, forehead pricked with sweat (cold sweat, Sueurs froides, as the French title recalls), his suit jacket sleeves crumpled and strained. In the dusky blue light of early evening in Technicolor, there is a darkness yet to come. The spectator hovers close to Scottie, just above him

90 Quinodoz, ‘What is Vertigo?’, p. 3. In the ear, the balancing fluids of the semi-circular canals located in the internal ear are coupled to the semi-circular folds of tissue of the visible external auricle.
91 Ibid., p 4, p. 5
92 Ibid., p. 5
93 Ibid., p. 9
(positioned by Hitchcock’s camera-eye in an example of his trademark high-angled framing of a protagonist in peril), before the drop. The audience sees, through the camera, one eye, one ear, one body, alone, suspended. Scottie emits no scream, his eyes cannot close, and over his silent terror a huge crescendo of lower-register brass, a thundering drum roll and a final cymbal crash, the orchestra screams. A fade to blackness and an opening into Vertigo, the symptoms scored, set, on sheet and screen, ready to play out.

Read alone, the film still of the suspended Scottie is an isolated moment, ‘like a compact rock,’ explains Quinodoz, that ‘prevents it from being integrated’.94 In this singular moment of looking, it appears that I believe, like Quinodoz analysand Luc, that what I am seeing, what I am suffering is ‘just one form of vertigo: ‘the vertigo’’, the moment of disequilibrium and sensory paralysis.95 And yet to watch and read the film in its entirety is to begin to approach it as both analyst and analysand. Visual language allows for acts of ‘differentiation’ (to borrow the term from Quinodoz), in writing of the film it is possible to perform a process that seeks to draw out, to draw attention to the shapes that ‘stand out from the [compact] rock’ so that it is ‘no longer just one impenetrable, vertiginous mass’, but instead reveals ‘various forms of vertigo, each distinguished from the rest by different sensations and meanings’.96

In piecing together the experiences of vertigo by simultaneously entering into an awareness of its forms, the written act of differentiation must be a process that is ‘neither chronological nor gradual’.97 Indeed, for Quinodoz, her practice, she reads, is ‘more like the photographic process: the photographer uses different focal lengths to bring out coexistent planes that remain invisible while they are superimposed’.98 In the close-up shot of Scottie there is the knowledge that, moments earlier, the panoramic shots of the San Francisco rooftop chase scene set the scene for the fall. So too, the cutting between Scottie’s view-point

94 Quinodoz, p. 17
95 Ibid, p. 19
96 Ibid., p. 17
97 Ibid., p. 18
98 Ibid.
and the counter-shot of the uniformed policeman above him, and the cut to the dolly-zoom shot that synthesises the sensation of Scottie’s experience of vertigo, all coexist within the plane that is Vertigo, as a single, contained unit of cinematic experience. In fixing the single screen-shot of Scottie upon the page, this awareness of the moments prior to, and after the fall, form a part of the continuum. In their absence, there is an awareness of their presence.

‘Experiential text’ layers upon and around the image, weaving together the theoretical and the psychoanalytic, as a means to reading the void which lies below Scottie, but cannot be seen, but is simultaneously presented in the close-up shot of the wide-eyed, terrified face. If the word ‘vertigo’, then, is ‘derived from the Latin vertere, to turn’, language, it is proposed, turns and re-turns to the shot through the different focal lengths of analysis.99

The Search is presented as the exploration of different worlds of signs which are organized in circles and intersect at certain points, for the signs are specific and constitute the substance of one world to another.100

Tracing Madeleine

Kristeva, in Time and Sense,101 approaches the origins of Proust’s madeleine through the experience of literature. Here, the “petite madeleine” (once again, ‘flavorful, incestuous, delicate, elusive’) is tasted, reading is ‘sensitized’ by the search through the moulded cake-shape of its name.102 Naming, then, becomes central to the search for the construction of the textual memory. Kristeva’s search through ‘Proust’s sustained interest in names […] and the meticulous care with which he chose the names of his novel’s characters’ returns, to Roland Barthes’ desire to approach language through the semiotic.103 He writes of

99 Quinodoz, p. 2
102 Kristeva, Time and Sense, p. 3
103 Ibid., p. 6
Desire in Language,¹⁰⁴ that Kristeva’s work ‘takes up all the space it deals with, fills it precisely’¹⁰⁵ in what translator Leon S. Roudiez defines as ‘a form of expository prose that has something specific to communicate.’¹⁰⁶

In both Time and Sense and Desire and Language, Kristeva draws attention to ‘space’, ‘the volume within which signification, through a joining of difference, articulates itself’.¹⁰⁷ As both the place in writing where language operates, the moment in reading where it is made present through action, and the location in which it is experience through the body, ‘space’ is the site in which meaning for Vertigo’s Madeleine is sought. The endurance of Madeleine’s character from Boileau-Narcejac’s novel to Hitchcock’s Vertigo cannot be overlooked. Hers is the only name that withstands the narrative’s shift from the Parisian novel to the American film. Although the description of her outward appearance alters, she remains both constant and memorable, the focus of the reader, and in turn, the viewer’s attention. Narrative and memory are to be proposed as dual aspects that make space for the viewer’s own memory of, drive towards and desire for (the) Madeleine, the woman who can never be.

In Noli me tangere: On the Raising of the Body,¹⁰⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy dedicates two sections ‘Mary of Magdala’ and ‘Mary, Magdalene’ to the unknown woman to whom Christ first appears after his Resurrection.¹⁰⁹ ‘Mary of Magdala’, Nancy writes, ‘she’s the woman with the beautiful hair, with the long, beautiful hair so carefully braided to attract men.’¹¹⁰ Much has been said

¹⁰⁵ Quoting Roland Barthes in Kristeva, Desire in Language, back cover
¹¹⁰ Nancy, ‘Mary, Magdalene’, pp. 57-66, p. 57
of the role of women in Hitchcock’s films, the selection of the actresses, the control the director may or may not have imposed upon them, their styling and the characters they were chosen to play, yet little has been said, beyond surface speculation, of the significance of the names of the characters. Whilst there is no evidence that Hitchcock himself read Proust, he must surely have been aware of the vast work, even if only through conversation with peers, friends, and cultural acquaintances. Clearly, Hitchcock knew of Boileau-Narcejac’s original detective novel (whilst they claim to have read Proust years earlier, but not to have held him in mind during their own writing), and yet it remains curious that Madeleine’s is the name that prevails, the only one that moves across the boundaries of text to screen. Madeleine moves from city to waters, tracing histories. Through Nancy, Madeleine returns to Magdalen, woman and place and history and water are soaked in the origins of the name:

The Magdalan, the Mary who comes from Magdala. Magdala was a town; its name might be related to a tower, the tower of the Fish or tower of the Dyers, depending on the source. In any case, a tower over water. Or else the name of this Mary has other etymology having to do with headdresses and hair. She would be the woman with beautiful braids, or the one who makes beautiful braids, a hairdresser for festival days. Water or hair, in either case it is a question of elemental waves, of a depth that comes to the surface and forms undulations; it is a question of an emergence, a floating, a pooling or a bathing.

112 Climbing the tower at San Juan Bautista, the name resonates, echoing Hitchcock’s Catholic upbringing. Schooled by Jesuits at St. Ignatius’, Stamford Hill, the progression from the greengrocer’s family in London to the Catholic Spanish missions of California, the director fascinated by his leading actresses with their beautiful hair, does not seem explicitly forced. From Magdalene to Madeleine and the watery echoes of San Juan Bautista, much could be made of Hitchcock’s baptism in the font of Hollywood film production.
113 Nancy, ‘Mary, Magdalene’, p. 65
Madeleine pulled from Paris to San Francisco. Pulled out of the water of the Bay at Old Fort Point just as Proust’s narrator pulls the madeleine cake out of his tea-cup swimming with memory-making. Madeleine as both tower and water, falling and drowning, plummeting and floating, solid and liquid. Her hair anointed with spikenard essential oil, Mary Magdalene perfumes the space around her, the scent interweaves with lime-blossom tea, hawthorn and the seaside at Balbec. Kristeva, aware of the numerous binaries emanating the umbrella term Madeleine/madeleine (as ‘woman or sweetness, mother or sinner, neutral or delectable’), justifies their presentation:

A metaphorical and metonymic irradiation has emerged, associating places and moments with desire and condensing these intermittent occurrences into an oral purity. This network of associations forms the focal point of infantile memory in which the book, the voice, and the taste are united, and in which Aunt Léonie offers her hand to Mamma, allowing an amorous body to emanate from a cup of tea.114

Just as the memory rises from the cup for the Narrator, so too it recedes once the flavour ebbs from his taste buds. The madeleine, rising and falling, produces in him, a vertiginous sensation. To refer to Nancy once more:

Magdalene stands on the edge of the human; she goes alongside it by coming from elsewhere in order to go elsewhere. She does not say where, and that should be of no importance to us. She comes out of the painting only to return to it again. She develops her image only to be enveloped in it again.115

Proust, like Hitchcock, had Catholicism in his roots. Son of a Jewish mother and a Catholic father, aware of both his faith lines, his mother preferred him to be raised as Christian, but, as he grew older, he was no devoted attendant. And

114 Ibid., p. 16. Proust revised the manuscript in 1909, turning the little ‘biscuit’ of the scene into a ‘madeleine’, permanently fixing the woman-cake as a marked and conscious choice. See Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, p. 16.
115 Nancy, ‘Mary, Magdalene’, p. 63
yet the madeleine followed him between his two homes. As well as the Sunday mornings of village church of Combray of his childhood (taken up by the Narrator of the novel), in Paris, the Proust family lived at 9, boulevard Malesherbes, a moment’s walk from the imposing church at the Place de la Madeleine. Proust’s Narrator also treads the same path. To quote Kristeva:

The writer evokes the Madeleine Church in the same way he might speak about the miracle of sacraments: “Even before we reached the Madeleine I would be trembling with emotion at the thought that I was approaching a street from which that supernatural apparition might at any moment burst upon me unawares.”

‘Only love,’ writes Kristeva, ‘can form metaphors and imbue images, objects, and names with the sense of time. Love is what turns a biscuit into a cascade of involuntary memories and sweet realities containing a lost though retrievable sensation.’ The humble biscuit swells with the Narrator’s taste for love. ‘I want to claim for the image,’ writes Chris Marker, in his digital memory chamber CD ROM, *Immemory* (1998), ‘the humility and powers of a madeleine.’

**Fixing the Image**

One aspect of the theme of *Vertigo* is given us by Saul Bass’s credit designs. We see a woman’s face; the camera moves in first to lips, then to eyes. The face is blank, mask-like, representing the inscrutability of appearances: the impossibility of knowing what goes on behind the

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116 Once the site of a synagogue, a further echo of the marriage of religions between Proust’s parents, the Madeleine Church today is dedicated to the Magdalene, with an ornate high altar sculpted by Charles Marochetti representing Mary Magdalene, standing tall in a pose of ecstatic devotion, raised aloft by a trio of angels.

117 Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, quoting *Search*: 1: 451

118 Ibid., p. 15

mask. But the eyes dart nervously from side to side: beneath the mask are imprisoned unknown emotions, fears, desperation.\textsuperscript{120}

Then a vertiginous, spiralling movement begins in the depths of the eye, moving outwards as if to involve the spectator: before the film proper has begin, we are made aware that the vertigo of the title is to be more than a literal fear of heights. This credit sequence is linked by the music that accompanies it to the scene of Judy’s metamorphosis into Madeleine in the beauty salon: the only scene where the same music returns, again as accompaniment to a close-up of a woman’s face— a face that is being transformed into a mask.\textsuperscript{121}

Bernard Herrmann’s music moves, resounds and reverberates across and around \textit{Vertigo} as the opening credits of Saul Bass’s geometrical spirals pulsate and gyrate across the screen. As Michael Wood concurs, in his 2015 Hitchcock anthology review:

\begin{quote}
In its first hour the film co-opts our eyes and ears for Scottie’s sense of the world. We don’t exactly see what he sees. We see what he would see if he had different eyes (if his eyes were a camera with a zoom lens). We also hear Bernard Herrmann’s magnificent score, which Scottie doesn’t; although \textit{when} we hear it is even more important that what we hear.\textsuperscript{122}
\end{quote}

Here, text, image and sound combine, overlapping across vision and the blinking eye of the unknown face of a woman, across her lips and into the swirling vortex of her blinking eye.

\textsuperscript{121} Wood, \textit{Hitchcock’s Films}, p. 74
Again, there is the mask, the double, the layering of looping patterns that return throughout the film, throughout the exposure to the action and immobility tied to the vertiginous falls. Sensory and sensual, Herrmann’s score is carefully crafted, and will be approached here as a means to exploring the symbolic construct of characters and moments that draw the viewer as listener and reader of the narrative back into *Vertigo*. Again, Madeleine echoes throughout, and Scottie’s memory is tied to her through the musical score, its movements and motifs. Just as Scottie says “I look up, I look down” as he stands on the stool in Midge’s apartment, testing his resilience to the height, so too he looks *around*, he circles around on his bar stool at Ernie’s restaurant to both strain an ear and his gaze towards locating Madeleine for the first time.

At Ernie’s restaurant, Scottie is perched at a bar.\textsuperscript{123} He has come to see Madeleine, ‘the suicidal neurotic’, at her husband Elster’s request. The bait has been laid, Scottie has made his first tentative steps towards it, and the plot rests upon its being taken.\textsuperscript{124} The wallpapered interior, like the red velvet seats of a cinema theatre, is deep and gaudy, showy and plush, furnishing the scene with drama. As the camera pans slowly across the room and into the restaurant, diegetic sound rises—cutlery clatters, voices murmur. A waiter glides by, balancing his silver salver. Glasses clink. Scottie, with the camera eye now back upon him, attempting inconspicuousness and anonymity can’t help but crane his neck and strain his ear towards the restaurant behind him. The camera again

\textsuperscript{123} Once a popular long-standing San Francisco hotspot located at 847 Montgomery Street, Ernie’s closed in 1995. Both its interior and exterior were recreated as studio sets, with props borrowed directly from the restaurant, and the owners, Richard and Victor Gotti, feature in cameo roles. See Dan Auiler, *Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), pp. 107-108

\textsuperscript{124} A plot that is somewhat dubious and fragile in its believability (the storyline hinges on Elster’s expectation that Scottie would not be able to overcome his fear of heights in order to save Madeleine from her fate at the top of the bell tower), but that becomes all the more powerful in its ability to suspend the need for narrative belief. A point both admitted and drawn attention to by Hitchcock himself in his interviews with French New Wave director François Truffaut in 1962. See François Truffaut & Alfred Hitchcock, with Helen G. Scott, Helen G., *Hitchcock/Truffaut*, Revised Edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), p. 243, first published in French 1966.
takes the lead, panning out, through an arched partition doorway, moving across the room. Right to left, like a stage curtain drawing back, it focuses in on a table where a man and a woman dine. With her back to the camera, folds of sea-green taffeta surround the figure of the woman. A dark gloved hand, its elbow resting on the table, contrasts against her open-backed evening gown, her pale, bare skin, and her white-blonde, chignonned hair. The restaurant clatter fades and an orchestra’s string-section swells, wave-like, to take its place. The siren song of Madeleine. Turning, rising, moving forwards to leave the restaurant, she turns, pauses for a moment. Before the camera, spliced shot-reverse-shot so that she appears before the watchful Scottie, she stands in profile centred in the frame of the image. A paradox, she is all at once intimate and absent, vivid in Technicolor, silent and mute, an abstraction; a formal exercise in secrecy and staged mystery. Paused under the camera’s gaze, she is the definition of Hitchcock’s directorial belief that, in film ‘there’s no such thing as a face, because until the light hits it, it is nonexistent.’ Filmed, illuminated, she becomes the cine-portrait, Madeleine. (Fig. 4)

In so doing, she takes on a presence in the form of an absence. It is in this framed pose, this poised moment before she turns, that, in becoming stilled, Madeleine becomes spectral, a ghostly image of both the imagined future and invented past that shapes Vertigo’s story. Spectre, from spectrum, from specere, ‘to look at’, in her own filmed way, this image of Madeleine, stilled on the page, held in the memory of the Spectator, is resonant of the Spectrum, ‘the kind of little simulacrum’, as Roland Barthes puts its, that retains a root to “spectacle” whilst adding to it that rather terrible thing which is there in every photograph: the return of the dead. “Here I was born,” she will later say, pointing to the markers of the past on a tree trunk with the same black-gloved hand that had rested on the table at Ernie’s. “And there I died. It was only a

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125 Vertigo’s costumes were designed by Hitch’s and Hollywood’s favourite—Edith Head and her team. Madeleine’s sumptuous evening dress pops against the red walls of Ernie’s interior, her movements more a glide than a walk, contributing further to the building of her ethereal cinematic persona.
126 Alfred Hitchcock, in Hitchcock/Truffaut, p. 183
moment for you... you took no notice...” Tracing time, fingers moving across
the sequoia rings, the folds of history become like the conical rings of the outer
ear. Filmed, Madeleine’s spectral presence can be heard as well as seen.

‘Hitchcock’, quipped composer Bernard Herrmann in a 1968 interview, ‘only
finishes a picture 60%. I have to finish it for him’. At Ernie’s, without
dialogue, Herrmann’s score animates the scene. Under his direction, the
orchestra takes its lead, and a long-lined romantic score begins, all elongated
strings, rising up the scale, lilting and smooth. ‘The music is a sad, quiet theme
played almost entirely by muted strings’, writes Royal S. Brown. ‘This brief
intense—and wordless—scene,’ writes Charles Warren, ‘amounts to the taking
of the bait, or infection of romantic love on the part of Scottie.’ In Boileau
and Narcejac’s novel, Flavière is transfixed by the scent of Madeleine’s
perfume, evoking in him memories of childhood, his past awoken by sensual
association. By contrast, in Vertigo, the scent is lost, Hitchcock removes any
mention of Scottie’s childhood, instead, the ex-detective picks up her trail

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128 Royal S. Brown, quoting Bernard Herrmann, 1968, in ‘An Interview with
Bernard Herrmann (1911-1975),’ High Fidelity, Vol. 26, No. 9 (Sept., 1976),
pp. 222-223. Indeed, Herrmann’s professional partnership with Hitchcock
covered a full decade of some of the director’s most recognisable works,
working on The Man Who Knew Too Much (remake, 1956), The Wrong Man
(1956), Vertigo (1958), North by Northwest (1959), Psycho (1960), The Birds
(1963), Marnie (1964), with an ending to the collaboration due to disagreement
on Torn Curtain (1966).

129 Royal S. Brown, Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music (London:
University of California Press, 1994), p. 84

this sentiment: ‘As Scottie leans back from the bar where he is sitting to see
Madeleine, the camera, rather than giving the audience his point of view, pulls
back to create a second “gaze” that circles around to the back of the restaurant
and then begins a slow track-in on Madeleine […] And since the music has now
become a theme for Madeleine […] it naturally has returned to the nondiegetic
track. Brown, Overtones and Undertones, p. 84

131 Jane Young, ‘A Continuous Spiral: Boileau-Narcejac’s Sueurs froides and
Hitchcock’s Vertigo’, in eds. Anne Mullen and Emer O’Beirne, Crime Scenes:
Detective Narratives in European Culture Since 1945 (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi,
through another sensory form. As Brown notes, ‘it is “Madeleine’s Theme” that is heard [...] throughout Scottie’s first encounters with her.’ It will occur and recur throughout Vertigo, a spectral leitmotif with its musical referencing of the swelling, the soaring, and the withholding harmonic suspension of the ‘Liebestod’ that marks the climax of Richard Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde. A leitmotif like that of the composer Vinteuil’s little phrase, traced by Swann and Odette in the Search, Proust was very much influenced by and attuned to Wagner’s compositional techniques. The Narrator traces resonant moments throughout the novel, recalling experiences, memories, and interactions through the mechanism of the musical motif. In the case of Swann and Odette, the ‘little phrase’, first heard by Swann and shared with his future wife, traces and resonates across the pages that describe tender moments shared. In a lengthy, descriptive passage that bears repeating, the Narrator describes Swann’s first

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132 Indeed, only the character of Midge can shed any light on Scottie’s past. Old friends, old flames, we learn that they were, at one time, briefly engaged. With no mention of family or childhood, the link between Scottie and Elster (that they were friends at college) serves only to allow for his entrance into the narrative, as the husband of the wealthy wife whom he is plotting to kill.

133 Royal S. Brown, Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music (London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 166

134 Many thanks to composer Michael Betteridge for patiently and generously sharing his knowledge and musical expertise. Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde premiered in Munich in 1865. Inspired by German Gottfried von Strassburg’s thirteenth-century courtly romance adaptation of the French legend, Tristan and Iseult, Wagner’s opera became hugely influential in Western musical composition, musical theory, and in literary and cultural spheres, cited by Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, and Claude Debussy, and triumphed by Friedrich Nietzsche, to name but a few. Indeed, Hitchcock himself used the prelude to Tristan und Isolde in Murder!, an early sound film from 1930, played by a live orchestra on set, and recorded as if to appear as a radio broadcast being listened to by the character Sir John Menier (Herbert Marshall) whilst he shaves, the camera filming his face reflected in the bathroom mirror. See Truffaut, Hitchcock/Truffaut, pp. 74-75.

135 See Richard E. Goodkin, Around Proust, Chapter 5. Proust and Wagner’, pp. 103-125. Thanks here to Dr. Wendy Ligon Smith and her work on Mariano Fortuny and the Bayreuth Theatre, for drawing my attention to the resonances between Proust’s Search and Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde. Thanks too, to Sophie Preston, for curating an evocative and stimulating research event in which the words of Proust and the music of Wagner were performed together at An Evening of Fashion, Music, Art, and Marcel Proust’ at Manchester Art Gallery, 30th May, 2013.
encounter with the music and his desire to seek its origins and the name of its creator, so that he might possess it and cherish it as its own:

The year before, at an evening party, he had heard a piece of music played on the piano and violin. At first he had appreciated only the material quality of the sounds which those instruments secreted. And it had been a source of keen pleasure when, below the delicate line of the violin-part, slender but robust, compact and commanding, he had suddenly become aware of the mass of the piano-part beginning to emerge in a sort of liquid rippling of sound, multiform but indivisible, smooth yet restless, like the deep blue tumult of the sea, silvered and charmed into a minor key by the moonlight. But then a certain moment, without being able to distinguish any clear outline, or to give a name to what was pleasing him, suddenly enraptured, he had tried to grasp the phrase or harmony—he did not know which—that had just been played and that had opened and expanded his soul, as the fragrance of certain roses, wafted upon the moist air of evening, has the power of dilating one’s nostrils. Perhaps it was owing to his ignorance of music that he had received so confused an impression, one of those that are none the less the only purely musical impressions, limited in their extent, entirely original, and irreducible to any other kind… Swann found in himself, in the memory of the phrase that he had heard, in certain other sonatas which he had made people play to him to see whether he might not perhaps discover his phrase therein, the presence of one of those invisible realities in which he had ceased to believe and to which, as though the music had had upon the moral barrenness from which he was suffering a sort of re-creative influence, he was conscious once again of the desire and almost the strength to consecrate his life… But that night, at Mme Verdurin’s, scarcely had the young pianist begun to play that suddenly, after a high note sustained through two whole bars, Swann sensed its approach, stealing forth from beneath that long-drawn sonority, stretched like a curtain of sound to veil the mystery of its incubation, and recognised, secret, murmuring, detached, the airy and
perfumed phrase that he had loved. And it was so particularly itself, it
had so individual, so irreplaceable a charm, that Swann felt as though he
had met, in a friend’s drawing-room, a woman who he had seen and
admired in the street and had despaired of ever seeing again. Finally the
phrase receded, diligently guiding its successors through the
ramifications of its fragrance, leaving on Swann’s features the reflection
of its smile. But now, at last, he could ask the name of his fair unknown
(and was told that it was the andante of Vinteuil’s sonata for piano and
violin); he held it safe, could have it again to himself, at home, as often
as he wished, could stuffy its language and acquire its secret.136

Tracing the narrative of Scottie’s enchantment by Madeleine across Swann’s
being charmed by Vinteuil’s andante, the musical motif becomes a powerful
tool for auditorily reading both the pages of Proust’s Search and the moving
images of Hitchcock’s Vertigo. A sonorous encounter, whose emotions and
desires are tied to the Narrator’s own encounter with the madeleine, the music
heard and subsequently described through visual images, most notably those of
liquid origins. The watery origins of the madeleine’s history are tied to the
swelling, soaring ‘deep blue sea’ bars of the music, whilst the moonlight echoes
the night-times of childhood waiting and longing for maman at Combray, and
the Narrator’s own embittered resentment of Swann as the man responsible for
the withholding of her kiss. The ocean, too, has its role to play in film, with
Hitchcock’s Madeleine plunging herself into the waters of the bay, in a
coupling gesture that ‘hooks’ Scottie, assuring his infatuation for her,
commands the future following of her scent, and sends him dizzy with pleasure
at finding her again in the reprisal—in the figure of Judy. The encounter with a
thing believed lost, the Madeleine Theme is Scottie’s ‘little phrase’ as made
resonant through its call to Wagner’s Liebestod.

The ‘Liebestod,’ —a compound of the German words Liebe, ‘love,’ and Tod,
‘death,’ therefore, ‘love-death’—comes towards the end of the Tristan und
Isolde’s third and final act, in which Isolde, in a final aria, sings over the body

of her dead beloved, Tristan, describing a vision of him revived, arisen once again. As she, too, dies beside him, they are united together once more, their love transcending their mortal end. In *Vertigo*, the film audience witnesses the playing out of Scottie’s vision of his love revived—his return to, his pursuit of, and his fetishisation of Madeleine.

Falling into “Madeleine’s Theme”, trailing her scent, bow strings working to signal her presence amongst the storyline, whilst the script dictates that the dialogue so often remains muted, Scottie is caught in a turning that renders him dizzy. *Vertigo* begins in the ear, and the music of *Vertigo* recalls this. In the ‘incompatibility of data’ that renders the sufferer sick with giddiness, unable to distinguish between real and unreal, stable and unbalanced.¹³⁷ The déjà vu (‘already seen’) of Scottie’s experience of fatal falls (at the hands of his own immobility) is coupled to the déjà entendu (the ‘already heard’), in his recognition of Madeleine as her ‘Theme’ runs through the musical score of *Vertigo*. Thus, in Herrmann’s scoring of the scent of the false trail of Madeleine, he plays out, performs, a woman who never was (for neither Scottie nor the viewer ever encounter a ‘real’ Carlotta, nor the ‘real’ Madeleine Elster, extant beyond his own nightmare-vision, or seen already in death, as Elster throws his wife’s body from the bell-tower). Even in its silences, in the sections of sparse dialogue, the unspoken looks and gestures, the score attunes the viewer to recognising, or, at least, into believing that they recognise Madeleine, in spite of her trance-like absences and her sudden disappearances. Scottie’s symptoms perpetuate the plot, his ears miss the signals his body attempts to send, to restore balance to his equilibrium. In seeing only Madeleine, when the audience can recognise, can hear the truth of his false vision, he misses his opportunity to be, once more, “a free man”, and instead, becomes embroiled in seeking a connection between a fictional haunting, and a painted image that cannot hear, cannot return his call. Madeleine’s theme is an echo, a reverberation, of Hitchcock’s composed image of the fantasised, intangible woman, who plays out, infinitely repeatable, with every re-screening of *Vertigo*.

¹³⁷ Quinodoz, *Emotional Vertigo*, p. 2
In 1999, visitors climbed to the second floor of Atlantis Gallery in London’s Spitalfields, to become the audience of an installation of a re-playing, a re-telling, and a re-sounding of *Vertigo*. An entrance requiring an initial physical engagement, the body’s movement up the stairs traces an immersive ascent. In Douglas Gordon’s *Feature Film*, a project made in collaboration with Artangel, Hitchcock’s characters and locations are swept to one side, to be replaced by the moving image of one man, James Conlon, then Musical Director of the Paris National Opera. Projected on an ‘obliquely placed free-hanging screen, while a commercial VHS version of *Vertigo*, formatted for television, was projected in smaller-scale- the size of a television image- in an alcove against a wall’, *Feature Film*’s main screen showed Conlon conducting an unseen Paris Opera orchestra in a full performance of Bernard Herrmann’s film score. Conlon’s gestures, shot simultaneously on three different cameras, are cut and edited together as he moves in and out of focus, maintaining the harmonic unity and timing of the musicians in their performance. The soundtrack recording comes in at one hour, fourteen minutes, and thirty-four seconds. From its opening credits laid over the eye of an unknown woman, to the final tolling of the bell at the tower of San Juan Bautista, Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* has a running time of two hours and eight minutes. On the small television screen, reduced in size and nudged to the corner of the installation space at Atlantis, *Vertigo*, plays, emitting no sound. Hitchcock’s narrative rendered mute, only the moving images remained. Amplified across the gallery space, the sound instead corresponds to the performance of the orchestra on the large, central screen. In the Paris orchestra’s momentary pauses and rests, *Vertigo*’s dialogue could be heard, ‘tinny and half-audible […] a trace of the recording; a monitor version of *Vertigo* was on stage pacing Conlon during conducting’. *Vertigo*, screened at a double-remove, is spectral, twice-screened. The orchestra, heard, their presence felt, are absent from both the film and the installation space. ‘Madeleine’s Theme’ haunts the space, out of sync with the small VHS screening, filling the void of the missing musicians on the large screen.

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139 Monk, *Double-Cross*, pp. 161-62
projection. In the gallery space, the audience are surrounded by the swelling, soaring, missing-ness of Vertigo, of two realms contained within one durational, time of encounter. ‘It was only a moment for you,’ Madeleine says, pointing to the sequoia trees. But only her gesture points to this time outside of time, the orchestra, instead, speaks on her behalf, the sound of her absence.

Conlon’s conducting traces the movement of Vertigo. The cameras, fixed solely upon him in his black turtleneck sweater with sleeves pushed up to the elbow, move to follow his gestures. ‘In cinema’, writes Giorgio Agamben, ‘a society that has lost its gesture seeks to reappropriate what it has lost while simultaneously recording that loss.’\(^{140}\) Conlon’s hands gesture the sounds, conduct the gaze towards the lost presence of the unseen orchestra. Without body, they perform the sounds of Vertigo as performed in the time-keeping, story-telling hands of the baton-less conductor. ‘Cinema’, continues Agamben, ‘leads images back into the realm of gesture.’\(^{141}\) Gordon’s art piece makes a feature of Hitchcock’s film. In his posturing and re-performing of something already extant, to be absorbed and experienced by an audience who are moved out of their seats and given the opportunity to move between either screen (the large screen containing Conlon, or the small television screen repeating Vertigo), there is no sudden resolution, no revelation, only a transferral of the site of experience through an adjustment of sensory engagement.

Conlon’s face moves into and out of focus as his body carries the orchestra’s rhythm. When he is caught, his gaze is always looking out beyond the frame, like Scottie in the driving seat in pursuit of Madeleine, the object of his attention is beyond the realm of the camera. Conlon listens in to each musician, each instrument, each note and melody, his task to bring each together each individual performative moment. Just as Quinodoz determines that there cannot simply be ‘the’ vertigo, so too, through Conlon, the camera and listening ear recognise that there is not just ‘the’ score, or ‘the’ orchestra, or ‘the’ film

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\(^{141}\) Agamben, ‘Notes on Gesture’, p. 53
soundtrack. Conlon’s gestures keep time with Michel Chion’s reading, in *The Voice in Cinema*:

If there is an invisible orchestra playing the film music, we might think of this proscenium as an orchestra pit like that of opera or vaudeville (it was of course a real orchestra pit during the silent era in large movie theatres). And if we hear a commentator’s voice, it corresponds to a sort of podium below the screen or alongside. These distinctly different triages of sounds emitted from the single real source of the loudspeaker, triages based on the simple criterion of each sound’s relation to each image at each moment, already testify sufficiently that there is no soundtrack, to put it provocatively. It is the image that governs this triage, not the nature of the recorded elements themselves.

Thus, Chion continues, ‘to see or not to see the sound’s source: it all begins here, but this simple duality is already quite complex.’ Conlon’s conducting gestures towards the absence of the sound’s source. His outstretched arms, curled hands, and gesticulating fingers sway in and out of shot. He, to borrow from Agamben, ‘neither makes nor acts, but takes charge, in other words, carries the burden of it [gesture].’ In other words’, he continues, ‘gesture opens the sphere of ethos as the most fitting sphere of the human.’

Conlon’s hand closes around air. Index finger and thumb are held momentarily in a point of contact. Curving around, the semi-circular, half-moon gesture of

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142 Indeed, even in its first instance, Herrmann’s score for *Vertigo*, whilst appearing ‘whole’, is a construct of the sum of several parts, built together over a spread of time and geographical space. The music had to be performed and recorded by two separate orchestras, one in London, and, as a result of a performers’ strike, transferred and completed by another in Austria. Herrmann himself was unable to be present to conduct either.
144 Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 4
145 Agamben, ‘Notes on Gesture’, p. 55
146 Ibid., p. 55
the hand takes on the shape of the cartilage of the outer ear. (Fig. 5) In this void, closed around air, Feature Film is filled with the sound of Madeleine’s Theme. As Susan Sontag writes, ‘there is no such thing as an empty space.’\textsuperscript{147} She continues:

As long as a human eye is looking there is always something to see. To look at something that’s “empty” is still to be looking, still to be seeing something- if only the ghosts of one’s own expectations. In order to perceive fullness, one must retain an acute sense of the emptiness which marks it off; conversely, in order to perceive emptiness, one must apprehend other zones of the world as full.\textsuperscript{148}

Conlon’s conducting ‘ear’ listens in, gesturing towards the silence of the small screen replaying of Vertigo. Thus, “Silence,” contests Sontag, ‘never ceases to imply its opposite and to demand on its presence.'\textsuperscript{149} For,

Just as there can’t be “up” without “down” or “left” without “right,” so one must acknowledge a surrounding environment of sound or language in order to recognize silence […] any given silence takes its identity as a stretch of time being perforated by sound.\textsuperscript{150}

‘Hearing,’ writes Chion, ‘is omnidirectional. We cannot see what is behind us, but we can hear all around.’\textsuperscript{151} He gives the example of the infant child in relation to the mother. In vision, the mother ‘ceaselessly plays hide-and-seek with his visual field,’ a ‘Fort-Da’ of here and there, implying distance and separation.\textsuperscript{152} But, in listening, that is, within the ‘olfactory and vocal continuum,’ it is possible for the mother’s presence to be maintained, even

\begin{footnotes}
\item[148] Sontag, ‘The Aesthetics of Silence’, p. 8
\item[149] Ibid.
\item[150] Ibid.
\item[151] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 17
\item[152] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
‘when she can no longer be seen.’ Likewise, in cinema, ‘sound films can show an empty space and give us the voice of someone supposedly “there,” in the scene’s “here and now.” For Chion, ‘a voice may inhabit the emptiest image, or even the dark screen…with an acousmatic presence.’ ‘Said of a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen,’ in Chion’s interpretation, the acousmatic has a special presence, a resonance that transcends the boundaries of the film image. When ‘we cannot connect it [the voice] to a face,’ he continues, ‘we get a special being, a kind of talking and acting shadow to which we attach the name acousmêtre,’ Thus, the acousmêtre is a double, both ‘outside the image, and at the same time in the image,’ ‘at once inside and outside, seeking a place to settle,’ a restless spectre-sound bringing ‘disequilibrium and tension.’ In the absence of the filmed woman’s voice, Madeleine’s Theme, made resonant through Conlon’s silent gesturing in Gordon’s Feature Film, is the acousmêtre of Hitchcock’s Vertigo.

Just as Scottie strains his neck and turns his head, his ear, towards Madeleine at Ernie’s, he falls into “Madeleine’s Theme”, in a dizzying, vertiginous pursuit of the acousmètric woman. Even later, when she finally does speak she reveals nothing, answers his questions vaguely, if at all. Conlon’s hand-as-ear leans in closer to the camera, to the orchestra’s music. The hand dips out of sight, out of shot, the fingers flutter up again as music swells, Conlon beckons for more, holding the sound close, letting it drop, measuring the moment, each moment of making, of contact between sound and silence. Without suffering the symptoms of vertigo, per se, listening to the sounds of Vertigo through Feature Film

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153 Ibid.
154 Ibid., pp. 17-18
155 Ibid., p. 18
156 ‘Acousmatic, specifies an old dictionary, “is said of a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen.” We can never praise Pierre Schaeffer enough for having unearthed this arcane word in the 1950s.’ Ibid., p. 18. See Pierre Schaeffer, Traité des objets musicaux (Paris: Le Seuil, 1966)
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid., pp. 21-23
159 Where the ‘real’ voice of a ‘real’ woman is absent (Judy-as-Madeleine is a double illusion—a character playing a role in a plot inside a film narrative, she is always impossible, always voiceless), her Theme prevails.
marks an oscillation between steadiness and imbalance, of precipices and longings, drawn-out looks and fleeting glimpses, terror and panic, desire and impossible love. A theoretical study of Herrmann’s score (guided by such works as those by Royal S. Brown, or David Cooper’s *Handbook*) would lead to a highly detailed, technical analysis of the musical language that shapes the body of work, its history, and subsequent readings of it. Untrained, mine, instead, is a language of listening that is attuned to looking, an attempt to write of both the visual and the aural through the sensory encounter of the film. It can only be experiential because *Vertigo* commands of its audience participation with, immersion into the full-bodied flatness of the screen, to fall into its troublesome plot and to submit to the possibility of acousmatic encounter, to surrender to illusion. As Mladen Dolar writes:

> The voice offered the illusion that one could get immediate access to an unalloyed presence, an origin not tarnished by externality, a firm rock against the elusive interplay of signs which are anyway surrogates by their very nature, and always point to an absence.

Scottie believed that Madeleine’s voice would be one of clarity, bringing reasoning for her actions, explanations behind her drive towards self-destruction and her being consumed by her past. He believed, too, in Judy, that her revelation, her return to the top of the bell tower at San Juan Bautista in the guise of Madeleine, would provide the answers to his own perplexing vertiginous suffering. His dizziness, whilst tied to either of the two female identities that Kim Novak assumes. Neither Madeleine nor Judy could be the ‘firm rock’ sought by Scottie in his search for presence and stability, a returning receiver who would render communication complete, a circle made whole.

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In *Vertigo*, Elster’s story of his possessed wife only ever points to a series of absences that Scottie determines to fill. In his pursuit of Madeleine and in an attempt to seek a justification for her actions, Scottie seeks in each sign and symbol a clue, a reason, an answer. Instead, he pushes towards a further unknowing, a re-turn, a regression, a stepping away from the reality of his own condition. Returning to Quinodoz, it is the ‘compact rock’ of ‘the’ vertigo that is echoed in Scottie’s belief in, and desire to prove the existence of ‘the’ Madeleine, who is haunted by ‘the’ (“mad, sad” great grandmother) Carlotta Valdes. Through Madeleine, in the bookshop owner Pop Liebl’s tale of Carlotta’s abandonment, in the gallery guide that labels her portrait, in the gravestone that bears her name and her passing, Scottie seeks confirmation through authority that can draw a strong red line through History to link Madeleine to her ancestor, curating a past in order to confirm the actions of the woman he encounters in his present. Scottie believes he is making semblance, giving shape to the tale he is attempting to make his own, thus providing a solution to his own pre-existing imbalance. Instead of the voice, ‘Madeleine’s Theme’ marks her more present than she ever could be on screen. Exposed, enraptured, Scottie trails it- indeed, he will trail across time, history, city and state of California, to try to fill up the space where the absent Madeleine is missed.

Blackness too, the blank spaces in between scenes, silences (lengthy passages without dialogue or interaction between characters), and suspense all work towards the production and reception of a film that is all at once full of communication, through controlled and carefully calculated restraint.

A lengthy, silent pursuit scene that culminates in Scottie witnessing Madeleine’s ‘attempted drowning,’ the camera closes on him lifting her to safety and bundling her limp, sodden figure into his car. Cut to Scene 151: in which Madeleine awakens in Scottie’s apartment following her leap into San Francisco Bay. With Scottie the hero undone by Madeleine’s presence in his own bachelor pad and her apparent unawareness of her actions, this is a scene

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162 Quinodoz, *Emotional Vertigo*, p. 17
that presses for remembrance, but is tied to forgetting, and rebuilding an image of likeness.

This scene was shot on Kim Novak’s first day on set. Novak-as-Judy-as-Madeleine awakes naked in Scottie’s bed at 900 Lombard Street (the property selected and arranged by art director Henry Bumstead and his team), her wet clothes hanging over the sink in the kitchen.

Hitchcock, so particular in his sculpting of character, of attention to detail, of the particular ‘look’ of his female actors, allows a moment of making to be displayed, declared to the viewer. Judy re-pins her hair, thus pinning herself back into the identity of Madeleine, whilst pinning Scottie to the spot, transfixed by the woman in his dressing gown before him. Scottie watches her make herself into an image of Madeleine, whilst, in the background, through the slotted blinds at his living room window, Coit Tower glows, illuminated, as a reminder of the desire her character has been instructed to provoke in him. In doing so, the camera, whilst panning, moving, spiralling around the coil of Madeleine’s signature hairstyle, also serves to pin, to fix, to impress the image of her memory upon the mind of Scottie and, in turn, the viewer. In this dichotomy between the fixed and the moving, a dichotomy is presented between the slow gesture of Madeleine’s actions, and the steady gaze of the bachelor, the director, and the audience.

Awakened abruptly from her post-Bay stupor by the ring of her husband’s phone call, Madeleine Elster leaves the ‘larger-than-single bed’ of Scottie’s Lombard Street bachelor apartment, wraps herself, as instructed, in his (less than) discreetly administered red silk dressing gown, and slips onto some cushions beside the fire. Through the slatted venetian blinds, illuminated on Telegraph Hill, Coit Tower stands tall and erect, whilst the camera cuts between the silently seated woman and the curious man, pressing her to drink coffee, and

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163 The film script dated 12th September 1957 reads: ‘And through another open door we can see into the bedroom where Madeleine lies, in the larger-than-single bed, under the covers, asleep.’ Hitchcock being Hitchcock, and without a word, makes room for Madeleine in Scottie’s bachelor bed.
for an explanation to her actions in the previous scene. She is aloof, distant, yet very much present, commanding attention—her heavily pencilled eyebrows contrasting against her ash-blonde hair (not even an attempted suicide by drowning can prevent Hollywood make-up from slipping), the gape of pale skin of her neckline visible between the folds of his gown. A slow pan-shot of the apartment reveals her clothes hanging beyond the frame, in the kitchen, “they’ll be dry in a few minutes”, he tells her. Whilst she slept, Scottie controlled the space that he calls home. Now the wait is over, Madeleine governs the scene. Cutting repeatedly back and forth between them, the camera moves between curious host and bemused, beguiling guest. Re-asserting her presence, Madeleine seeks to remake herself in the image of her own likeness:

M: [reaches up to her hair] When you… [And suddenly conscious of her nakedness again, and embarrassed]… There were pins in my hair…

S: Oh! Yes! Here! [He crosses the room swiftly, picks up an ash tray in which he had deposited her hairpins, takes her handbag from the chair, and brings them to her.]

M: Thank you.
[She proceeds to do up her hair. He watches her, held by the movement of her body under the dressing gown as she raises her arms and deftly sets about putting her hair in order.]164

This (although the ex-detective does not yet know it) is Judy, wrapped up in Scottie’s own gown, dressed for the interior, pinning herself back into the character of Madeleine, coiling herself back by symbolic association to the portrait and the memory of Carlotta Valdes, back to the actions of the woman who jumped into the San Francisco Bay and Old Fort Point earlier in the day. An echo of the ironwork of the Golden Gate Bridge that formed the backdrop to the calculated act that prompted Scottie’s terror, her arms reach up, marking a cantilever between the moment before and the moment that is now. Connecting

164 Vertigo film script, 12th September 1957, ‘Scottie’s Apartment’
two identities, imagined past and fantasy present, Madeleine is reframed, rehung, her hair the keystone to the narrative plot of the construction of the woman’s image. Scottie, enchanted, hangs on the precipice of infatuation.

Whereas, until now, the fixation on the coiled, low spiral of blonde hair has been viewed- by Scottie, camera and audience alike- as always-fixed, always present, always from behind, here the viewing gaze is exposed to Madeleine’s power face on. The bridge between Madeleine and the story of her great-grandmother Carlotta (between the woman sitting on the gallery bench at the Palace of the Legion of Honor and the woman in the painting before her), the jump into the Bay sought not only to woo Scottie into heroics, but to have him become caught up in the plot, enthralled, through the unravelling of her own image-in-likeness. In the subsequent bedraggled rescue, her undress (an act censored from the viewer under film regulations, but nevertheless worked to Hitchcock’s own advantage—a space made for imagination under the cover of the blackness of the cut between the two scenes), and recuperation, Madeleine’s spiral comes loose, only to be pinned back up again, before Scottie, before the camera, before the viewer. Kim Novak as Judy as Madeleine is slow in her actions, aware of her body and the watchful gaze of the man before her. Scottie, bringing her purse, compact mirror and hairpins to her, presents the tools of her disguise. Posed in sharp relief against the uncomfortably self-conscious man dressed in the comfortable green sweater and open-collared shirt before her, Judy proceeds to pin herself into the role of the ghostly pin-up, and it is once again Madeleine who returns the gaze, mirrors the actions, doubles the coil through repetition, the act of hair-dressing doubly resounding the state of her own body’s undress.

“There, that’s done”, says Madeleine, snapping the purse shut, the transformation complete. Scottie, too, is (trans)fixed. (Fig. 6)
In a reversal of the myth (and the pet names adopted by the protagonists of *D'Entre les Morts*), Madeleine becomes the Orpheus to Scottie’s Eurydice. It is she, now with the spiral intact, who leads ahead, driving the narrative. She cannot turn her image or return to the relative safety of the watery Bay as Lethe. She must continue onwards, across the map that has been determined for her by the powerful, controlling, direction of Hitchcock’s script, of the detective novel’s fate. As Orpheus, Madeleine drives Scottie as Eurydice onwards, in pursuit of the hope of sanctity, of once again being able to climb higher, out from his own underworld of despair, caught in the void of his suffering of vertigo.

In the second half of the film, when Scottie seeks to find Madeleine in Judy, having pressured her to be ‘made over’ in the image of her likeness, again we have a repetition, a double-helix that binds the two characters through the one same actress. In the green neon-lit bedroom at the Empire Hotel, Scottie seeks to pin Madeleine on to Judy, to fix the image of the remembered woman on to a living body. By now of course, the viewer knows the truth, they are privy to the knowledge that Judy has played this role (too successfully, it might be said) once before. Scottie’s memory, or his desire for memory becomes, like the Narrator of Proust, a longing for a return to a moment that is no longer attainable. It is a longing for a memory of making, of fantasy built on the belief system of encounter and exchange—a gift from the past into the present to carry to the future. Balanced perilously (as one the bell-tower window ledge), *Vertigo* narrates a time that can only be permitted within the two-dimensional surface of the cinema screen.

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165 See Dominique Paimi and Guy Cogeval (eds.), *Hitchcock and Art: Fatal Coincidences* (eds.) (Montreal, Quebec: Mazzotta and Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2000), p. 209. In Boileau-Narcejac’s novel, Flavières, after rescuing her from drowning in the Seine, repeatedly refers to Madeleine as “my little Eurydice”, gifting her a lighter with the name engraved onto it, she who he follows, the ignition of his obsessive passion.

The language of the self would be stripped of one of its richest resources without hair: and like language, or the faculty of laughter, or the use of tools, the dressing of hair in itself constitutes a mark of the human. In the quest for identity, both personal and in its larger relation to society, hair can help. The body reveals to us through hair the passage of time and the fluctuating claims of gender; strangers offer us a conspicuous glossary of clues in the way they do the hair on their head, for in societies all over the world, callings are declared through hairy signs: the monk’s tonsure, the ringlets of the Hassidic scholar, the GI’s crewcut, the sansculotte’s freeflowing mane, the flowerchild’s tangled curls, the veil.\(^{167}\)

To this list I shall add the coiled bun of the woman possessed by her ancestor. And, by association, the tawdry, brash red-hair of a woman caught up in a plot of power and control, murder and money. And, again, the dyed and re-dyed ash-blondie of the same woman, made over by the hands of a man obsessed, possessed the memory of a woman who never was.

‘Liberty characteristically wears her hair loose,’ writes Marina Warner, whereas ‘Order pins it up.’\(^{168}\) Perched at the topmost point of the body, hair draws the eye over the figure of the individual. Framed in isolation by the open space between the shoulders and the head, hair sits, stands, styles itself as the summit of the anatomical form, the furthermost point from connectivity with the ground, the highest peak in an individual’s ascension and assertion of their own self. Hair is active, durable, powerful and subject to manipulation a site for the exercising of control over matter. It marks a point of association and also of isolation, individuality, difference and desire. Hair is both performer and performed upon, all at once curtain call, stage and soliloquy.


\(^{168}\) Warner, From the Beast to the Blonde, p. 374
Masks and Mirrors

In *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, T.J. Clark approaches Edouard Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882) as a site for considering the problematics of gaze, and its corresponding point of active awareness—‘seeingness’—within a critique of modernity. In her central positioning but apparent ‘mispositioning’ in the reflective surface of the mirror behind, it is in the figure of Manet’s barmaid that Clark makes a case for a new framework for looking. Paradoxically ‘centrally displaced’ by the economics of bourgeois capitalism of late nineteenth-century Paris, the bar maid stands as a visual experiment in aesthetic and political contemplation. Her presence on the canvas is subject to a proposed yet unwritten narrative assumption of her own relevant wealth (or, indeed, lack of) in relation to the exchange-value system of Parisian commodity society. Her positioning denotes that she must remain fixed within her role—selling and serving (and posing?) in order that she might retain her own position within the system of economic exchange. In serving the spectacle of the audience-crowd who neglects to see her beyond her occupational duties, she exchanges her time and efforts in return for continued access to commodities of modern living in capitalist cultural existence.

[…] she is posed and composed and confined by it [her alienation]; it is felt as a kind of fierceness and flawlessness with which she seals herself against her surroundings. She is detached: that is the best description. She looks out steadily at something or somebody, the various things which constrain and determine her, and finds that they all float by “with the same specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money”.

Hers, Clark projects, is a precarious life, as echoed by the painting that is abundant in ledges, edges and precipices. Present but misplaced, Manet’s painted mirror presents a dislodged, shifting and slanted perspective on the scene. Reflected at an angle that is a perspectival impossibility, the Folies-

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170 Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, p. 254
Bergère hostess is both present and yet she cannot be. It is in her duplicity, in
the search for painted wholeness, that she becomes unreal. Clutching the bar-
top, the woman’s mirrored reflection is no more present, no more real than the
first-sighting of Madeleine at Ernie’s red-wallpapered restaurant, nor the
Madeleine reflected in Judy’s compact mirror in Scottie’s apartment, nor the
Madeleine of his memory-imagination reflected in the green neon light of the
Empire Hotel.

Kim Novak, as Charles Barr points out, ‘is not simply, as a first viewing
suggests, playing for Hitchcock the role of a woman being voyeuristically
observed; she is playing, for Hitchcock, the part of a woman who is playing, for
Elster, the part of a woman being voyeuristically observed.’ He continues:

[…] we have been, and are now again allowing ourselves to be, led on,
deceived, by a consummate manipulator, complaisant victims of what
has all along been—like all cinema—an illusory construction.

Pleasurable gaze indulges the viewer yet simultaneously destabilises the act of
looking through the patterns of manipulated, carefully controlled presentation,
and re-presentation of the image of Novak. Judy, as Elster’s lover and
accomplice, is caught up, like Manet’s barmaid, in a narrative of power and
control tied to greed and desire, a drive towards financial advancement that
readily and actively acknowledges and seeks the eradication of the real
Madeleine Elster through the manipulation of the vulnerable ex-detective
Scottie. Judy, playing Madeleine, allows herself to be surveyed, followed, to be
assumed possessed in her adopted role as the great-granddaughter of a painted
portrait of a woman. Between Judy and Madeleine, Novak plays both controller
and controlled, as possessed she wields a power over Scottie (and the following
gaze of the viewer) to seduce through mis-association. Returning to the
apartment scene, she becomes double once again, answering Scottie’s questions
in cyclical, spiralling repetition:

171 Charles Barr, *Vertigo* (London: British Film Institute, 2002), p. 11
172 Barr, *Vertigo*, p. 11
S: Where were you before?
M: When?
S: This afternoon, if I may?
M: Wandering about.

[...]

M: [...] And what were you doing there, at Old Fort Point?
S: …Oh, just… wandering about.
M: Oh, you like it too?
S: Yes [nods]
M: And where had you been just before?¹⁷³

Novak as Judy, Judy as Madeleine, Madeleine as Carlotta, and now Madeleine as Scottie, the doubles resound and reverberate, echoing the narrative, the plot, the filmic intent, the manipulated image. The balance of power plays out between Madeleine and Scottie in their questioning of one another—each seeking to engage with the other whilst retaining separation, distinction but a desire to understand. The camera echoes this movement, cutting repeatedly between one and other, she before the fire, turning her head intermittently towards he who looks on, attempting to decipher, to make sense of the events and the woman he has carried from the Bay to his bed, and is now posed before him.

An echo, for example, cannot occur without a distance between surfaces for the sounds to bounce from. But the resonation is not on the walls. It is in the emptiness between them. It fills the emptiness with its complex

¹⁷³ *Vertigo* film script, 12th September 1957, ‘Scottie’s Apartment’
patterning. That patterning is not at a distance from itself. It is immediately its own event.\textsuperscript{174} 

Brian Massumi’s echo-space provides a context for approaching the narrative as event in \textit{Vertigo}. The distance between Madeleine and Scottie, the physical distance that is, was broken by her staged fall and her subsequent rescue. Within the apartment, however, the distance is once more present, tense, loaded and expectant—Scottie sits on the sofa or paces by the window, Madeleine sits, sipping at her coffee, pinning her hair, her clothes hanging in the kitchen beyond, and the open door of the bedroom reminders of the blank space between the two events which the audience was not privy to see. When Madeleine re-pins her hair, he sits directly before her, her gaze fixed more often upon his own than on her own reflection in the little compact mirror propped up against the coffee pot.

\textbf{Screening Memory}

In Boileau-Narcejac’s \textit{D’Entre les morts}, Flavières (the alcoholic ex-lawyer protagonist who will become the James ‘Scottie’ Stewart of \textit{Vertigo}) re-encounters Madeleine in the image of Renée (recreated by Hitchcock as Judy Barton)\textsuperscript{175} on a news film reel in the cinema:

\begin{quote}

The screen lit up and with a blare of old music the news was announced. It began with General de Galle’s visit to Marseilles. Uniforms, flags, bayonets, the crowd being with difficulty pressed back on to the pavement. Close-ups of spectators caught with their mouths wide open, yelling cheers that couldn’t be heard. A fat man waving his hat. A
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{174} Brian Massumi, ‘Introduction- Concrete is as Concrete Doesn’t’, \textit{Parables for the Virtual} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 14

\textsuperscript{175} In \textit{Vertigo}, Scottie, some time after the ‘death’ of Madeleine, will turn outside the florists to see a woman in a Kelly green sweater and skirt walk by with a gaggle of friends. As he follows her to the Empire Hotel he will learn, from much questioning and persuasion, that she is ‘Judy Barton, from Salina, Kansas’ and that something in her very much reminds her of someone he once knew.
woman who turned slowly round and recalled some portrait by Lawrence. The camera moved on, but Flavières had had time to recognize her. Half rising from his seat he thrust a terrified faces towards the screen.\textsuperscript{176}

In the image of Renée, as in the sight of Judy Barton outside the San Francisco florist shop, there is the same recognition of an impossible something that can be brought to life only by an awareness of having witnessed death.\textsuperscript{177} For

\textsuperscript{176}Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac, \textit{Vertigo} (first published as \textit{The Living and the Dead} in GB, 1956), trans. Geoffrey Sainsbury (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), p. 107, French edition \textit{Sueurs Froides (D’Entre les Morts)} (Paris: Folio, Denoël, 1977), p. 118. A brief synopsis of the novel: Set in the Paris of World War Two, where the threat of invasion from the Germans is high and tension reigns, Gévigne asks his old friend and ex-legal practitioner Flavières to follow his wife Madeleine whom he believes to be possessed by the spirit of her great grandmother, Pauline Lagerlac, who committed suicide at the age of twenty-five (Madeleine’s own age). Flavières comes to know Madeleine, he falls in love with her, rescues her after an apparent fall into the Seine, and gives her a cigarette case and lighter inscribed with the words \textit{A Eurydice ressuscitée}. After a drive out of the city, the two stop at a church with a too-tall bell tower, she runs up the stairs and jumps to her death. Flavières, feeling the guilt of Gévigne’s accusations of missed responsibility, turns to drink in an attempt to rid himself of the memory of the fall and his inability to save her due to his fear of heights. The second part of the novel begins four years later, after armistice has been declared, and Flavières has returned to France from a legal practice he was running in Dakar. He is still haunted by Madeleine, and revisits the sites they explored together, and is fearful that he is becoming mad. On visiting the cinema, he sees a picture newsreel of General de Gaulle visiting Marseilles, and is stunned by the image of a woman in the crowd. Three viewings later, he knows she is not Madeleine, but something about her lures him in. He travels to Marseilles in attempt to track her down, along with the man she seemed to be in companionship with. He finds her, Renée Sourange, and pursues her, keeping her close to him, attempting to force her to reveal answers to his questions of who she can be. On discovering the necklace once owned by Pauline Lagerlac he presents Renée with the lighter and commands she be made over in the image of the likeness of Madeleine, in grey suit and with her hair pinned up. Forcing her to reveal her story-- that he had been set up by Gévigne so that he could stage his wife’s suicide and take her inheritance, with Renée his mistress playing her in disguise— Flavières, in a fit of fury and anger, strangles Renée, killing her, curing his fears of her identity in her death.

\textsuperscript{177}Barthes, too, thrusts his face towards the cinema screen: ‘In the movie theater, however far away I am sitting, I press my nose against the screen’s mirror, against that “other” image-repertoire with which I narcissistically identify myself (it is said that the spectators who choose to sit as close to the screen as possible are children and movie buffs); the image captivates me,
Flavières it is the slowly turning head of Renée, and for Scottie it is Judy’s blissful unawareness of her re-entry back into his life in the image of the likeness of Madeleine. ‘To each his madeleine’, writes Chris Marker in the notes for ‘Immemory’. Indeed, in footage from his own apartment in Paris in Sans Soleil (1983), the delicately trashy, child-like frame of his own pipe-cleaner Madeleine rotates slowly for the camera. This mobile bust, all tangled impression, like Madeleine is both full and empty, the recognisable coil of yellow hair now a marker for her markedness upon Marker’s own life and work, a movement through time, screen and memory.

In two films—La Jetée (1962) and Sans Soleil (1983)—Chris Marker presents the portrayal of impossible, insane memory, an homage to and a remaking of Vertigo’s tale. Even the music of La Jetée echoes Hitchcock, devoted to the memory of ‘The Girl’ of a remembered film179 (one that ‘he had watched nineteen times’), whilst in Sans Soleil (the title taken from Mussorgsky’s song cycle, ‘Sunless’), under the narrated gaze of Sandor Krasna (another Marker captures me: I am glued to the representation, and it is this glue which established the naturalness (the pseudo-nature) of the filmed scene (a glue prepared with all the ingredients of “technique”); the Real knows only distances, the Symbolic knows only masks; the image alone (the image-repertoire) is close, only the image is “true” (can produce the resonance of truth).’ Barthes, ‘Leaving the Movie Theater’, The Rustle of Language, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 345-349, p. 348. First published in Communications, 1975

178 Chris Marker, ‘Immemory’, liner notes from the original English edition, 1998,

179 La Jetée’s soundtrack contains two pieces by English composer Trevor Duncan entitled simply ‘The Girl- Prologue’ and ‘The Girl- Theme’, whose indebtedness to Bernard Herrmann’s score for Vertigo cannot be overlooked. Indeed, Herrmann’s soundtrack also includes a piece entitled ‘The Girl’ that plays as Scottie (James Stewart) sights Judy Barton (Kim Novak) for the first time outside the florist shop where he first followed Madeleine Elster (Kim Novak) and the film’s storyline of following and desiring truly begins to unravel. All three pieces, in both films, resound with an enraptured fascination and a longing to follow the image of a woman who seems familiar, whose ‘significance’ (a term from Kristeva, adopted by Barthes) remains out of reach. They become recognizable, like Venteuil’s “little phrase” for Odette and Swann. See Proust, Swann’s Way, p. 250.

identity, he has many), there follows a pilgrimage across lands and histories: from Japanese technological utopian dreams, to Guinea Bissau, where figures dare to look back at the camera, to the San Francisco where Vertigo both slips in and outside of time, as the ocean’s waves ebb and flow against the rocks at Old Fort Point, as once they had done in a moment of the longed-for film. In his CD Rom Immemory, the Marked man (as digitally designed cat avatar) invites, conducts a journey through the zones of Proust and Hitchcock to invite the explorer to join in a ‘A Free Replay’ into the ‘fade to black’ of the fall back into the search in Vertigo, of remembrance of things to come.

In March 2009, Antoine Campagnon (a former student of Roland Barthes) devoted a section of his course at the Collège de France to Barthes’ Mourning Diary, the series of entries and fragments written in the year after his beloved mother’s death in November 1977 and before his own untimely departure in 1980:

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181 Chris Marker also went by Christian François Bouche-Billeneuve, Sandor Krasna, Hayao Yamaneko, Kosinski, Sergei Murasaki, and was often represented by his cartoon cat, Guillaume-en-Égypte.

182 The orange and black striped cartoon cat avatar Guillaume-en-Égypte is the guide to Immemory, who, like Alice’s Cheshire Cat in Wonderland, appears and disappears, wide-eyed and grinning all the while. From the appearance of this cat (who neither purrs nor speaks, but fizzes into view with an electronic tinkle of apparition) there follows an opening up of choice, and a declaration that there are other Madeleines beside Vertigo’s. Guillaume-en-Égypte, like Madeleine, is a name of many forms. The same orange and black of Vertigo’s advertising colour schemes, he is all at once the name of Marker’s own domestic pet cat, the comical and somewhat infuriating guide of Immemory (technology has advanced somewhat beyond the pace of the cat since Marker’s dabblings in computer software, time rushes ahead, and yet the cat’s visits- his apparitions- are always unexpected and marvelled at by the good pilgrim explorer of memory), and the commissioned machinima avatar for Marker himself in the online virtual world Second Life (where he also forms a large, comfortable cat-shaped couch on which Agnès Varda’s avatar can take a nap). Indeed, Second Life in itself suggests a desire for a re-living amidst the present of the real-time, lived existence, “a second chance” one might say, to borrow from Vertigo’s Scottie Ferguson; an alternative presentation and interaction of oneself amongst the freedom of a virtual, internet reality.

Cinematic images play a completely different role in *Mourning Diary* than in *Camera Lucida*, which opposes the “punctum” of photography to the little interest aroused by cinema: images from films provoke full reminiscences in the mourning subject, whose past self [*le moi passé*], in contact with the deceased, is ready to rise [*ressusciter*] completely at the slightest stimulus.\(^{184}\)

Again, a return to Nancy’s reflections on ‘the woman with beautiful hair’, \(^{185}\) Mary Magdalen:

> Abandoned by love, Mary is given over to the simulacrum of love. Yet in every simulacrum there is a similarity; there is in the fleeting embrace something that resembles love.\(^{186}\)

In rising, in the resuscitation of the image of memory, of moments lived and lost, both mourning subject and mourned-for subject are interwoven in the image of something that transcends semblance. Simulacrum, then—unsatisfactory in the awareness of its not-being the desired-for (longed-for) original, but overwhelming in its likeness—is the fleeting embrace whose form envelopes, makes round, the space in which both the living and the dead can share. As when Madeleine points to the sequoia tree rings in Muir Woods outside San Francisco—“Here I was born, here I died,”—the moment rescreened again in Marker’s *Sans Soleil* and restaged in Paris’ Le Jardin des Plantes in *La Jetée*, is a double representation of woman and object both inside and outside of time, always simulacrum and always reached for, reaching out.  

(Fig. 7)

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\(^{184}\) Quoting Antoine Compagnon (Collège de France, March 2009), in Badmington, *Punctum Saliens*, p. 313


\(^{186}\) Nancy, ‘Mary, Magdalene’, p. 58
Mary, Magdalen, Madeleine, Maman, each name is a spectre of the something within the image which cannot be named. Magdalen, says Nancy, can originate from the Hebrew for the place of the tower. In ‘Proust and Names’, Barthes speaks of the different ‘figures’ that are present in any one Name within the Search. In the name ‘Guermantes’, there are, he writes, ‘several primitives (to borrow a word from Leibniz)’. He expands, for every ‘Proustian Name’, there is an ‘entire dictionary column’, each name is ‘a voluminous sign always pregnant with a dense texture of meaning, which no amount of wear can reduce, can flatten’. Thus, in ‘Guermantes’, he reads:

“a castle kept without density, which was nothing but a strip of orangetinted light and at the top of which the lord and his lady decided the life or the death of their vassals”; “a yellowing and rosette tower which traverses the ages”; the Parisian mansion of the Guermantes, “limpid as its name”; a feudal castle in the middle of Paris, etc.

Thus, for Barthes, in Proust, each Name has a ‘semic spectre, variable in time, according to the chronology of its reader, who adds or subtracts elements exactly as language does […] The Name, is, in effect, catalyzable’. So too in the madeleine image, the name is both catalyzable (to be filled) and catalyst (the explosion of memory). Each madeleine is both castle and water, the name is on the lips of both Scottie and Judy at the top of the tower at San Juan Bautista, and in the flow of Madeleine’s hair as it dries after she has been pulled from the waves of San Francisco Bay at Old Fort Point. From the ‘catalyzable’ name

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188 Barthes, ‘Proust and Names’, p. 60
189 Ibid., pp. 59-60
190 Ibid., p. 60
191 Ibid., p. 61. A great deal more will be said about Proustian names in Chapters 3 and 4, through the Search and in the writings of Deleuze and Kristeva on the subject.
unfolds the space in which the ‘past self [le moi passé]’, is ‘ready to rise [ressusciter]’.192

In *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1977) he writes of his ‘resistance to the cinema’—he is constrained by it because of unceasing and determined continuum, its ‘garrulous ribbon’ of representation.193 And yet the film, as ‘pellicule’—‘a skin without puncture or perforation’—is the ideal surface upon which the unwelcome guest would be found, where the penetrating trait of the obtuse must lie, in order to speak of the guest after they have gone, after the host (the film’s witness) has left the cinema hall behind.194 Like the perfectly smooth skin of Madeleine when Scottie first encounters her dining with Elster at Ernie’s Restaurant, like the ‘skin without puncture or perforation’ of Carlotta Valdes, still living beyond the tale of her death, upon the canvas of her portrait in the Palace of the Legion of Honor, film is the surface upon which its traits are allowed to be made present. Like the image pouring forth from the Narrator’s exquisite pleasure, ‘the film image’, writes Barthes, is ‘a lure’:

I am confined with the image as if I were held in that famous dual relation which establishes the image-repertoire. The image is there, in front of me, for me: coalescent (its signified and its signifier melted together), analogical, total, pregnant; it is a perfect lure: I fling myself upon it […]195

… Madeleine… He liked the name. It had a gentle, plaintive sound.196

… Madeleine!... Il aimait ce nom un peu dolent.197

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192 Quoting Antoine Compagnon (Collège de France, March 2009), in Badmington, ‘Punctum Saliens’, p. 313
194 Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, p. 54
196 Boileau-Narcejac, *Vertigo*, p. 17
197 Boileau-Narcejac, *Sueurs Froides (D’Entre les Mort)*, p. 26
Chapter 2


Madeleine Time in Percy Adlon’s 1980 film Céleste, is Proustian maternal holding made filmic through sound and moving image. Transposing the memoirs of Proust’s housemaid, the written word moves into the realm of cinema through the feminine figure of Céleste Albaret.

Céleste opens with actress Eva Mattes seen through an open doorway, sitting in a chair in a kitchen, waiting. (Fig. 8) On the table sits a pile of letters, a copy of Le Figaro, a silver tray (part-loaded, expectant), and a small carriage clock. The clock’s ticking on the table beside her is the only sound to be heard—heightened and diegetic—emphasising her stillness. From off-screen, a man’s cough. The clock continues to tick. Another cough. Then, the strings of the Bartholdy Quartett start up. Dry cough followed by dramatic strings talk back at one another, with always the constant ticking of the clock, matched by Albaret’s steady presence in the chair.

Based on Céleste Albaret’s memoirs, Monsieur Proust, as told to and recorded on audio cassette tape by Georges Belmont in over ten hours of interviewing in 1973, German director Adlon’s film is a re-presentation of Albaret’s devoted time spent as Proust’s housekeeper, nurse, and secretary from 1914 to 1922 in the final years of his life and writing of In Search of Lost Time. The figure of Céleste Albaret, here, is considered in three forms. First, as the woman of Proust’s life - as housekeeper-turned-amateur biographer, albeit a reluctant one – in her continued devotion to Proust after his death, it would be fifty years before she committed her memories to Belmont’s print. Then, as a character in her employer’s writing - Céleste Albaret first appears in the Search with her sister-in-law Marie at Balbec in Vol. IV: Sodom and Gomorrah, the same

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199 Albaret, Monsieur Proust. See Introduction by Georges Belmont, xv-xvii
summer in which the Narrator encounters Albertine and her band of girls at the beach. In a third form of representation, Céleste Albaret is the motivation for Adlon’s film, in its portrayal of the interior life of Proust, whose origins lay in the director’s reading of Albaret’s transcribed memoirs. These three aspects combined, Albaret is observed as a reluctant devotee—a contradictory woman whose own independence grows out of Proust’s dependence upon her, and whose figure further contributes to readings of her employer’s lifework, his habits and his atypical rhythms of day to day (or, rather, night to night) existence. In Albaret’s hours of waiting hatched Proust’s great novel. She shared in his solitude, surrendering her body clock to his in a committed intimacy that held them together in an interior time that could on occasion be as stimulating as it was so often confined to sickness, solitude, and suffering. “I hold myself ready for him,” Mattes says, looking directly at the camera.

As “orphans” together, Albaret and Proust spent their time in close quarters. From 1914, Albaret joined the household of the second floor apartment at 102 boulevard Haussmann (where Proust had lived since 1907) until 1919, with a few unsettled and unhappy months interim at 8 rue Laurent-Pichat, before relocating to the fifth floor apartment at 44 rue Hamelin, until his death at the age of fifty-one in 1922. He, childless, unmarried and bereft of his beloved parents (his mother, Jeanne Weil Proust, had died in 1905, whilst his father, Adrien, had died two years earlier in 1903), she far away from her family in Auxillac), her mother dying whilst she was in Proust’s service, her new husband, Odilon (they were married in 1913), summoned away on service at the outbreak of the Great War in 1914), were held together in a space of strange union, arguably in self-selected semi-isolation in the midst of the hustle, confusion, and change of early twentieth-century Paris. From accounts

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201 ‘I hold myself ready for him. (Je me tiens à sa disposition).’ Percy Adlon, *Céleste, Proust, die letzen 100 Seiten Schreibend*, (Germany: Pelemele Film and Bayerischer Rundfunk, 1981), pressbook script in German with English and French subtitles, p. 1.3

202 Albaret, *Monsieur Proust*, p. 117
recollected in her memoirs, and Proust’s own correspondence, Albaret’s own time appears suspended, or at the very least, out of sync with the external world and that of her newly-married life, in her investment in Proust in the historical context of the outbreak of war. Her husband absent, her mother dead, she, too, is both childless and childlike. At first helpless and lonely in her new city surroundings, then made dependent-upon through—by her own admission—her reluctant acceptance of the invitation into Proust’s household, Céleste Albaret becomes the twenty-two-year-old mother-maid-secretary to the thirty-two-year-old man-boy-mother-author. The two exist as co-habiting familiars, almost-siblings in their kin-confinement.

In Proust’s cluttered, darkened, and smoky bedroom, with its heavy blue curtains and much-mythologized cork-lined walls, each working to barricade

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203 Céleste Albaret is mentioned on occasion in the conversations and communications of Proust’s letters that he sent and received between 1914-1922. Philip Kolb’s rigorous twenty-one volume edited, dated, and annotated Correspondance de Marcel Proust (the first volume of which was published by Plon in 1970, the final volume released in 1993, very shortly after Kolb’s death) and, despite his apparent wish that his correspondence never be published (a subject which, Albaret recounts, caused him considerable distress: “You will see, Céleste, I shall hardly be cold and everyone will start publishing my letters. I did wrong; I wrote too many, far too many. Because I was ill, my only contact with people was through writing. But I should never have done it. Still, I shall take what precautions I can. I shall see to it that no one has the right to publish my letters.” See Albaret, Monsieur Proust, p. 201), has proved an indispensable source of information and insight to scholars of Proust, his life and work. Indeed, Jean-Yves Tadié, in his biography of Proust, first published by Gallimard in 1996, relies frequently to Kolb’s volumes as a resource for his own writing. See Jean-Yves Tadié, Marcel Proust, trans. Euan Cameron (New York & London: Viking Penguin, 2000). It must be noted, of course, that whilst Kolb’s work is vast and wide-reaching, it is not, indeed cannot be, absolutely comprehensive – some letters having been lost or destroyed, whilst others belonging to private collections, families, and institutions, have never been published or shared publicly.

204 Indeed, Proust’s bedroom has been reproduced as a permanent exhibition piece at Paris’ Musée Carnavalet, with cork plates and select pieces of furniture donated by Albaret’s daughter Odile Gévaudan, albeit looking a little exposed and out of sorts with its ‘studio-set’ exhibition box arrangement and missing fourth wall that allows for the public to view ‘Proust’s bedroom’ as a small collection of furniture pieces on their route through the museum. See http://www.carnavalet.paris.fr/en/collections/chambre-de-marcel-proust (first accessed 12/03/2012). So too, the CIC bank which now owns 102 boulevard
the author from all sensory stimulation or agitation from the living world beyond, Albaret moves between the two realms of interior life-writing, and the exterior one of life lived. Albaret was undoubtedly an influential figure in the formation of Françoise—the loyal servant, cook, and nurse character of the Search—whose devoted presence endures throughout almost the entirety of the novel. Originally in the service of Aunt Léonie at Combray, Françoise transferred to serving the Narrator’s immediate family following her employer’s death. Françoise thus traces the Narrator’s maternal lineage from grandmother, to aunt, to mother, serving all and moderating the domestic life in relation to one another. As quick-tempered and cutting as she could be tender and generous (indeed, her meal-time offerings made for a table laid heavy, each sitting an occasion, in contrast to Albaret’s limited capabilities in the kitchen), proud Françoise orbits the Narrator’s life whilst allowing him to follow his own course. Her servitude allows for an observation of the characters and episodes of the Narrator’s life, her observations, as observed and recounted by the Narrator, act as an effective fictional device for developing the reader’s experience of the novel. Passing judgement on the characters she encounters,

Haussmann use Proust’s bedroom space as a boardroom. Many of the original features were removed or replaced, yet, in a curious move that appears to lie somewhere between prosperity’s sake and a bizarre homage to the previous famous tenant, the bank chose to install its own cork plates on the walls, and today permit access for tourists for a couple of hours on one afternoon each week.

Indeed, following one of several lengthy and evocative descriptions of the sumptuous food designed, prepared, laboured over, and presented by proud Françoise, where ‘To have left even the tiniest morsel in the dish would have shown as much discourtesy as to rise and leave a concert hall before the end of a piece under the composer’s very eyes’, the Narrator describes her workplace, the site of such creativity, Aunt Léonie’s back-kitchen: ‘Once could see its red-tiled floor gleaming like porphyry. It seemed not so much the cave of Françoise as a little temple of Venus. It would be overflowing with the offerings of the dairyman, the fruitier, the greengrocer, come sometimes from distant villages to dedicate to the goddess the first-fruits of their fields. And its roof was always crowned with a cooing dove.’ Proust, In Search of Lost Time, Vol. I: Swann’s Way, p. 83, and p. 84. The kitchen as the embodiment of Françoise’s movement between the external world and that of the interior domestic, from organic origins to the production of such sumptuous creations, echoes the movement between the madeleine’s exquisite pleasure (triggered by just a morsel, each crumb, each bite holds value for Françoise) and its origin, the beating heart of the novel and its beginnings in Combray, from which the visions pour forth.
her distrusting opinion of Albertine a shining example (“That girl will bring you nothing but trouble”)),\textsuperscript{206} Française exercises her right to the assessment of others in a manner that surprises the Narrator in the same way that Céleste’s unprompted, uncensored character assessments could both destabilise and humour her employer Proust. Positioned ‘below’ those characters of the upper classes of the \textit{Search}, Française, like Céleste, is the peasant who is party to the world of privilege without membership. Their lives of servitude (fictional and remembered) grant access, providing a lens through which to observe Parisian high society, contained within it (indeed, they are the support mechanism for its very functioning), yet paradoxically remain outside of it. Lives pressed against one another, the role of the devoted servant fills the world of the novel, and accounts of Proust’s own history, with a learned richness that comes only from proximity and longevity, rather than fleeting social encounters. The two combined, operating within the same space (that of the novel, and that of the biographical memoir) colour the reading encounter, broadening the spectrum, shining light on the shadows of interiors and daily (in Céleste’s case, \textit{nightly}) home-life, as well as illuminating further the surfaces of the society of spectacle, as gritted and grooved as it could be glittering.

Orbiting the overstuffed writing space, Albaret as ‘celestial’ body navigated the darkness of Proust’s waking night, ensuring the diurnal day’s sun be eclipsed by the nocturnal lamplight of the \textit{Search}-hours.\textsuperscript{207} In Percy Adlon’s shadowy, dimly-lit film, Albaret is portrayed as both ever-present satellite and sentry—a \textit{guardian}, in every sense of the word. The nourishment Albaret offered to Proust came in her continued supply of objects and aids—pens, café au lait, hot-water bottles, a croissant (sometimes two), fumigation papers, fried potatoes for

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{206} Proust, \textit{In Search of Lost Time, Vol. V: The Captive}, p. 120
\item \textsuperscript{207} Proust’s bedroom-as-writing-room is the subject of Chapter 4: ‘Proust’s Nose: 102 boulevard Haussmann, Paris, France’, in Diana Fuss’s detailed and illuminating \textit{The Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped Them} (New York and Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 151-211. She carefully maps the writer and his work across the interior space of his home: ‘At once a final articulation of classical order and an early expression of modern interiority, Proust’s seven-volume novel simulates his seven-room apartment in both outline and scale. Proust’s fiction, no less than Haussmann’s architecture, represents, in every sense of the word, a \textit{monumental} achievement.’ p. 162
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guests, jumpers, handkerchiefs, always a burning candle—but most of all, her time, her being-thereness. Julia Kristeva declares that, in her living with Proust, ‘Céleste becomes a living contact point between the female body and the book.’

Albaret binds together mother and lover in the tales of her own love for her mother and her childhood, whilst, on his rare excursions out, Proust brought back to her tales to shock and awe—stories of sadism, of voyeuristic encounters, of brothels and rats, of dinners at the Ritz, of princesses and pig-headed aristocrats, as well as his own childhood reminiscences.

Words fill up where action comes at a remove, distanced by recollection and retelling. In Adlon’s Céleste, the extraordinary asceticism of both Proust and Albaret contrasts against the overflowing pages of the making of the Search—the countless notebooks, page-margins, scraps of paper, and the backs of envelopes all filled with text, notes, and doodles—the struggles and outpourings of a zealous collectomania of memories. In later years, when black coffee was

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209 A feature also present in *102 Boulevard Haussmann*, a television play written by Alan Bennett and directed by Udayan Prasad in 1990 and filmed for the BBC’s ‘Screen Two’ drama series. Set in the 1916 Paris apartment from which the play takes its name, Alan Bates’ Proust (complete with a dark lock Brylcreemed into a perfect curl on his forehead) and Janet McTeer as Céleste cohabit together, in this British interpretation of the French author’s life, work, habits and routines. McTeer’s tall, elegant, and commanding frame—at first glance seemingly possessing a trace of something akin to the fierceness of Judith Anderson’s ‘Mrs. Danvers’ of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rebecca* (1940)—in contrast to Mattes’ almost-always gentle, open face, appears often to stand over, rather than alongside Bates’ round-faced and mostly-recluent Proust. The play’s attention to historical detailing and biographical referencing create dramatic lure and appeal, exploring the familiar themes of isolation and self-sacrifice in devoting a life to writing. (Indeed, in 1986, Bennett had written *Kafka’s Dick*, another portrait play in which the protagonist author—Kafka here is played by Daniel Day-Lewis—commits to a life of writing above all else.) In *102…*, interruptions from the ‘outside world’ come in the form of a larger cast of characters, (most of whom are met with silent resistance and disapproval from Céleste). Yet, in contrast to Adlon’s considered asceticism that resists overcrowding in favour of exploring the intimate relationship between author and employee, in Bennett’s work, visitors appear here almost as interruptions who serve primarily in order to allow the plot line to develop (the allusions to Proust’s homosexuality culminating in a scene in which he invites the viola player, Massis, from the string quartet to return once again to the apartment, this
alleged to be the only regular sustenance Proust would take,\textsuperscript{210} Céleste nurtured her charge, building the pieces of his novel, manually gluing together the pages of his concertina manuscripts whilst doing everything in her power to keep him warm and well—a bundle of hot towels ready for every wash, always a newly-replaced, unopened bottle of Vichy water by his bed each night. Both untrained problem-solver and sounding board for ideas, with her, the cold, draughty, unused interior rooms of Proust’s apartment became filled with the sounds, the voices, the colours, the characters of sensuous memory and fictitious tales. In Adlon’s scene, in which a string quartet visit the apartment to play, music comes to life, a graphic score made real, both Proust and Albaret are held in raptures, and, in this memory, the slippage into fiction. The scene is a re-performance of a recollection of Albaret’s; an intimate concert held in 1920 in the salon of the apartment at rue Hamelin, in which a chamber music group came to play for Proust at his home at night. Diana Fuss notes that two of the musicians, Gaston Poulet and Amable Massis, remembered differently ‘several concerts held around 1916 in the bedroom of boulevard Haussmann, with Proust lying motionless and apparently asleep on a green divan’, where they would play for him Beethoven’s Thirteenth Quartet, and César Franck’s Quartet, the inspiration for the Vinteuil’s violin sonata from which the Search’s

time alone). In a clear consideration of the power and politics of relationships, however (and one that contains echoes of the Narrator’s desire for his mother and resentment of the father in those nights of longing that open the Search), Bennett includes a scene in which Proust overhears Céleste and her husband Odilon (Jonathan Coy) having sex. Interrupting the scene with the ringing of his bell and ‘I can’t seem to get comfortable’, the now placated Proust seems pleased to have regained his position at the top of the pecking order of the household and its priorities. Devotion takes precedent over the marriage. For more on 102 Boulevard Haussmann, see Kara McKechnie, Alan Bennett (part of ‘The Television Series’) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). 102 Boulevard Haussmann can be viewed on the 4-disc DVD compilation Alan Bennett at the BBC (BBC/2 Entertain, 2009).

\textsuperscript{210} Surely a further impossible mythologizing—coffee having little nutritional sustenance beyond caffeine as stimulant—thus serving as an example of one of those titbits of biography or hearsay (that Céleste, in her own memoirs, regards with much disgust and disdain), that stick and swell, feeding into and fattening up the ‘Image of the Author’ (‘Author’, here, with a capital ‘A’, in the Barthesian sense of the word)—of Proust as always obscure and sickly recluse.
Swann and Odette claim their ‘little phrase.’ Albaret recalls: ‘After the interval, M. Proust asked the musicians, if they weren’t too tired, to play again, not the whole quartet but a certain part if it. I don’t know enough about music to say exactly which part.’ Of its impact and importance, however, Céleste is certain in her memory, clear in her mind’s eye:

He was transfigured and lit up from within… It was with experiences such as this that he managed to keep the flame of life alight within himself. He kept it alight only for his work, which was consuming him.

A New Reality

“And I not only lived in the same rhythm as he did,’ writes Albaret, ‘but twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week I lived entirely for him.” In offering up her whole being, Céleste enters a state of existence with Proust that goes beyond ‘clock time’ and connotes an unknowable, always-extended period of existence in which she makes herself continuously available. (Fig. 9) Adlon’s opening scene resonates with this commitment: Céleste (Mattes), ‘on call’, seated by the clock on the kitchen table, awaits her next undertaking. The film’s movement back and forth across scenes from the memoirs, not chronological, but developmental, move beyond the carriage clock’s ticking, as Adlon’s Albaret tiptoes, rushes, slumps and smiles across the film-set.

211 Fuss, p. 172. After careful consideration of the interior spaces at both rue Hamelin and boulevard Haussmann, Fuss contends that the most likely location of the performances was boulevard Haussmann, ‘but in the large drawing room, rather than in the bedroom,’ applying the recollections as a means to drawing attention to the important of music ‘in the physical composition of Proust’s bedroom interior,’ where ‘his mother’s grand piano’, ‘the most obtrusive object in the room,’ occupied ‘the room’s center of gravity.’ Fuss, p. 173
212 Albaret, Monsieur Proust, pp. 330-331
213 Ibid., pp. 331-332
214 Ibid., p. 45
215 See Jonathan Crary, 24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep (London and New York: Verso, 2014). ‘Clock time’ as that which is commanded and acknowledged only through the marking and mechanisms of hour-keeping, proposing Albaret as a 19th Century forbearer of the time of technological subservience, demand and availability that Crary writes of.
apartment’s floorboards between her charge’s wants and needs. By closing herself to the world, moving into the spare bedroom at boulevard Haussmann in lieu of her own (empty) marital home, only entering out into the city beyond with purpose, Céleste Albaret is the figure of Proustian time acted out upon the woman’s body. “I was more interested in her than in him,” wrote Adlon.\(^{216}\)

Walter Benjamin, in ‘An Image of Proust’, speaks of the “réalité nouvelle”, that is, the new reality of the author’s life in his later years. This, Benjamin contends, meant that Proust became, even more so than ever, inextricably bound to his craft with an awareness of the impact of his own ‘malady’—in particular, of the proximity to the risk of death without completion of his work—‘whose reflections on things and people are the marks of aging.’\(^{217}\) And whilst his was ‘not a model life in every respect’, for Benjamin, ‘everything about it is exemplary.’\(^{218}\) Albaret, too, is lured. Proust’s observations of her are as careful and considered as her listenings out for him, awaiting the bell which would summon her from the kitchen, or signal her to tend to the stove and make preparations for the ritual of coffee-making. As Jonathan Crary notes in *Techniques of the Observer* (1992), to be an ‘observer’ rather than a ‘spectator’ connotes an active compliance of actions with events, rules, codes and practices.\(^{219}\) Céleste Albaret, as made apparent in her memoirs and portrayed thus in Adlon’s film, is an *observer* of Proust’s household, his writing, his activities and the rules by which he lives his conditioned existence, but so too, Proust observes his own commands, and, in turn, is reliant upon Céleste’s successful execution of his wants and needs, and her readiness to abide by his

\(^{216}\) Percy Adlon, regarding the making of *Céleste*, in email correspondence with the author, 28 April, 2015.


\(^{218}\) Ibid.

wishes. He could blame Céleste and rebuke her in his letters for slippages and frustrations, but he too, as Anne Borrel notes, had to learn to live with her, to bear the brunt of her tempers, her novice beginnings with him, and her own fatigue and exhaustion that was inevitable under the demands of the topsy-turvy lifestyle in which, together, they went about their practices. A great strength of Céleste is the visual representation of the impact ‘Proustian Time’ has upon Albaret’s own features. Non-chronological in its story-telling (a series of linked and building recollections and returned-to memories that build towards a final cut, as opposed to a more straightforward diary-entry approach), scenes often open with or return to Mattes as Albaret sitting in her kitchen chair, the carriage clock always close to hand, available to read at just the slightest side-glance (a gesture made apparent through fast cutting between close-ups of Mattes’ face and that of the clock’s, its rhythmic ticking an ever-present soundtrack to all of the kitchen scenes). Back and forth, across busy day-time activities, from the customary preparation of coffee (albeit in a very particular method, Proust was meticulous in his tastes and habits), to the rather more unusual tasks of letter-cleaning, and of manuscript-pasting. In a quietly gentle, humorous and

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220 Anne Borrel, ‘Céleste and the Genius’, in The UAB Marcel Proust Symposium (In Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of Swann’s Way (1913-1988) ed. William C. Carter (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications/University of Alabama, 1989), pp. 1-16. Proust writes of Céleste to several of his close correspondents, from a letter to Reynaldo Hahn in August 1914 in which he first discusses a ‘Madame Albaret’ accompanying him on a proposed (and what will be his final) trip to Cabourg, to Madame Catusse (‘Céleste is broken by excessive fatigues (…) which make her insufferable towards me…’), to Madame Straus in 1918 ‘(…) she [Céleste] leaves me with a dry inkpot and I do not know where to find any ink…’, to Sydney Schiff in 1921 and to Jacques Rivière, to name but a few. See Borrel, ‘Celeste and the Genius’, pp. 5-7

221 In later years of their time together, Proust became extremely preoccupied with the notion that germs from the external world could reach him on the pages and envelopes of mail from his correspondents. As Albaret notes: ‘Toward the end of his life, too, he adopted a peculiar attitude about letters arriving from outside. His fear of germs had become greater than ever. He began wearing gloves in bed when people came to see him whom he knew too well or not well enough to be certain about their health. And he would keep his gloves on until the people went, for fear the visitors might pass on germs when they shook hands. Someone advised him to get a box and put formol in it. Then the letters were placed in the box both before and after they were opened. He told me how it worked and why he used it:'
tender scene of Adlon’s film, a despairing Proust is at his wit’s end as to what to do to prevent his endless loose paper additions and paper scraps from becoming separated from the notebooks. (Fig. 10) A confident Céleste takes charge:

“It’s as simple as anything, monsieur,” I said. “Just write your extra pages, making sure you leave a bit of blank space at the top and at the bottom. And when you’ve finished I’ll stick them in as carefully as I can at the right place. In that way you can add as much as you like—all we have to do is fold the paper. Then the printer will have to unfold the strip that’s stuck in, and he cannot but take it all in the right order.”

… And that’s how the exercise books containing the manuscript expanded. There was a famous one, which has been shown in exhibitions, which has a strip about four and a half feet long when it’s unfolded! And that’s the story of the “paste-ons.”

The additions became pasted pages within pages, whose rustling folds and pressed edges opened up, unfurled, to reveal the ever-developing worlds of Proust’s Search. Pleated and concertinaed, like the frilled edges of the madeleine cake, the shell of the Search became more secure, a strong habitat for the pearl-words contained within to remain secure until the time would come for them to prised open and writ large by the printer.

Albaret’s odd existence is so often staged in the kitchen—the ‘domestic’ centre of this most un-domestic of homes. On days (nights) when she has stayed

“You see, Céleste, in the state I am in, someone with scarlet fever or measles or any other contagious disease would only have to write to me and I would catch the germ in no time. So it is best to disinfect all the letters.”

It was very ingenious, so much so that after he died his brother exclaimed over the idea and took the box away. He said it would be very useful.’ Albaret, *Monsieur Proust*, p. 202


Albaret, *Monsieur Proust*, pp. 276-277
awake for many hours in anticipation of Proust’s needs (in a reversal of the Narrator of the opening pages of the *Search* waiting up all night for his mother to visit him), her tired eyes and washed-out complexion are made apparent, her shoulders become heavy and weary, her pinafore rumpled and her hair tousled. She bears the brunt of the impact of the insular, interior lifework of Proust, the tedium, fears and happiness of which can be read through Adlon’s work in correlation with, and in contrast to, her own memoirs. Adlon’s focus is the image of the devoted Céleste, as distinct from, yet born out of, the filmmaker’s reading of Albaret’s transcribed devotional memoirs of her time spent with Proust, fifty years after the fact. At a double-remove, the filmed representation offers a new fiction of remembering.

**Cutting Time**

Proustian time, here the time of working to create a world of remembering and a desire to write, is held in interdependence of servant and master – for she to function for him, he must function for her, her tasks and wants and needs, too. Céleste, it appears, functions when her time in Paris is given a purpose. On becoming necessary, valid, considered, when she is asked for and required of, she begins to make choices. Loneliness and reluctance become transformed into productivity and engagement, and in the case of Céleste, a strange irony where one form of isolation (once passive) is subsumed by another (now active) as a mode of operation for and the navigation of her young adult life away from her family and the only world she had known in her first twenty-one years of existence. In their exchange together, their coexistence, both Proust the motherly son, and Albaret the motherly daughter are held together, meeting at the intersection between the vertical (parental) and lateral (sibling) relationships that Juliet Mitchell recognises in her *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (1974).  

Adlon’s portrayal of the gentle violence of Proust’s death is marked in the tender cutting of the lock of hair that closes Adlon’s film. In Albaret’s memoir,

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the moment is described in a brief, simple sentence: ‘The professor asked me to cut off one lock of hair for him and one for myself, and I did.’

Adlon expands the time of the sentence, devoting the final scene to the moment. The act becomes one of tender reflection, making space for mourning, inviting emotion through the presentation of the mourning object, the hair becoming a love-lock from master to maid. In the sorrowful moments after Proust’s passing, Céleste (who, in immediate shock, seeks a final clarification from the Doctor present: “Is he dead?”) hands Proust’s brother, Robert (he a physician, as their father had been), a just-cut lock of Marcel’s hair. She then turns back to the body, and cuts the second lock for herself. In this moment, one that recognises and encompasses the full weight of her dutifulness and devotion to her employer, Céleste Albaret becomes as a relation would be—as ‘one of the family’—bestowed with a memento mori mourning morsel of the now-departed beloved. Encased in her palm and held close to her chest, Albaret holds the lock close to her, cradled in both hands, a small piece of an enormous recent past, a memory of the curl she noticed in her first meeting with him in the kitchen at boulevard Haussmann in April 1913, and akin to the small curls of the former child-self of the young Narrator, who, in the opening pages of the Search, brings forth the memory of his once-awful terror: his curls being pulled by his great-uncle, a threat which hung over him until the day came when they were first cut, and, from which horrors, when, newly-shorn, he was liberated.

In Adlon’s work,

225 Albaret, Monsieur Proust, p. 360
226 ‘Or else while sleeping I had drifted back to an earlier stage in my life, now for ever outgrown, and had come under the thrall of one of my childish terrors, such as that old terror of my great-uncle’s pulling my curls which was effectually dispelled on the day—the dawn of a new era to me—when they were finally cropped from my head. I had forgotten that event during my sleep, but I remembered it again immediately I had succeeded in waking myself up to escape my great-uncle’s fingers, and as a measure of precaution I would bury the whole of my head in the pillow before returning to the world of dreams.’ Marcel Proust, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff & Terence Kilmartin, revised. D. J. Enright, In Search of Lost Time: Vol. I, (London: Vintage, 2005) pp. 2-3. Jean-Yves Tadié, in his substantial biography, contends that this episode must have spawned from one of Proust’s early, if not the earliest memory, of his own childhood, the curls of which, when susceptible to the hands of another, were a source of great torment and pain of anxious suffering to the child, with a dread described as being embedded in the strands of hair from root to tip. Tadié keenly notes this as one strong example of the transference of subject material
the cut of the hair signals the cut of the final scene. Mattes closes her hands around the lock (Fig. 11), drawing them close to her body (Fig. 12), whilst the camera slowly pans upwards, fixing on her bowed, sorrowful head (Fig. 13), that then slowly rises, looking brightly and up into the top right of the screen and beyond. A radial focus keeps her face illuminated whilst around her the room fades to darkness. Slowly, too, the celestial light fades and the film meets its close. This movement towards the black leader of the film’s ending possesses a poetics that synchronises with the ending of not only Proust’s life, but of Céleste’s (and Odilon’s) life with Proust too. Her slow movement out of the interior life of nightly activity mirrors the movement of the cinema-goer stepping slowly back out into either daylight or a brightly lit evening after having watched a film. From reel-time to real time. I am thinking here, of Roland Barthes’ short piece ‘Leaving the Movie Theater’, in which the author confesses to his enjoyment of uncertainty, his disjointedness, his sleepiness on exiting the cinema and returning to ‘reality’, of external life after the fascination of the time spent enclosed. Time outside of itself, to film Céleste Albaret is to make a magic lantern in which Proustian memory feeds from phantasmatic Celestial time – playing out across the cycle of the film reel until its final cut, and from which point the viewer and the housekeeper both move out, albeit reluctantly, from the interior, back out into the exterior world beyond.

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that moves from Proust’s earlier writings and through several draft variants (the tormentor being written originally a priest, before being substituted for an uncle, and finally taking the form of a great-uncle), before reaching the final published work in a somewhat adjusted but traceable form. See Jean-Yves Tadié, Marcel Proust, trans. Euan Cameron (New York & London: Viking Penguin, 2000), p. 40


228 Ibid., p. 346
Waiting

‘Having to wait – this is how it first started.’

Born in the village of Auxillac, in Lozère, central France, on 17th May 1891, Céleste Gineste, the fourth of six children and the elder of two daughters, was raised in her parents’ water mill on their seven-acre family farm, where she lived for the first twenty-one years of her life. Despite family losses that brought sorrow and mourning, the Ginestes were a strong and close-knit unit, and Céleste’s young life was filled with love. Married to Odilon Albaret (a regular visitor ten years her senior of her cousins in the village, and brought to Céleste’s attention by his match-maker sister Adèle Lariviére) on 17th March 1913, Céleste left the village behind and made her first journey to Paris with her husband, where he worked as a driver for private clients. One of these customers was Marcel Proust. Their paths had first crossed in 1907 when Odilon was working alongside Alfred Agostinelli as a chauffeur in Cabourg.

229 ‘Having to wait – this is how it first started. (Les attentes – c’est comme ça que cela a commence.)’ Percy Adlon, Céleste, Proust, die letzen 100 Seiten Schreibend, (Germany: Pelemele Film and Bayerischer Rundfunk, 1981), pressbook script in German with English and French subtitles, p. 2.3-4

230 In 1897 a fire at the mill resulted in Céleste’s pregnant mother going into labour prematurely, giving birth to a son who would not survive more than a few days. In 1901, ten-year-old Céleste’s eldest brother, Régis, dies, aged twenty-seven, following a cycling accident. In 1903, the youngest brother, Julien, dies at age nine from a heart rheumatism. See Borrell, ‘Céleste and the Genius’, pp. 2-3, and Albaret, Monsieur Proust, pp. 106-108. Albaret recalls that Proust was often keen to hear of Céleste’s family and childhood, and would ask her to tell her tales and memories to him and he would listen attentively, propped up in bed.

231 Odilon too, had suffered his own sadness as a child, his mother dying when he was twelve years old, and his youth had been somewhat tougher and short-lived than Céleste’s pastoral early years.

232 Céleste first heard mention of Monsieur Proust when, on their wedding day, Odilon received a kind telegram from Paris from his employer that read: “All good wishes and congratulations, I do not write at length because I suffer from influenza and I am tired but I pray with all my heart for the happiness of you and yours.” See Borrell, ‘Céleste and the Genius’, p. 4, and Albaret, Monsieur Proust, p. 3

233 Agostinelli, too, would work for Proust. When Céleste first encountered Agostinelli, he had recently returned to Paris from the Côte d’Azur and was living at boulevard Haussmann with his ‘friend’ (Céleste’s definition) Anna,
for Jacques Bizet’s luxury rental company, Taximètres Unic. Céleste first encountered Proust when she walked with Odilon to the first floor apartment at 102 boulevard Haussmann where the chauffeur went to inform his employer that he was ready to return to work. Alongside Nicolas Cottin and his wife Céline (who were, at that time, the live-in husband and wife team of valet and maid), Proust entered the kitchen, and Céleste formed her first portrait of the man she would come to live with for eight long years. She would describe the image some fifty years later, in the opening passages of her memoirs, a passage that bears repeating, for the impact he had upon her was both striking and lasting:

I can see him now. He was wearing only a jacket and trousers and a white shirt. But I was impressed. I can still see that great gentleman enter the room. He looked very young—slender but not thin, with beautiful skin and extremely white teeth, and that naturally formed curl on his forehead, which he always would have. And then his exquisite elegance and that peculiar manner, a kind of restraint, which I later noticed in many asthmatics, as though he were husbanding his strength and his breath. Because of his delicate features, some people thought of him as slight, but he was as tall as I, and I’m quite tall—about five feet nine.

My husband greeted him, and when M. Proust saw me, he held out his hand and said, “Madame, may I introduce Marcel Proust, in disarray, uncombed, and beardless.”

I was so nervous I didn’t dare look at him. He said a few more words to my husband, which I didn’t hear, because as he spoke he was circling me and I sensed that he was studying me. I also sensed in him such a warmth and thoughtfulness toward me that I became still more nervous.

and serving as Proust’s secretary, typing out his manuscripts. See Albaret, *Monsieur Proust*, p. 8


235 Albaret, *Monsieur Proust*, pp. 5-6
Once Odilon returned to work, however, Céleste began to struggle. Alone, in the new marital apartment at Levalllois in the vast capital that was so different and so distant from everything and everyone she had known at home in Auxillac, Céleste was out of sorts. She recounts one day when Proust asked Odilon how his new wife was settling in. At his troubled and anxious response, Proust’s immediate response, one that startled Céleste in its astuteness—“She misses her mother, Albaret. That’s what it is.”—sparked the first bonds of understanding, respect and commonality between them, despite their being worlds apart in character and societal rank and order. Proust’s next proposal suggested that Madame Albaret, should she wish, might sometime consider calling by his apartment at 102 boulevard Haussmann on the basis of helping out her husband’s employer in hand-delivering letters or copies of his newly published book (*Swann’s Way*) to friends and admirers across Paris.

That’s how it all began. I would never forget, after I knew and had understood him better, the way he figured me out right away. I myself wasn’t at all conscious of being unhappy, even when my husband was out and I was alone. And I wasn’t really aware of missing my mother and family; I wrote to them, and they wrote to me. Odilon was very considerate; and he too was concerned, because he was a good man. But only M. Proust understood that even if I wasn’t really unhappy then, I soon would be. And what he said about my mother was actually true. My husband spoiled me, but it wasn’t the same thing. Our little flat at Levalllois overlooked a courtyard, whereas the house at Auxillac was spacious and airy and set in the middle of the village, surrounded by meadows belonging to my family, alive with activity and cheerful.

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236 “Not very well. I don’t know what’s going to happen—she rarely leaves the house. I keep telling her to visit her family [Odilon’s sister, Adèle, ran a café at the corner of rue Montmartre and rue Feydeau, and his youngest brother, Jean, had moved to Paris too] instead of just waiting for me to come home. She does go sometimes but not often. I’m working, and you know how it is—I’m not always home for meals and return at all hours. So she hardly eats or sleeps. I don’t think it has only to do with leaving the country.” See Albaret, *Monsieur Proust*, p. 7

voices echoing back from the nearby hills. And M. Proust had sensed it all.

Later, because of that and too many other things he noticed about me and other people, I called him a magician. I said to him, “Sir, you are not only a charmer but a magician as well.”

He looked at me with his piercing glance, to see if I meant it.

“Do you really believe so, Céleste?”

But I think he was quite pleased.  

Céleste began to deliver Proust’s letters, or copies of the newly published first volume of the *Search: Swann’s Way*. Nicolas Cottin wrapped the books in neat paper parcels for their recipients: pink for women, and blue for the men (‘Nicolas explained to me: “Those are Monsieur Marcel’s orders.”’). These gendered-stamped deliveries bestowed on Céleste Albaret a purpose, giving her a reason to go out and explore her new city, under the premise of completing a role for her husband’s employer, whom he regarded with the greatest respect. The loneliness that has begun to lodge itself in Céleste’s heart and mind was overtaken by the redemptive power of being made necessary. As Olivia Laing writes in a short essay on her experience of urban loneliness as a stranger living for a short period in New York, it was the regular contact with a friend’s father that brought her out of her increasing anxiety and social withdrawal in an unknown city in circumstances that had run beyond her control: ‘I’ve missed you, Alastair once said, and my heart jumped at the pleasure of existing in someone else’s life.’ It seems that Proust allowed Céleste Albaret a little of that tenderness in those early months in Paris, allowing her to step beyond the threshold of her own small word to explore the city that he, even then, so rarely frequented himself. The reluctant first journey soon became a daily commute. As Albaret recounts:

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238 Ibid., p. 8
239 Ibid., p. 9
'I would take a bus from Porte d’Asnières to Saint-Lazare, and from there I crossed rue de la Pépinière and rue d’Anjou to boulevard Haussmann—it wasn’t far. If there were no letters I didn’t necessarily go right home. Since I was already in town, I usually took the opportunity to visit one or the other of my sisters-in-law. In other words, M. Proust had had his way yet again: I still didn’t see him, but it was as if he were directing me from within his apartment.242

At an unseen distance—it was not until much later in the year, when Albaret began to work at boulevard Haussmann covering some of Nicolas’ tasks in the kitchen whilst he tended to his sick wife, that she would interact with Proust in person again. Céleste would wait in the kitchen, and, should the call arrive from the bedroom (the apartment was fitted with an electric service bell system, with its central unit located in the hallway joining the kitchen to the vestibule), 243 she would prepare coffee and a croissant to take through to Proust on a silver tea-tray.244 Only if called for, never was she to enter unannounced. Nicolas had given her the full brief of the very particular particulars of the ways of the Proust household. And so Céleste would begin her apprenticeship with patience. Writing under the pen-name Sydney Schiff, Proust’s friend Stephen Hudson produced a small volume of five short stories, entitled Céleste. An early admirer and translator of his work, Hudson would often write to Proust, and would visit

242 Albaret, Monsieur Proust, p. 11
243 See Diana Fuss, ‘Proust’s Nose’, p. 158. In Adlon’s Céleste, Albaret is fascinated with the bell system, never having encountered such a thing before. Mattes as Albaret, having been left to her own devices to wait for Proust’s call, approaches the signal box, peering behind it, attempting to divine how it’s inner mechanisms might work, to understand its magic connection. 244 In Adlon’s Céleste, to cut down on additional characters and to keep the cast at a limit and the narrative clear, the Cottins are removed from the script. Instead it is Céleste’s husband, Odilon, with his leather driving goggles perched atop his head, who provides instruction, before departing through the kitchen’s door, down the service stairs, to his car. Indeed, Adlon kept the cast very small: Céleste and Odilon, Proust and his brother, Robert (played by Wolf Euba) the central four, with a handful of minor supporting roles playing Doctor Bizet, the publisher Gaston Gallimard, and, of course, the visiting musicians who come to play Beethoven to Proust at night.
him whenever the circumstances allowed.\textsuperscript{245} In the first edition of \textit{Céleste}, published by the Blackamore Press in London in 1930, Hudson enlisted another friend and fellow Englishman, the artist John Nash (1893-1977) to produce a series of engravings to be included as companions to the stories. The engraving that accompanies the story ‘Céleste’ features a pile of almost-tumbling books in the foreground, with reams of paper lying on a bedspread (looking almost as though they are taking flight, caught on a breeze, becoming all-at-once animated by some unseen force). (\textbf{Fig. 14}) To the right, the carved crescent moon of a bedstead, to the rear, the heavy folds of curtains and a shuttered window. Beside the tower of books, a jug and a coffee cup, sat atop further notebooks or papers. Without suggestion of the author’s form, the bedspread is cross-hatched, the top half of the bed is out of frame, the image seems filled with the presence of Proust. So too, Céleste is present—whether the cup and jug are signs that she has just visited, or markers of her presence beyond the frame, waiting patiently to attend.\textsuperscript{246} The shadows and shades of the monochrome engraving evoke the suspension of diurnal time, the transformation of night-into-day of Proust’s bedroom, and of Céleste’s immersion into this strange, interior world of her waiting and of his writing.\textsuperscript{247} ‘Having to wait,’ says Eva Mattes, addressing the camera (breaking the fourth wall), in the second scene of Percy Adlon’s \textit{Céleste}, a different day, dressed in a new dark pinafore, once

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\textsuperscript{245}Proust features in the book as a character named Richard Kurt. \\
\textsuperscript{246}To quote a passage from Albaret’s memoirs, recalling her first visit to Proust’s bedroom: \\
I reached the fourth door, opened it without knocking, pushed aside the heavy curtain on the other side… and went in. The smoke was so thick you could have cut it with a knife… All I could see of M. Proust was a white shirt under a thick sweater, and the upper part of his body propped against two pillows. His face was hidden in the shadows and the smoke from the fumigation, completely invisible except for the eyes looking at me—and I felt rather than saw them… I bowed toward the invisible face and put the saucer with the croissant down on the tray. He gave a wave of the hand, presumably to thank me, but didn’t say a word. Then I left. Albaret, \textit{Monsieur Proust}, p. 16 \\
\end{flushright}
again seated in the kitchen chair, quiet and calm, ‘– this is how it first started.’

Adlon’s Albaret

Percy Adlon was born Paul Rudolf Parcival Adlon in 1935 in Munich and spent his childhood in the Bavarian countryside, in a small town, Ammerland, on Lake Starnberg. Perhaps best known commercially for his German-American feature film Baghdad Café (also known as Out of Rosenheim) of 1987, following his relocation to Pacific Palisades in Los Angeles, California in 1985, Adlon’s earlier life and works give some insight as to his opting to make Céleste, a German film about Marcel Proust’s housekeeper, in 1980. Having studied art history, theater, and German literature at university in Munich, developing a keen interest in theatre, Adlon began a professional career as an actor in 1958. Entering the world of radio in 1961, Adlon took on various roles—as adaptor, editor, and narrator—for a literature series on Bavarian public radio station, Bayrischer Rundfunk. It was here that he narrated a ten-hour adaptation of Swann’s Way, the first volume of Proust’s In Search of Lost Time. The work at the radio station in turn led to further employment as a presenter and voice-over actor for Bavarian Television, covering local arts news, which then expanded to scripting and directing documentaries, many of which were shown on nationwide television. A twenty-four-part series ‘Mein Dorf’ (‘My Village’) (1970), depicted ‘contemporary living conditions in Bavarian villages’, whilst documentaries that followed

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248 ‘Having to wait – this is how it first started. (Les attentes – c’est comme ça que cela a commence.)’ Percy Adlon, Céleste, Proust, die letzen 100 Seiten Schreibend, (Germany: Pelemele Film and Bayerischer Rundfunk, 1981), pressbook script in German with English and French subtitles, p. 2.3-4
250 The Adlons continue to reside in Pacific Palisades today, working with their son Felix under their independent US production company name, Leora Films.
251 Other work included editing and writing an adaptation of Laurence Sterne’s The Life and Works of Tristram Shandy (1759), as well as narrating works by Kafka. Percy Adlon, in telephone interview with the author, 15 May 2015.
turned their attention to often-overlooked subjects in society, from the life stories of German emigrants, to the experiences of taxi drivers, to moving image portraits of widows and foundlings.\footnote{The films as follows: \textit{Wahlheimat… Porträts Deutscher Auswanderer} (Chosen Home – Portraits of German Emigrants) (1973-77) […] \textit{Taxifahrer} (Taxi Drivers) (1977), widows – \textit{Witwen – Bermerkungen zu einem verdrängten Problem} (Widows – Observations on a Suppressed Problem) (1978), and foundlings – \textit{Ich weiß nicht, wer ich bin} (I Don’t Know Who I Am) (1979). See Haase, ‘Ch. 4: Crossing Boundaries’, p. 136} During this period, Adlon made longer documentaries about artist Tomi Ungerer (\textit{Tomi Ungeres Landleben}, 1973), the German author Alfred Andersch and his wife Gisela (\textit{Mann und Frau im Gehäuse}, 1974), and Bavarian sculptor Fritz König, (\textit{Nebenbei hauptsächlich Rösser}, 1979), further developing his interests in literary and artistic figures, focusing on their lives and works at both personal and wide-reaching levels.\footnote{Ibid., p. 136} 

With the establishment of their own production company, Pelemele Film GmbH, in 1978, Adlon and his wife Eleanore made their first feature film, \textit{Der Vormund und sein Dichter} (The Guardian and His Poet), a docudrama for television on the subject of Swiss poet Robert Walser. The film was met with acclaim and award in their native Germany, and the Adlons, along with their close-knit crew, established themselves as a small but driven company with a keen eye for original and independent subject matter. Adlon tells the tale that, in 1979, when preparing to meet with producers at the Bavarian television company the next day to discuss proposals for the subjects of the new year’s documentaries, it was the as-yet-unopened copy of Céleste Albaret’s \textit{Monsieur Proust} sitting on his desk that caught his eye. The blurb on the book’s back cover, of a woman from the country becoming Proust’s housekeeper triggered a strong and personal interest. Adlon, raised in the country himself, with an active interest in literature, having read Proust (both privately and publicly, aloud on the airwaves), found the combination of personal and literary interests such a natural and serendipitous occurrence, that he wrote up a one-page proposal that would be met with success and approval in the next day’s meeting.\footnote{Percy Adlon, in telephone interview with the author, 15 May, 2015.}
Thus, Céleste began to take shape. Percy and Eleanore Adlon moved to Paris with their twelve-year-old son, for the period of one academic year in order to learn French and film location shots. As well as shooting the streets, buildings and signage of Proust’s Paris, they made the pilgrimages to the Grand Hôtel at Cabourg (the Balbec of the Search) on the Normandy coast, as well as Albaret’s home region of Auxillac, with its snowy lanes and surrounding countryside.

The interior apartment shots that make up the majority of the picture were filmed on 35mm Kodak between January and February 1981 in Munich, with a tiny crew, tiny budget, and a tight schedule. Twenty-six-year-old Eva Mattes was selected to play Céleste Albaret. Already well-established in her career and not one to shy away from a challenge, Mattes had already worked with director Rainer Werner Fassbinder in productions for both television and theatrical release, as well as starring in two films by Werner Herzog, with whom she gave birth to a daughter, Hanna, in 1980.

Adlon recounts, by way of example, that Eleanore, as well as producing the film, was also the runner who brought breakfasts of pretzels and coffee for the cast and crew, and acted as location scout, working to source the ‘perfect’ lift shaft for the elevator scenes some time after filming had already begun. The budget for the film was 600,000 Deutsche Mark, with half of the funding coming from themselves, Pelemele Films, the other half being provided by Bayerischer Rundfunk, with rights to show the film on both television, and, a first for Adlon, in theatres both nationally and internationally.

Adlon notes that Oskar Werner (of Truffaut’s 1962 Jules and Jim fame) was first approached for the role of Proust. On receipt of the script, however, Werner refused, writing to Adlon with the reasoning that he had imagined Proust—‘this very strange butterfly’—in quite a different way. Adlon, quoting Werner, in telephone interview with the author, 15 May, 2015.
eyes” whom he used to pass by. Arndt, however, had left Munich two years earlier, declaring himself ‘no longer an actor’ and setting up a secluded sunshine life for himself on Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands in 1977. Not one to be dissuaded, Adlon continued his pursuit, and Arndt consented to let him fly out to visit him, if only to prove to him that he was no longer the image of the man he was looking for. Adlon stayed for two days with Arndt, who, with his now dark brown short hair flecked with silver, Adlon admitted, had very little of Proust left in him. On the morning of his departure, however, Arndt called Adlon into his bedroom. Here he found a man posed sitting straight-backed and upright in bed, wearing a very particular expression. All night, Arndt had studied Proust, looked at photographs, read biographies, and searched his own character in an attempt to embody, to become, Adlon’s Marcel Proust. Six weeks before shooting began, Arndt returned to Munich, shutting himself away in a hotel room, without contact, with very little food, drink or sleep, taking on the nocturnal, interior existence of his character. Adlon notes that the two actors differed as greatly as their characters in their approach to their work. Arndt, Adlon recalls, wanted total direction (“You have to tell me everything, every little finger gesture.”). Mattes, on the other hand, possessed a more free-spirited approach. When Adlon wanted to show her how to carry herself when, as Céleste, she would sit in the kitchen, awaiting Proust’s buzzer, he was met with “You can show me, but I will not look.” This contrast of styles and personalities, of attitudes towards attention to detail and characteristic corresponds accordingly with the temperaments and the manner of their counterpart characters, Proust with his need to know, to see and write the minutiae of details in a scene, Céleste with her strong temper and particular ways.  

Adlon, too, was particular about attention to detail in the making of his film. An experience he likens to being ‘much like that of the reading encounter of Proust’, it was the little things that concerned him from. Production Designer Hans Gailing and Costume Designer Barbara Gailing (another husband and wife team, they, too, like Mattes, had previously worked with Fassbinder) were

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tasked with sourcing just the right type of curtains, the correct overcoat, in order to successfully turn the Munich apartment of 1981 into Proust’s 102 boulevard Haussmann existence in Paris, 1914. Props, Adlon recalls, were expensive and difficult to source requirements. Proust’s toilette, complete with triptych-mirrored dressing table and full-size vanity set with glass jars,\textsuperscript{260} bone shoehorn, and heavy silver and hairbrushes, for example, was a pricey but necessary addition. Arndt’s animated Proust (a revival of Albaret’s first encounter with the jovial, ‘beardless’ man she would come to serve) is powerful in his contrasting representation, no longer the bed-ridden asthmatic but preparing to be the man-about-town – off to be the host of an evening in his room at the Ritz. Freshly shaved (his eyes will never leave the barber’s, following every movement across his face for the duration of the task) and bathed for the occasion, freshly dressed, his over-zealous tooth-brushing has Céleste smirking in stifled amusement, incredulous at his suddenly boisterous and vigorous flailing. Waistcoat now suitably coated in flecks of toothpaste, she follows him as he walks from the bathroom, eager at the prospect of what he might bring back from his evening’s encounters. Dabbing at his skin with one freshly laundered towel after another, a moment’s pressure before dropping it to the floor to grab another, the scene captures the contrast of interior asceticism of his writing in bed with the seemingly frivolous and lavish preparations for a venture outdoors on one of his memory-collecting excursions.

The scene resonates with Albaret’s accounts of their multiple roles and associations to one another: Proust, all at once childlike in his seeming inability to prepare himself in a sensible manner (leaving in a mess, toothpaste and powder on his dress clothes, being seemingly oblivious to the waste and expense of requiring a hotel’s worth of freshly-laundered towels to dry just his own face), and yet stubbornly particular in his needs and sensitivities (his refusal of freshly starched gloves because of their irritation to his sensitive adult skin), requires Albaret play both mother and maid to him. Whilst he is gone, she

\textsuperscript{260} Filled with cotton wool that he would tear and tuck under his dress shirt collars of an evening out, to prevent the weight of his overcoat, jacket, and the starched fibres of the shirt from rubbing against and irritating his sensitive and delicate skin.
is maid, seizing a rare chance to air out the bedroom, draw back the curtains, and survey its current state, attempting to hurriedly to tackle as best she could, the layers of accumulated dust and clutter, hot water bottles and jumpers, notebooks and scraps of paper under which he operated in his writing world. On his return, he will want her as daughter, wanting to tell her bedtime stories (albeit a bedtime in the early hours of the morning, rather than at night) of his tales from the evening, and so too, a sounding board for what might be retained or expanded, selecting material for the novel, gauging her reaction and response.

Arndt as Proust, seated before the mirrors, wrapped in fur and an oversized overcoat, appears simultaneously grand and humble, with Céleste before him, ready to help in all matters, but always reserved. He bends forwards towards his boots, struggling. Albaret moves forwards to help, taking up the fastener to deftly hook the boots closed. Her unprompted gesture causes a look of anguish and emotional suffering to spread across Proust’s face. Adlon’s scene recalls the wounding jolt of suffering experienced by the Narrator on his return to Balbec, a year after the death of his beloved grandmother. To quote at length:

On the first night, as I was suffering from cardiac fatigue, I bent down slowly and cautiously to take off my boots, trying to master my pain. But scarcely had I touched the topmost button than my chest swelled, filled with an unknown, a divine presence, I was shaken with sobs, tears streamed from my eyes. The being who had come to my rescue, saving me from barrenness of spirit, was the same who, years before, in a moment of identical distress and loneliness, in a moment when I had nothing left of myself, had come in and had restored me to myself, for that being was myself and something more than me (the container that is greater than the contained and was bringing it to me). I had just perceived, in my memory, stopping over my fatigue, the tender, preoccupied, disappointed face of my grandmother, as she had been on that first evening of our arrival, the face not of that grandmother whom I had been astonished and remorseful at having so little missed, and who
had nothing in common with her save my name, but of my real grandmother, of whom, for the first time since the afternoon of her stroke in the Champs-Elysées, I now recaptured the living reality in a complete and involuntary recollection. This reality does not exist for us so long as it has not been re-created by our thought... and thus, in my wild desire to fling myself into her arms, it was only at that moment—more than a year after her burial, because of the anachronism which so often prevents the calendar of facts from corresponding to the calendar of feelings—that I became conscious that she was dead.261

The emotional suffering cuts to the core. When Proust and Céleste travelled to Cabourg for the first and only time together in 1914, the difficult trip came soon after the outbreak of war and following the death of Alfred Agostinelli in his aeroplane crash on his maiden flight. The scene hooks together the seams of Proust’s life and his life-writing, the Search. At Cabourg, Adlon takes time to look out of the high oval window of the Grand Hotel, the view of the sea cut through like an eye looking out through a lid, a lens on the worlds of both the Search and Proust’s own. The slow movement of the sea contained within the oval frame makes a space for touching at loss, of sensing grief. Then, the lens turns inwards. With a cut, Proust and Céleste leave Cabourg behind, they are transported back to the Paris apartment, never to venture out together as one again.262

A Lock of Love

With the cutting of the lock of hair on his deathbed, Céleste Albaret becomes the family clock of Marcel Proust’s small family. The lock of hair becomes an object both outside of time and contained by it. A tufted bow tie of hair purported to belong to Proust now resides in the special collections of the

261 Proust, Vol. IV: Sodom and Gomorrah, pp. 179-180
262 Another
University of Manchester’s neo-gothic cathedral to learning, the John Rylands Library.\(^{263}\) (Fig. 15) As Stella Halkyard, notes of this dark sprig:

> Objects differ from subjects, artefacts are made and organisms grow. Disrupting these distinctions, this lock of hair […] carries its own cultural history within the context of death and mourning rituals that played such a significant and therapeutic role in the past. As itself a ‘vehicle of memory’ this little lock of Proust’s hair defies death and […] forms parts of the monumental body of a Great Writer and acts, as Proust might have said, like ‘a slender bridge thrown between the present and the already distant past, which joins life to history, making history more alive and life almost historical’.\(^{264}\)

Whether cut from the head of the author or not, the little lock of hair in Manchester becomes bound to Proust, becomes both relic and token of the writer, his life and work. As relic, it invites the collapsing of time in favour of devotional belief, reverence, and intrigue. As token, it imparts its power as an object as (believed to be) cut from the body of the beloved subject. As historical

\(^{263}\) Details of the provenance of the Manchester lock of hair are somewhat hazy. There is a strong chance that it may well have to come reside here through Marie Riefstahl-Nordlinger (1876-1961), a cousin of Reynaldo Hahn’s, who lived in Fallowfield, Manchester, and with whom Proust corresponded. Having travelled to Paris to study as a painter after having attended the Manchester School of Art, Riefstahl-Nordlinger dedicated the later years of her life to the promotion and advancement of Proust’s own life and works. A devoted friend and champion of the author, who was an invaluable source of knowledge and information to early academics and scholars of Proust. The Riefstahl-Nordlinger archives are now held in The University of Manchester Library’s Special Collections department (donated in 1974), and comprise some fifty plus volumes by Proust, and secondary books dedicated to Proust, as well as newspaper cuttings, commemorative pamphlets, and exhibition catalogues. For more on the life of Marie Riefstahl-Nordlinger see P. F. Prestwich, The Translation of Memories: Recollections of the Young Proust, from the Letters of Marie Nordlinger (London: Peter Owen, 1999)

It answers nothing, but marks the passing of time, as the cut lock marks the severance from the living body to the deceased subject, an act that can never be reversed, and yet, unequivocally, binds the new viewer or researcher to the image of the writer of the *Search*. In Percy Adlon’s *Céleste*, Mattes appears to hold this knowledge close to her in her own gentle gesturing of the lock of hair she snips from Arndt’s head. Although scripted, directed, conducted, this gesture forms the genesis for an act of remembrance: for those who have read Albaret’s memoirs and recall her own telling of the scene; for those who have read the *Search* and remember the Narrator’s retelling of his childhood terror of having his hair pulled by his uncle; for those who braid their own hair memories to their reading and viewing, just as the reading of the *Search* invites the provocation of our own reminiscences, whether voluntary or involuntary.

The lock of hair held in the hand of Mattes’ Céleste, correspondingly holds her close too. The history of hair jewellery as both object and token of love is familiar. A child’s first lock, worn by its mother in a pendant; or the curl of a beloved, given in truth and pressed, encased close to the chest of their betrothed; or the last strands of the departed loved one, carried always as memento mori and talisman to contain all at once life lost, grief felt, and a new present beyond, hair both collapses linear time and commands that it play on. Mattes, in her enactment of Albaret’s memory (already at once divided by fifty years of life lived since the day of Proust’s departure and her retelling of the scene to Georges Belmont, to be recorded and then translated for this English reader, and also translated into German for Adlon and other readers), marks the departure of her beloved employer, the end of his writing, the ending of his memory-seeking and the beginning of reading. Cutting the locks of hair,

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265 Another lock of Proust’s hair resides in the collections at ‘le Maison de Tante Léonie’, the Musée de Marcel Proust at Illiers-Combray that was the home of his maternal aunt Elisabeth and uncle Jules and where the author spent his summers as a child, reworking the location as the home of the Narrator’s aunt whom he would visit in her bedroom on Sunday mornings, sipping tea, the memory of which pours forth from the madeleine crumbs of the early pages of the *Search*, and from which, eventually, the novel will be written into being.
distributing one first to Robert Proust, and then keeping for herself, Céleste marks the end of the familial life she lived within Proust’s apartment (first at 102 boulevard Haussmann, briefly at rue Laurent-Pichat, and, finally, at 44 rue Hamelin) and takes with her too the life of family before and beyond her that she had come to know (of all that she has learned of Proust’s childhood at his homes of 9 boulevard Malesherbes, and at 45 rue de Courcelles, where both of his parents had died, the arrondissements of the Search, the Champs-Élysées of his youth, and the dome of the Madeleine Church which could be glimpsed over the rooftops of boulevard Haussmann).

Tied up in the little strands of the filmed lock of hair are all at once the life of Proust, the history of the Search and his life-works, the recreated Proust, the memoirs of Albaret, her own life shared with him. As Bruce Robbins reminds us, in The Servant’s Hand, ‘the word “family” derives from the Latin word famulus, or “servant.”’266 “You must come with the family, Céleste”, Robert Proust told Albaret on the morning of his brother’s funeral, “No one was closer to him than you.”267 In the small world they built together from which the enormous world of the Search spawned, Proust and Albaret stand as both family together, subverting the separations between blood relations and servants and uniting as one household whose sole purpose the progression towards the ‘Fin’ of the Search. ‘Death,’ continues Robbins, ‘gives servants the unaccustomed right to be heard’.268

Like the news of death, they [the servants] cluster around endings, and thus coincide powerfully with the author’s naked intention to generate

267 Albaret, Monsieur Proust, p. 362
268 Robbins, The Servant’s Hand, p. 123. Whilst Robbin’s subject here is the role of the servant in English eighteenth-century literature and theatre, (this chapter title being ‘The Servant as Narrator’, pp. 91-130), it is argued that his approach remains appropriate material for consideration when applied to Céleste, as, in this approach, she is being read as simultaneously, narrator (of her own memoirs), character (of Adlon’s film and Proust’s novel), and individual (she who is approached to speak her memories, to be represented on film, and to asked by Proust to tell her own memories to him for his own writing).
coherence. They obtrude into the text at “that limit,” in Walter Benjamin’s phrase, “at which he invites the reader to a divinatory realization of the meaning of life by writing ‘Finis.’ To bracket the action, to speak within or simply occupy the frame of a scene, chapter, or instalment, confers upon the novelistic servant, as upon the theatrical prologue and epilogue, a relative but appreciable hermeneutic authority, capable of magnifying thematic hints that may be slight in themselves.  

Céleste Albaret, in occupying the very frame that was Proust’s life-in-writing, allows for the realization of his own ‘Finis’, the ‘Fin’ of the Search. The cutting of the lock of hair in Percy Adlon’s Céleste, allows for the final cut of the film. Having moved through the clock time (Father Time) of the ticking hours that collapsed into the years of Proust’s writing (“I ran hither and thither as if it were noon instead of midnight. I’d got so used to turning day into night”), and beyond women’s time (the ‘cyclical’ and ‘monumental’ temporalities ‘traditionally linked to female subjectivity’), Céleste provides the sanctuary of family time that embraces the anxiety to finish and to withhold from the end of writing, that holds off the clocks but keeps the consistency and security of routine.

Now I realize M. Proust’s whole object, his whole great sacrifice for his work, was to set himself outside time in order to rediscover it. When there is no more time, there is silence. He needed that silence […]  

And, finally, after the silence, comes the rustle of pages, the beginning of a new time, of a future reading, of a past remembered:

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270 Mavor, Reading Boyishly, p. 391, quoting Céleste Albaret, Monsieur Proust, p. 49
272 Albaret, Monsieur Proust, p. 50
I only parted from M. Proust in the cemetery, and even then I didn’t believe it.

And then one day a strange thing happened. Coming out of the apartment, were we had stayed—Odilon, my sister [Marie Gineste], and I—to finish putting things in order, I suddenly noticed the window the bookshop nearby on rue Hamelin. It was all lit up, and behind the glass were the published works of M. Proust, arranged in threes.  

As Adlon’s Céleste draws to a close, Eva Mattes’ bowed head raises up and looks up to the right, off-camera. Her face momentarily illuminated, darkness surrounding her, the film fades to black and the credits begin to roll. With her ‘FIN’ comes the movement out of the movie theater, or the viewing time, and back out into clock time, of twenty-four seven time, of time outside of the film. Céleste Albaret, represented here, once again, provides the silence that allows for the movement between two worlds, of reality and of remembering. Celestial time here, is one that illuminates.

273 Ibid., p. 362
Chapter 3

“That girl will bring you nothing but trouble”: Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive* (2000)

Madeleine Time is the movement of Proust’s *Search* from literature to film in Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive* (2000). It moves by drawing attention to absence, to missingness, as traced from Akerman’s earliest works, to her final film, when read through and alongside her re-representation of Proust’s elusive female character Albertine Simonet. In *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975) and *La Captive* (2000), Chantal Akerman, the late, lesbian, Belgian filmmaker of Jewish descent, disrupts the boundaries of desire on film by colouring her pictures with love. The films in turn speak of mother, lover, and self: true to Proust in a form that becomes their content.

Marcel Proust’s fifth and sixth volumes of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, *La Captive* and *La Fugitive* (originally *La Prisonnière* and *Albertine disparue*, and in Moncrieff and Kilmartin’s English translations *The Captive* and *The Fugitive*), write of entrapment, anxiety, jealousy, the mad afflictions of wanting and possession. The Narrator wants to know all of Albertine Simonet, an orphan of lower social ranking, first seen and selected from the band of girls at the seaside at Balbec in the summer, whom he has moved into his Paris apartment. The existence is uneasy, bliss soon becoming only momentary, instead often stunted, stumbling, unhappy, and unbelieving. In the sixth volume, *The Fugitive*, she flees, escaping through a window, and the anguished Narrator comes to learn that she has been killed in a riding accident. Only from her death comes the realisation of her profound impact upon him. In Chantal Akerman’s films, there is no disappearance, only absence, missing-ness. There is much missing in Akerman, and it stems from the maternal. Her mother, Nathalia, a Polish Jew, an Auschwitz survivor, lost her own mother to the Shoah. She would never, could never, talk to Chantal about the horror of that past. In the empty hole of her own mother’s silences of her own genealogical past, Akerman’s films are coloured by untruths and fictions woven together, with a desire to know her own History, *Her-story*. And yet, like Albertine the orphan, Akerman chose, or, perhaps, rather, she saw herself faced with no choice, but to follow a life where she was neither displaced nor at home – always moving,
always making, resisting categorization or allegiance to any one particular school of thought, yet returning consistently to themes surrounding her own identity politics. As in Proust, the devotion and adherence to the mother is enormous, possessive, but controlled and driven by love.

In *Jeanne Dielman*—the revolutionary 201 minute long, long film made by the then twenty-five year old Akerman—the hygienic tones of the post-war domestic (roles, interiors, cleaning, prostitution, widow-hood) are overridden by her dedication of the film to her mother. For Akerman, Jeanne was ‘every woman in my life that I had ever known’.274 Making in the kitchen, earning in the bedroom, scouring in the bathroom, feeding at the dining table, only venturing outdoors with a purpose, a schedule and a shopping list, Delphine Seyrig’s Jeanne is an exercise in durational devotion, control, and an exactitude that becomes truly manifest and powerful in Akerman’s depiction of its fatal (and freeing) unravelling.275 In *La Captive* –inspired by (as opposed to a direct, informed, adaptation of) the volume of Proust’s novel of the same name—the mess of rich surfaces-without-substance are smeared with both beauty and disdainful half-truths, whilst pseudo-relations mark desire as bound to sexual want without union.276 Here, the lovers share a screen, a bed scene, a car drive,

“I grew up reading Proust all my life and he’s very dear to me. After my last film, “Sud” was so poorly received, I needed something to rejuvenate me. My
but never harmonious bliss, no mutual *jouissance*. The protagonists, Simon (Stanislas Merhar) and Ariane (Sylvie Testud),\(^{277}\) are separate, closed off, despite being laid out before the viewer through Akerman’s slow, steady, not-too-close-but-close-enough shots. Simon, fixated, cannot understand lesbian love—he hurtles to remove Ariane from the company of opera singer Léa, played by Akerman favourite Aurore Clément—yet he cannot live either with or without it. Femininity becomes Simon’s obsession, he is captivated, unsettled in his central role—a leading male character a rare focus in an Akerman film.\(^{278}\) The director writes her own genealogy through her female stars – Delphine Seyrig in *Jeanne*, Aurore Clément, and Sylvie Testud are all beloved by the camera, their presences throughout Akerman’s oeuvre proclaiming woman, women’s love, and love of women as the heart of her practice. Each of these return women’s love to the mother, to the maternal line. Chantal Akerman died on October 5\(^{th}\) 2015 in Paris, aged 65. In her final work, ‘a treatise on space and time’;\(^{279}\) released following her mother Nelly’s [Natalia Akerman] death, and

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\(^{277}\) The first role for Merhar in an Akerman production, he would go on to play another leading male in 2011 in *La Folie Almayer/Almayer’s Folly*, inspired by Joseph Conrad’s 1895 debut novel. In 2004, Testud starred in Akerman’s *Demain on déménage/Tomorrow We Move*, again alongside another of her favoured female actors, Aurore Clément.

\(^{278}\) Clément played Anna in *Les Rendez-vous d’Anna* (1978), and starred in *Toute une nuit* (1982), before joining Testud and Merhar as Léa, the lesbian opera singer whom Ariane goes to hear, and whom Simon steals her away from in a panicked, forceful, comedic scene in which Ariane is led hurriedly out of the venue, still clutching her champagne glass, her silver heels (present throughout, and made all the more present by Akerman’s sound direction, the heels heightened against the stone staircases, polished floors, seemingly never quite in sync with Simon’s steps) quick-clacking as he grips her arm, trying to regain a hold over her, to bring her back to him, away from the world of women that he himself cannot access.

\(^{279}\) Andréa Picard, ‘We Can’t Go Home Again: Chantal Akerman’s *No Home Movie*, CinemaScope, Issue 64, (Dec., 2015) http://cinema-
saddly, at the time of her own, *No Home Movie* captures the final years of her mother’s life in her Brussels apartment, as seen through the frames of hand-held cameras, doorways, and the computer screen windows of Skype conversations. Often, Nelly will not let Chantal go, she is reluctant to talk on the camera (somewhat confused by the new technology but delighted in its allowing her to see the moving image of her daughter, the camera window contained within computer screen, framed within film-camera screen layering becoming a poignant point of both contact and distance) but even more reluctant to part, to hit ‘End’ on the call button. She beams with pride and pours out her admiration for her ‘beautiful Chantal’. The love between mother and

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[280] *No Home Movie* had premiered at Locarno Film Festival, Locarno, Switzerland, in August 2015. Akerman’s final solo exhibition, *NOW* opened at The University of Westminster’s Ambika P3 gallery on 29th October and ran until 6th December 2015. The UK premiere of *No Home Movie* screened by *A Nos Amours* (curated by Joanna Hogg and Adam Roberts) at London’s Regent Street Cinema on 30th October. Akerman, who had been very much involved in the exhibition arrangements (and, according to Claire Atherton, had been delighted with the vastness and strangeness of the gallery’s belly-of-the-beast vast underground concrete car-park setting), had been due to attend and speak at the film screening that would mark the triumphant finale of *A Nos Amours*’ year-long retrospective screenings of almost her entire filmography. Following the sad and sudden news of Chantal’s death on 5th October (reported as suicide by French newspaper *Le Monde*), her younger sister, Sylviane (a recurring, caring presence on screen in their mother’s home), travelled from Paris to attend the screening, whilst long-time editor, Claire Atherton (who had worked with Akerman since *D’Est* in 1993) introduced the film to a packed and moved theatre, paying tribute to and celebrating the life and work of her friend and collaborator.

[281] The Skype calls feature at various points over the course of *No Home Movie*. Nelly, guided sometimes by a carer or housekeeper and sometimes by her younger daughter, Sylviane, speaks to a Chantal who is often on the move. In New York or in Israel, or preparing to travel to Venice for the Biennale, Akerman seems busy, restless, active, flustered. Sometimes she calls from her apartment in Ménilmontant in Paris’s 20th arrondissement where she had lived for over twenty years. Considered by Nicole Brenez in her interview with the director to be an ‘underprivileged district of Paris’, Akerman refuses this label, instead delighting in Ménilmontant’s ‘hybrid neighborhood’ where ‘the building across the way includes 89 different nationalities’ and where she has witnessed the ‘children grow up, the building decay’, whilst ‘nobody does anything.’ A place of fluidity in peoples but stagnation in the city’s financial investment, a neighborhood seemingly ‘left to its own devices’ and one of outsiders coming together in one space. The ideal location for a nomadic film
daughter, their roles now reversed, draws them closer together than they have ever previously been in the space of Akerman’s works:

“So much love is coming out of her, and I was not aware of that,” Ms. Akerman said. Referring to her mother’s unwillingness to let one long-distance chat come to a close […] “I knew she loved me, but when I see that Skype moment, it’s really like a love affair between us.”

*No Home Movie* shows Akerman as childless daughter becoming a carer to her mother. Moving towards the maternal, the film summons Roland Barthes’ writing in *Camera Lucida* of nursing and caring for his own beloved mother in her final days. He writes, ‘Ultimately I experienced her, strong as she had been, my inner law, as my feminine child… I who had not procreated, I had, in her very illness, engendered my mother.’ Neither Akerman nor Barthes would procreate (their family lines extending instead through their siblings), but both present to their viewer or reader a maternal caring, performed by adult children, that seeks to comfort the mother at home in her movement towards death.

In *La Captive*, Akerman returns Ariane (as Proust’s Albertine) to the sea, to her watery home always moving. (Like Madeleine in *Vertigo*, leaping into the Pacific Ocean, she is unafraid of the power of water.) This sea home colours Ariane’s land-locked existence with Simon (from the first Super8 footage at the beach, to her blue slip dresses and foamy silk scarves, to her final, fatal swim). Aphrodisite-like, her apparent emergence from a watery womb (and, cyclically, this becomes her tomb) makes aware the missing mother figure. As Carol Mavor has noted, ‘la mer’ [the sea] is never too far away from ‘la mère’ [the maker who struggles to identify in a location a home, a residing without roots, as it were. See Brenez, ‘Chantal Akerman: The Pajama Interview’.


283 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 72
mother]. In *No Home Movie*, footage of Akerman’s bodiless shadow waves as she paddles in the shallow, lapping waters at a beach in Israel. Filmed on a hand-held camera or perhaps on her mobile phone (she utilises both throughout), her bodiless trace ripples across the screen, moments before returning to Nelly’s apartment, where the kitchen tiles are the same green-blue of Jeanne Dielman’s scrubbed-clean bathroom. In Akerman’s Proustian films, desire pokes holes in the boundaries of film. In their missing-ness—in memory and memory-making—is love, is the mother, is love. As Akerman declares simply in an 2011 interview with Nicole Brenez:

NB: What was your mother’s name?

CA: Leibel

NB: Almost an anagram of ‘Liebe’, German for ‘love’.

The Captive Albertine

*The Captive* and *The Fugitive*, Proust’s fifth and six volumes of *In Search of Lost Time*, create a watery mythological figure of Albertine as always elusive in the Narrator’s Paris apartment ‘imprisonment’. Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive* (2000) makes an appropriation of Proust’s ‘Albertine volumes’ by supplanting her memories of its passages into an atemporal film world contained within Simon’s (the substitute for the Narrator) Paris apartment and his pursuit of his captive Ariane (Akerman’s Albertine) across both his own mental projections and the city. 

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286 Just as Chris Marker has tailed Scottie’s followings of Madeleine across Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958) and San Francisco in his *Sans Soleil* pilgrimage of 1983.
making, from Hollywood to New Wave to New York experimental, nodding to Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958), Godard’s *Le Mépris/Contempt* (1963), Bresson’s *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1945), and Michael Snow’s *Wavelength* (1967). In key analytical and discursive texts from Akerman scholars Emma Wilson, Martine Beugnet and Marion Schmid, Ariane as Albertine is located as both the site and the container from which Simon’s disillusion pours forth. Traced back through Julia Kristeva’s *Proust and the Sense of Time*, the coupling of desire to an ever-increasingly destructive paranoia drives the film towards its fateful seaside ending, Ariane is lost at sea, believed drowned—a marked distinction from Proust’s novel, in which the Narrator learns of Albertine’s death, she having been killed falling from a horse in a riding accident. Ariane’s female body is both screen and projection of the male protagonist’s inability to escape his own fantasies, the basis of which find their ‘origin’ (Kristeva’s word) in the mother’s goodnight kiss and the madeleine memory that evokes and determines the reading encounter of Proust’s great novel. The destructive pull of the fantasy returns Ariane as Albertine to her liquid origins, from tisane to sea. In the resurrection of this memory from which impossible desire pours forth, the madeleine, here as woman, in Akerman’s film, contains a temporality that brings to light its painful yet rapturous dependence on the sense which allows a space for the ‘I’ of the reader to return to. Screening Akerman’s filming of woman—self, lover, or mother—seeks out what the madeleine is, can be, has been, and will be. Desire, mortality, myth, horror and story-making are bound together in reading Akerman’s images, her film-tales. To quote from Kristeva again, here, in Akerman’s captured and captivating madeleines, is a space for watching, and self-observation: ‘I as writer; I as reader; I living, loving and dying.’

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Love, here, comes in the contemplation, projection, and representation of the female form, as screened through Akerman’s reading and manipulation of Proust. Acknowledging Kristeva’s reading of the movement between the Narrator’s mother to the little biscuit in her *Proust and the Sense of Time*, the memory of the madeleine, and its taste as trigger, next is a move from one woman to another through the desire for the closeness of their kiss. In Proust’s fifth and sixth volumes of the *Search, The Captive* and *The Fugitive*, Albertine Simont is the woman onto whom the Narrator’s obsessions become both projected and fixated. Just as Scottie Ferguson projects his fanatic, fetishized memory of the dead ‘Madeleine Elster’ onto the auburn-haired Judy Barton in the second half of Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, so too, Proust’s Narrator projects his fascinations and longing to possess upon the image of Albertine, whom he keeps as mistress in his Parisian apartment. Held in alternating paradoxical states of frustrated pursuit and frenzied stasis at the mercy of Albertine’s intangible nature, the Narrator’s emotional outpourings, his sexual desires, and his dumbfoundedness and anxiety play out across the pages of Proust’s writings. In the claustrophobia of his jealous *amour-fou*, the Narrator spends aching hours, days, and nights ruminating on Albertine’s life with him, her pre-history before him, her moments spent without him, her dreams and her desires, without truly knowing (arguably, without ever truly wanting to know) them, she, her.

The fascination, the intoxication, that surrounds the orphan Albertine (raised by an aunt), is born of the Narrator’s mother’s madeleine, in the written lineage of Aunt Léonie’s tisane, and the grandmother’s ailing presence. Albertine, seemingly all surface, all Fortuny gowns and dinner parties, outings and social climbing, is, rather, filled up with the relations of femininity and female presence that resonate throughout the *Search*. Albertine’s own desires as a woman are repeatedly questioned and sought out—the Narrator is determined to uncover or disprove her presumed lesbian identity, at the risk of his own soundness of mind. Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive* is fixed upon the figure of Ariane, as fixated upon by Simon in his incessant, exasperating drive towards attempting to all at once shield himself from whilst exposing, revealing the
‘true’ version of Ariane, believing knowledge to be the route to power and happiness, a joyous understanding. Instead, Akerman’s *La Captive* presents the manipulation of one loving subject upon another. Revisiting Proust’s *The Captive* without the need to render a faithful retelling—a little like Albertine’s stories of her day’s activities to the ever-despairing Narrator, it is an adaptation that both distances itself and echoes its source, a manipulated memory (all memories are manipulated) of a reading of the text made filmic. Flavours of Proust fill up Akerman’s camera lens, with long takes, shadowy interiors, desperate followings and darkened rooms, sumptuous fabrics, pressed bodies and the returning drive towards the ocean.

**The Captivating Albertine**

In her atemporal staging (costumes, technologies, cars, locations, and interiors are all merged into the same blurred, flattened screen-space, appearing contemporary whilst remaining deliberately, selectively, outside of any specific historical, cultural, or social context), watching becomes a central aspect of absorbing the emotional anxieties of the Proustian drive to consume and be consumed in his longing for Albertine. In the Musée Rodin, as in *Vertigo*’s Palace of the Legion of Honor, the male pursuer follows the female object of fascination. In the Super8 home movie film-within-a-film that opens *La Captive*, Simon’s obsession, the image of Ariane, is projected, writ large within his own home, and yet his inability to speak the language of his lover means he can only touch at, but never hold her. His obsession, poorly disguised as indifference, ultimately, cannot end in possession, only tragedy. ‘Albertine’ writes Anne Carson in Appendix 19 of her dry-humoured, closely observational *The Albertine Workout*, ‘is a person in motion, and her ability to flee or evade Marcel forms a significant part of her desirability.’ In a literal translation, Akerman’s moving image of Ariane, filmed as Albertine, is the person in motion who captivates the desiring Simon as Narrator.

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Eating Simon up with her eyes and her lies, her excursions and her wanderings, Ariane, like Vertigo’s Madeleine, like Albertine, pecks at, nibles at, barely appears to consume anything substantial that might give her more substance, more solidity, before the fetishising male gaze. Albertine, who loves her ices, icy Madeleine who never seems to eat and only sips at her coffee, and sylphlike Sylvie Testud as Ariane, who, in her pale blue slip of a dress, sups only champagne, and falls asleep before she can drink the milk Simon fetches her from the kitchen—each of these stagings of ‘Woman’ become the small morsels from which the Narrator’s or filmmaker’s own obsessive hunger grows ever-stronger. In close scrutiny of the proximities and distances between reading and watching, between written text and filmed image, Emma Wilson contends that this presentation of obsession is stimulated through a drive towards the oral. That is to say, that a taste for the desire that both fills up the text and the screen whilst simultaneously emptying it of any hope of final resolution, stems from the first mouthful of little madeleine cake and pursues the desire for impossible recapturing of memory by attaching an ‘oral bond’ between eater and eaten, writer, director and viewer. Approaching the

291 Marcel Proust, too, Céleste Albaret informs us, was, partial to ices from time to time, sent for from the Ritz. See Céleste Albaret, Monsieur Proust, as told to Georges Belmont, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: New York Review of Books, 2004).
292 Unlike Judy Barton, who loves to dine at Ernie’s, believing it to be a return to a ‘special place’ for she and Scottie, reunited.
294 Indeed, eating played something of a role in Akerman’s own relationship to her work, her family, and her ‘oral bond’ between the world as she chose to work in it, and how she chose to represent or embody herself within it. To quote from her interview with Nicole Brenez in 2011 in response to the question: NB: You always talk about yourself in terms of a fille, girl, daughter […] For you does fille mean not to be a femme, a woman?
[...] CA: Possibly. Probably. I don’t know. I never grew up. I was always an overgrown child. […] I never followed my father’s dream, to have a family. I stayed a girl, the daughter of my mother. […] I was the first child. My mother always scolded me for not eating, she obsessed over food. […] As a teenager, I ate voraciously—which bothered my father, since you had to keep skinny to get married. […] He would have liked a son in my place, so his name would have been carried on. One day I asked him: ‘Have you seen what I’ve done with your
madeleine in Albertine through Ariane is determined by a sensory experience that turns Simon’s ‘reality’ inside out. Desire becomes excessive to the object of his attention. Ariane’s is altogether too much and too unfulfilling for his own desires. In the absence of a nourishing and fulfilling relationship, he attempts to *eat up* the spatial and emotional distance between his loved object and himself. In his kissing her, sustenance is sought but met with resistance. Reading Adam Phillips’ *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored* against Scottie and Madeleine’s 360° whirlwind time-travelling and transporting kiss of Hollywood *Vertigo* against the pressed bodies of the clamouring Simon covering Ariane, kissing goes some way to expanding the notion of the oral bond that is synonymous with the experiencing of madeleine as a moment of too-close all-encompassing presence. Indeed, when Proust’s Narrator recounts a kiss with Albertine, the zoomed-in, telescopic closeness of her face to his becomes blurred, dizzying, fuzzy. All at once there are too many Albertines, too many faces, too much to contend with. As Anne Carson confirms: ‘This pictorial multiplicity of Albertine evolves gradually into a plastic and moral multiplicity. Albertine is not a solid object. She is unknowable. When Marcel brings his face close to hers to kiss, she is ten different Albertines in succession.’

In this dizzying, vertiginous realm, images swirl and memory returns back to the bedroom of Narrator as a child at Combray, and the longing for security, the kiss goodnight from the mother who, like Albertine, is perpetually longed-for and then all at once too close. This oral desire that is coupled to the oral

name?’ He’d read a few articles on me, but it wasn’t enough; in my case I wouldn’t perpetuate his name, so disappointment was predetermined. Brenez, ‘Chantal Akerman: The Pajama Interview’.

In *La Captive*, as in the majority of Akerman’s films, the characters are known only by their first names. Surnames are rare. Jeanne Dielman, however, from the outset is defined both by her surname and her address—‘Dielman’ the ever-present reminder of her widowhood, her husband’s name living on after his death through the might of long-standing societal bindings, ‘Quai du Commerce’, the marker of economy (of the economics of her body as she attempts to make ends meet to care for her son, Sylvian (whose name is surely a tender nod to Akerman’s own younger sister, Sylviane), who will continue the father’s name).


296 Carson, ’38.’, *The Albertine Workout*, p. 14
confusion, the marriage of image, reality, memory and time outside of itself, circles around the open mouth of the desiring Narrator. Akerman’s use of classical music—Mozart’s *Cosi Fan Tutte* and Rachmaninov’s *The Isle of the Dead*—sound out the double motifs of desire and death that surround her filmed woman. Desire and death contend with one another for space. As Martine Beugnet and Marion Schmid’s closely detailed reading of *La Captive* notes, the ailing presence of the character of the grandmother (resuscitated by Akerman from her earlier death in the second volume of Proust’s *Search—The Guermante’s Way*—and here played by Françoise Bertin) is felt within the same walls of the apartment, in the adjoining bedroom to that in which a pyjama-clad Simon masturbates against a seemingly-sleeping Ariane, who ‘awakes’ with the name of “Andrée” (Olivia Bonamy), her friend, and, Simon suspects, her lover, escaping from her lips.²⁹⁷ Contained within the claustrophobic walls of the space of cohabitation that is a kissing-cousin to both the Narrator’s Paris apartment,²⁹⁸ and a muffled echo of Proust’s own cork-lined room at 102 Boulevard Haussmann, in Akerman’s set, each body presses up against the other yet remains closed and selfish to the other, contradictorily experiencing their sharing in total isolation. Jacqueline Rose, in her novel, *Albertine*—an imagined telling of Simonet’s life with the Narrator, as written from her own perspective—opens the story (first published the year after Akerman’s *La Captive* premiered) capturing the atmosphere of this same compressed air. To quote at length here allows for a descriptive and sensory placing of the reader into this interior existence, akin to the experience of viewing Akerman’s long takes of Simon’s dust-sheet covered apartment, his sneezing, horrified retreat upon discovering that Andrée and Ariane have giddily returned home with a

²⁹⁷ Beugnet and Schmid, ‘Ch. 5. Filming Obsession: Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive,*’ in *Proust at the Movies,* pp. 168-204.
²⁹⁸ A nod to cinematic tradition here also, to the half-decorated Rome apartment of Jean-Luc Godard’s ‘film within a film being filmed’ *Le Mépris/Contempt* (1963) in which Brigitte Bardot stars as Camille Javal, the wife of Paul Javal, played by Michel Piccoli, in a home that seems neither to accommodate their frustrations nor their desires, thus holding them in an ever-increasing state of disappointment and longing. See Michael Wood, ‘At the Movies’, *The London Review of Books,* Vol. 38, No. 2 (21 January, 2016), p. 40.
bouquet of fresh flowers, and his watchful gaze out of his bedroom at two
women greeting one another with familiarity and affection down in the street
below:

If you open the windows, you can feel the air move at once. Slowly it
pushes its way through the gap, down the frame and into the room. The
air is heavy, but gathers speed as if collecting itself for a struggle. For a
second I can breathe. I can feel its presence as a type of freedom. But
almost before the breeze has reached me it starts pressing under the
door. Forced by the pull of its own current, it will be making its way
down the corridor to where he waits, suffering his thoughts of me.
I have never opened the windows before and I know he will hear and
read its deadly message. There is perhaps nothing so hard to imagine,
for someone who has never known asthma, as the idea that air can
suffocate. That it does not free but constrains, grips the throat, makes
each fibre convulse, hammers the whole body with its blows. Maybe
that’s why I did it so loudly, made such a fanfare out of my rage. As
much because I don’t really believe that it can kill him, as because I do.
When I first entered this house, it had the wonder of something you
never dare to believe. It felt as if I were breaking in, crossing a sacred
threshold, scaling the walls. I knew I was way out of my class. A home
is not something I could ever feel at ease in. We have that much in
common, straining through our mothers, although in different ways. He
because, even when she is away, she is also here, never releasing her
hold. I because, with consequences that are at times strangely similar, I
never knew mine. I have had the luxury of being lost. It has allowed me
to cast my net wide. He, spoilt for stability and privilege, has contracted
his forces, whittled down his strength. Huddled inside the panic of his
safety, he draws others into the space of his fragile bodily compass and
the unrelenting remit of his mind.

299 In the *Search*, the Narrator, like his author, is an suffering asthmatic. In
Akerman’s film, it is Simon’s “allergies” that plague, haunt, and weary him—
perhaps a physical marker reflecting the impact of Ariane’s fever-inducing
presence.
[...] We have been wrapped in a membrane thin to bursting, even if its fabric is this house’s ancient and more than solid walls. Mostly it has felt like living with someone trying to expel the air out of a balloon. Has he ever realised, I sometimes wonder, how much his conditions of living and loving, far more than his illness, have made it impossible for either one of us to breathe?\footnote{Jacqueline Rose, \textit{Albertine: A Novel} (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 3-4, 6}

Ariane, Albertine, Madeleine and the madeleine too, are all containers, vessels, contained within the narratives of their construction. From the madeleine cakes, moulded from their special tins, filling the mould with their rising forms, Kristeva reminds us of the origins of their shell-shaped origins. Saint-Jacques scallop shell badges worn by pilgrims travelling the Way of Saint James would have journeyed through Proust’s Illiers-Combray en route to Santiago de Compostela.\footnote{See Carol Mavor, \textit{Reading Boyishly: Roland Barthes, J.M. Barrie, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Marcel Proust and D.W. Winnicott} (London & Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 12. A fictional description that seems fitting when read alongside Céleste Albaret’s \textit{Monsieur Proust}, her memoirs of her time spent as Proust’s housekeeper from 1914-1922, his asthma, the shuttered Paris apartments in which they lived over the years, the fear of attacks, of contamination from the exterior world beyond the shuttered and curtained windows, and, in later years, her desperate airing out of his bedroom on the rare occasions when he would venture outdoors to mine for diamond memories, characteristics, details and descriptions from his companions and admirers of the social elite. See Albaret, \textit{Monsieur Proust}.}

As symbols of memory and devotion, the badges are recognised as devotional, displaying their desire to move along a path of experience and reconciliation. The Narrator and Simon are devotees of their madeleine-women, their symbols pinned to their persons and their psyche, body and mind. Kristeva returns the madeleines to their damp origins; from the tea cup to the sea, the little shells of desire are ‘watery’, fluid, liquid, they cannot be held for very long before they slip away. Through Gaston Bachelard’s \textit{Poetics of Space},\footnote{Gaston Bachelard, ‘Chapter 5. Shells’ in \textit{The Poetics of Space}, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994), pp. 105-133} Ariane and Albertine, and Madeleine too are explored as shells of desire. Their construct allows them to be inhabited, to be desired, to be stroked at, touched at, picked up. They have the salty scent of the sea in their grooves and curves.
(described by Ariane through her bathroom screen-wall, scrubbed away at by Jeanne in her sea-green tiled bathroom), as read through artist Esther Teichmann’s beautifully slow, beautifully blue, beautifully nude film piece and accompanying story from her Fractal Scars, Salt Water and Tears series (2012). Both enclosure and enclosed, “‘Everything, indeed,’” Anne Carson quotes from Proust, “‘is at least double.’”

Clasped shut or pried open, the shell-space held by each of these women is prized, desired, and seductive. The fantasy figure can protrude from the body (as ‘the returned Madeleine’ emerges from the made-over Judy Barton), the shell can be empty (as in the blank face of Ariane), and it can be filled up (as the Narrator attempts to pour the image of his desire into Albertine’s being, making a space for his infatuations and anxieties). As both formation and container of the plot (to borrow from Kristeva), these shells drive that narrative back to their origins. Having been pried open, the shell forms an open mouth through which the male protagonist will fall. This projection returns full circle back to the beginnings of Akerman’s La Captive. The Super8 footage returns Ariane to the beach, to the sea, to the company of women, just as the end of Proust’s Search (Vol. VI: Time Regained) returns the Narrator to memory and his urge to write. Ariane, presumed drowned (lost at sea, lost to Simon) after her night swim is pre-empted by Albertine’s early threat at Balbec after a heated argument with the Narrator (in the Search, Vol. IV: Sodom and Gomorrhe) that he would one day drive her to end her life by drowning. As with Vertigo’s Scottie, when he witnesses Madeleine’s attempted suicide by her jumping into the San Francisco Bay, the madeleine-woman’s return to the water charges his masculine desire to its extreme through the presence of imminent death. The impossibility of the prospect of their being swallowed up by the sea, projects a new form of arrest within the male protagonist. As Gilles Deleuze

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notes in his *Proust and Signs*, ‘the loved women [of Proust’s *Search*] are often linked to landscapes that we know sufficiently to long for their reflection in a woman’s eyes but are reflected from a viewpoint so mysterious that they become virtually inaccessible, unknown landscapes: Albertine envelops, incorporates, amalgamates “the beach and the breaking waves.”’

It is Simon’s open mouth that shivers, teeth-chattering back at the viewer at the close of *La Captive*, where Ariane’s bright smile and blue eyes had, 118 minutes earlier, opened the film. Simon’s cold wet cheeks grow steadily closer and closer to the camera, until, at last, his face passes under the frame. As if in a voiceover of Simon’s despairing, helpless, internal monologue, Deleuze asks, ‘How can we gain access to a landscape that is no longer the one we see, but on the contrary the one in which we are seen?’

As in Michael Snow’s *Wavelength* (1967),

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306 Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, p. 8

307 Akerman lived in New York from 1971 to 1972, where, writes Ivone Margulies, ‘she was exposed to minimalist dance, Andy Warhol’s long-duration films, Jonas Mekas’s diary films, and other structural filmmakers. She has mentioned being particularly impressed with Michael Snow’s *La région centrale*, a film whose random camera movements over a human-less landscape “opened [my] mind to the relationship between film and your body, time as the most important thing in film.”’ Quoting Ivone Margulies, ‘*A Matter of Time*’, essay in booklet accompanying *Jeanne Dielman 23, quai du Commerce 1080 Bruxelles*: a film by Chantal Akerman (Criterion Collection DVD, 2009), pp. 4-13, p. 6

Also at: https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1215-a-matter-of-time-jeanne-dielman-23-qui-du-commerce-1080-bruxelles (first accessed, 31/07/2014). Snow’s *Wavelength* (1967) mixes a slowly zooming camera in a fixed interior with manipulated sound and colour to disrupt chronological ‘clock time’ (to borrow a phrase from Jonathan Crary in his *24/7* (2014)), an intense and mesmeric durational piece of film that closes with the camera focused on a framed image of ocean waves, and a piercing high-frequency note reaching its peak. Annette Michelson characterizes *wavelength* as the distillation of suspense: ‘And as the camera continues to move steadily forward, building a tension that grows in direct ratio to the reduction of the field, we recognize, with some surprise, those horizons as defining the contours of narrative, of that narrative form animated by distended temporality, turning upon cognition, toward revelation. Waiting for an issue, we are “suspended” towards resolution.’ See Annette Michelson, ‘“Toward Snow,”’ in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1987), p. 175. As in the closing scene of Akerman’s *La Captive*, sea and sound (here the soaring crescendo of Rachmaninov’s soaring *Isle of the Dead*) culminate in a lasting haunting image before cutting to black.
the viewer is left marked, pierced by an image of the sea, and then abandoned to
darkness. As Proust’s Narrator passes out of memory and into writing (of the
already written text), so too, Simon passes into mourning which permits him to
enter into an understanding of the impossibility of his own desire. The taste of
salty sea-water on his lips (the same saltiness of tears), Simon returns the
viewer to the mother, via Aunt Léonie’s teacup, he is left with the shell, the
empty remains of the desired moment of the longed-for kiss. In grief, desire is
returned to its origin.

I ought to have been happy: I was not. It seemed to me that my mother
had just made me a first concession which must be painful for her, that
this was a first abdication on her part before the ideal she had conceived
for me, and that for the first time she, who was so courageous, was
confessing herself defeated. It seemed to me that, if I had just gained a
victory, it was over her … it seemed to me I had just traced in her soul
the first wrinkle and caused the first white hair to appear.308

Julia Kristeva, in *Proust and the Sense of Time* (1993), reads the familiar scene:

The well-known scene of the kiss withheld at the little boy’s bedtime
[…] has given generations of readers the image of a mother who is
loved voraciously and selfishly. This was a love which involved, right
from the start, a struggle for power, a mingling of violence and
passivity, of desire and contrition. For the moment she yielded, the
moment the kiss was granted, the narrator’s anticipated triumph turned
to bitter regret, and suffering began […]309

From Maman to madeleine via a reading of Georges Sand, memory pours forth
from the bite into a squat little cake. And from the morsel of cake, as we have

seen already, springs desire, the desire for memory past, remembered in a retelling of the Narrator’s writerly present, as remembered backwards from the final volume of Proust’s novel. The cruelty wrapped up in desire brought against the mother in the Narrator’s longing for her goodnight kiss (and her subsequent submission to his wants) proposes a novel that is concerned with emotional power, possession, obsession, and revulsion. Time opens up as a site across which this expanding realm of impressions and responses, both immediate and delayed, move. As Kristeva explains, ‘[…] desire, in its cruelty, goes beyond the temporality of concern, and opens up a place in which signs can develop a spatial dimension by building up sensations.’

The site of the text that pours forth from the madeleine moment of Proust’s opening pages, pre-determined by the desire for the mother, collapses time as a linear experience and instead becomes a construct of sensations, recognised through symbols (of which the madeleine becomes both the first and the last). Kristeva continues:

[…] memory regained bears the imprint of colour, taste, touch and other forms of experience, whilst a distinctive type of writing which transgresses all bounds in its richness of metaphor and its embedding of clauses within one another at the same time destroys and reconstructs the world.

And thus, she determines:

The taste of childhood regained emanates from A la recherche as it ends and comes full circle. We think we are at the beginning, and yet the entire closed spiral made manifest by the last book has already been set into motion, magnetized, to go in search of a deeper level which is certainly that of which has already come to its close. So the circles of metamorphosis work their magic. The child is an adult who recalls

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311 Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, p. 26
having loved with his mouth persons and places that his adult desires regard as merely anodyne.\textsuperscript{312}

In Proust’s spiral, Kristeva reads a Narrator who has written his text into absolution—his painful experiences have come, in adulthood, through recollection to ease his remembered past. And yet, without those first experiences of grief, trauma, anger, passion, the drive for desire towards those who he ‘recalls having loved with his mouth’, the words could not flow. The magic metamorphosis circles at work in Proust contain both cruelty and desire at loggerheads with one another in the mouths of the loving Narrator and the mouths of his longed-for others. In order to become inoffensive or pain relieving, the now-anodyne memories were first experienced in the full throes of passion and suffering. From here, the grief that follows the pleasure of their original sensation allows for a future understanding of the potential drive towards destruction of the longed-for thing, in order to prevent its destruction of the sought ideal:

And it is because they contain thus within themselves the hours of the past that human bodies have the power to hurt so terribly those who love them, because they contain the memories of so many joys and desires already effaced for them, but still cruel for the lover who contemplates and prolongs in the dimension of Time the beloved body of which he is jealous, so jealous that he may even wish for its destruction.\textsuperscript{313}

It is jealousy that destroys Scottie in Hitchcock’s \textit{Vertigo}. He is driven towards frenzy in discovering that Judy has deceived him in playing her role in Gavin Elster’s plot to kill his wife, the ‘real’ Madeleine Elster. As unsuspecting witness, Scottie believed himself responsible, in part, for her death. In his jealousy over his memory of Madeleine (the role played by Judy, and in turn played by Kim Novak), and a desire to resurrect her in the image his memory of

\textsuperscript{312} Ibid., p. 30
her, Scottie drives himself to a point of madness and a double-edged sadomasochistic and necrophilic drive to make the newly-discovered Judy over into the likeness of the dead Madeleine. Moulding Judy brings about the revelation of the true shell that destroyed his desires for Madeleine, and the fate for Judy is accidental death by falling from the heights of the bell-tower at Mission San Juan Bautista (a repeat image of the first death of Madeleine that Scottie believes himself to have witnessed), driven on in his anger, conquering of his fear of heights (a vertigo that is both emotional and bodily). The destruction of the beloved body through the unveiling of the shell of Judy’s living lie brings about Scottie’s desire to regain a hold of his now-lost past.

Whilst Hitchcock’s Scottie never fully intended to destroy the image of Madeleine in Judy, the finality of her physical departure signals Vertigo’s end, returning the film to its beginning, where we see Scottie looking down, out over

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314 In the recent documentary film Hitchcock/Truffaut that celebrates French New Wave director François Truffaut’s 1962 interviews with Alfred Hitchcock (conducted with the aid of translator Helen G. Scott, and first published by Éditions Robert Laffont in 1966), a significant portion of time is allocated to the discussion of Vertigo by an all-male score of individually interviewed contemporary filmmakers (Wes Anderson, Martin Scorsese, David Fincher, Paul Schrader, and Richard Linklater to name but a few). The ‘transformation scene’ of Judy into Madeleine at the Empire Hotel takes central focus, with a overlaid fragment of interview recording presents Hitchcock as in a voiceover, repeating a much-quoted passage of the Hitchcock/Truffaut book in which the director recalls his fascination with the story, of a man’s obsession with the image of a dead woman. In no uncertain terms, and with his trademark deadpan, guttural delivery, Hitchcock declares of Scottie’s desire: ‘To put it plainly, the man wants to go to bed with a woman who’s dead; he is indulging in a form of necrophilia.’ See Kent Jones, dir., Hitchcock/Truffaut (2015) Arte France, Artline Films, and Cohen Media Group, dist. Dogwoof Ltd. For published quote, see François Truffaut & Alfred Hitchcock with Helen G. Scott, Hitchcock/Truffaut, Revised Edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), p. 244

315 As Sianne Ngai writes of Vertigo in her chapter ‘Anxiety’ in Ugly Feelings: ‘For his [Scottie’s] notably anxious mindset could be described equally well in terms of a horizontal oscillation between two sites of feminine self-discontinuity, embodied in the figures of “Madeleine” and Judy (both played by Kim Novak).’ She continues, ‘Insistently nonidentical to themselves, the women [Judy and Madeleine, as well as Carlotta and the real Madeleine Elster] are symbolically negative presences, defined more by who they are not than by who they are. Thus, the film’s romantic pathos resides in Scottie’s inability or refusal to perceive Judy as Judy, seeing her rather as not Madeleine.’ Sianne Ngai, ‘Chapter 5. Anxiety’, Ugly Feelings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 209-246, p. 216
the space below, a void and a great depth of space between him and his future and past existences below.\textsuperscript{316} In a similar movement, whilst the Narrator did not destroy the mother through his actions, his persistence in his selfish endeavour, to obtain from her what could only be bestowed upon him by her, is an exertion of power that foretells the actions of his quest in his pursuit of his knowledge of Albertine Simonet, his mistress, lover and captive.

The fifth volume of \textit{A la Recherche, La Prisonnière} is Proust’s tale of entrapment, of confines, conflicting emotions, sexuality, lies, longing and despair contained within the figure of Albertine, whom, suspecting her of lesbianism, the Narrator has convinced to live with him, away from the distractions of \textit{Gomorrah}, as his mistress in his Paris apartment. In Akerman’s film, the figure of Ariane as screened through Simon’s desire for her resonates with the words of Luce Irigaray in her ‘Così Fan Tutti’:

\begin{quote}
If there is a such a thing—still—as feminine pleasure, then, it is because men need it in order to maintain themselves in their own existence. It is useful to them: it helps them bear what is intolerable in their world as speaking beings, to have a soul. Foreign to that world: a fantasmatic one.\textsuperscript{317}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Panacea and Poison}

“That girl will bring you nothing but trouble.”\textsuperscript{318}

Albertine Simonet, who arrives in Proust’s manuscripts around 1913, is the echo of the Narrator’s mother’s kiss, projected onto the lips of his lover.\textsuperscript{319} In

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{316} In contrast – partly in order to meet the sensitivities of Hollywood censorship – to Boileau-Narcejac’s Flavières, who strangles Renee at the end of \textit{D’Entre les morts}, from which \textit{Vertigo} was adapted.
\item \textsuperscript{317} Luce Irigaray, ‘Così Fan Tutti’, in \textit{This Sex Which is Not One}, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 86-105, p. 96
\end{itemize}
her reading of Proust in *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, Kaja Silverman locates Albertine as the site in which the mother-as-lover allows the narrative to move most succinctly between the realm of childhood longing, through adolescent drive and remembered passion. Partnered to Kristeva’s ‘Stabat Mater’, which frames Freud’s reading of primary narcissism in the longing of the child to sustain himself through an awareness of self-recognition and self-love following the separation from the mother, Silverman writes:

Marcel’s relationship with Albertine dramatizes the reversibility implicit in narcissistic desire, the possibility of moving back and forth between the maternal position and that of the adolescent or child. The narrator desires that character not only as if he were the mother, but as if she were the mother. Thus in *La Prisonnière*, he describes himself talking to Albertine ‘at one moment as the child that I had been at Combray used to talk to my mother, [and] at another as my grandmother used to talk to me,’ and he characterizes his love for her as both ‘filial and maternal’. Elsewhere, Marcel suggests that he keeps Albertine by his bedside not only as a daughter, but as a mistress, a sister, and a mother.

At once incestuous, as well as self-pleasuring and self-destructive, Albertine, for the Narrator, presents a relationship of parts to a whole, who continues to suffer the trauma of having been separated from the mother. In his drive to return to the whole, to re-join with the mother through the kiss, this very same union drives his jealousy in his inability to do so. In his inability to ‘conquer’ Albertine, to claim her kiss as truly his own, her elusiveness drives the Narrator further into himself, and his own narcissistic longings. As Beugnet and Schmid determine:

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319 Around the same time, notes Kristeva, that Céleste Albaret is becoming established in her role as housekeeper in the writer’s household at 102 Boulevard Haussmann. See Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, p. 22

320 This essay first appeared, under the title “Hérétique de l’amour,” in *Tel Quel*, no. 74 (Winter, 1977).

The young woman is both panacea and poison for the neurotic and hypersensitive Narrator: a substitute for the all-important mother of ‘Combray’, she is the only person who can calm his anxieties with her soothing presence and good-night kiss, yet, paradoxically, she is, of course, also the one who constantly provokes these anxieties in the first place.\textsuperscript{322}

“One only loves that which one does not entirely possess,” says Marcel’, so Anne Carson recalls.\textsuperscript{323} Emma Wilson develops this further:

Albertine cannot be known, unless this interminable passage from structure to structure is itself knowledge and our other notions of what it is to know are the products of a lingering infantile wish for comfort or mastery.\textsuperscript{324}

Thus, from mother to cake to tisane to lover to mistress to anxiety and back to the goodnight kiss through the lover’s refusal to return the love within the confines of the Narrator’s structure of obsession, Albertine cannot be known because the Narrator refuses to free himself of his wish for mastery, born of his childhood longing for a kiss that should never, or would never, sustain him through the night.

As a narrative construct, ‘Albertine’, notes Wilson, ‘becomes necessarily entrapped within the narrator’s thoughts as a ricocheting series of suspicions intensifies both his suffering and his desire.’\textsuperscript{325} Wilson’s concern, in her

\textsuperscript{323} Carson, ‘52.’, The Albertine Workout, p. 18
\textsuperscript{325} Wilson, ‘Reading Albertine’s Sexuality’, p. 79
analysis, is how this entrapment within the space of thought—of Albertine’s seeming untruths, of her seeming lesbian passions, of her mistrust under the scrutinizing gaze of the Narrator—in turn imparts upon the reader of Proust. In this ‘space of repetition and recurrence where s/he is forever unsure of what is real and what is imagined,’ Proust’s reader is situated, purposefully, with ‘no easy solutions to this uncertainty’. She continues:

In this sense Proust gives his reader few privileges over the narrator: our view is no more panoramic than his own, and although we may wish to come to some reckoning with the ‘truth’ or otherwise of the experiences imagined, we are necessarily in no position to do so. Thus the challenge to interpretation posed by Albertine is the delight and the torment of the reader as much as the narrator. Through the figure of Albertine the narrator may come to reread his childhood and his tortured desires, while the reader is him/herself drawn to reflect on the very construction of sexuality through interpretative process.

In Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive*, Proust’s Narrator becomes Simon and Ariane replaces Albertine. The name of ‘Simon’ is also a distant echo of Albertine’s surname, ‘Simonet’, coupling the desires of both male and female protagonists. Incidentally, Ariane is a small shift from the ‘inaccessible’ Oriane, the cousin of the Marie, the Princesse de Guermantes. In an attempt to further sustain the lineage of the ‘purest blood in France’, Oriane is married to her cousin Basin. However, this ‘loveless and semi-incestuous marriage, in which both partners shared the same grandparents, was to produce no heirs’, an ironic union intended to protect the bloodline instead succeeded in destroying it. This link between text and film seems to preempt the fateful entrapment of Ariane.

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326 Ibid., p. 87
327 Ibid. Wilson expands further still: ‘The reader also is engaged in this alluring yet fruitless quest; his/her passions are aroused in the discovery of knowledge about Albertine; s/he is encouraged to question his/her hermeneutic desires with the rigour and with the lack of resolution of the pained narrator. And it is here that the text persuades us to perceive the patterns of reflection between the desiring process within the text and the reading process of the text.’, p. 92
328 See Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, p. 43
within Simon’s Parisian apartment. To film La Captive is to fill the screen with ‘the motifs of alterity and entrapment – spatial, social, emotional or [and] sexual.’

Akerman’s decision to film an adaptation lifted from the Search was somewhat Proustian in its approach. Having first considered the idea in 1975, after the release of her most renowned film, Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles, it would take the then twenty-five year old Akerman a further twenty-five years before she could find herself ready to turn to a novel for her film’s source. In an interview with Frédéric Bonnaud, she declares:

I read Proust for the first time when I was an adolescent, but not from beginning to end, just bits and pieces here and there, encouraged by a cousin who was my main intellectual influence. And it immediately fascinated me, especially La Prisonnière, first of all because it touched upon my sexual awakening, but also because I think that I was already fascinated by enclosed spaces, imprisonment. It was as though Proust had written La Prisonnière for me.

Adopting the male protagonist’s viewpoint as a filmic eye, screened through her own directing female self, Akerman opens up Proust to cinema. Wilson recognises two distinctly ‘madeleinesque’ references that move between text and film:

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330 Beugnet and Schmid, ‘Filming Obsession’, p. 171

331 Jeanne Dielman’s protagonist played by Delphine Seyrig, who in 1961, had played the mysterious ‘brown-haired woman’ of Alain Resnais’ Last Year at Marienbad, a film whose stylistic influences and motifs resonate in closer readings of Akerman’s La Captive.

Firstly, to the illusion of the female face as remembered maternal image, as first object of desire recalled in subsequent love relations, and, secondly, to the popular cinematic illusion of woman as enigma, as mysterious vanishing other.\textsuperscript{333}

Reading Akerman’s \textit{La Captive}, Wilson considers ‘the possibility that the elusiveness and unknowability which inhere in Albertine may also have meaning within a female erotic imagery.’\textsuperscript{334} With Albertine, ‘the fantasies of her erotic practice are far more crucial to the text than the ‘truth’ of her sexuality or her gender,’ just as ‘Ariane is forever sought, called, recalled and lost in the permutations of the film.’\textsuperscript{335}

\textsuperscript{333} Emma Wilson, ‘“Les Rendez-vous d’Ariane”: Chantal Akerman’s \textit{La Captive}, L’Esprit Créateur, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Fall, 2002), p. 61
\textsuperscript{334} Ibid., p. 62. Wilson notes that Akerman’s most direct representation of sexual relations between women comes in the third part of her 1974 film \textit{Je tu il elle}. ‘Ivone Margulies writes indeed of “love-making,” finding in the film the seeming obverse of the invisibility and unknowability diagnosed in Proust. Yet Akerman has refused to let \textit{Je tu il elle} be categorized as a lesbian film. Margulies affirms this reluctance by drawing attention to the pronominal shifters which form the title of the film, seeing the film promoting the instability of identity categories.’, p. 62. Quoting Ivone Margulies, \textit{Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman’s Hyperrealist Everyday} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 126
\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., pp. 67-68. Wilson here is making reference to Albertine having been read by various scholars as a means to reading Proust’s own sexuality through biography: Alfred Agostinelli, his friend and chauffeur, became a pilot and crashed his monoplane on one of his first flights on 13 May 1914. Wilson takes up the case of Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick’s questioning of these ‘gender-centric’ readings: ‘For instance, if Albertine and the narrator are of the same gender, should the supposed outside loves of Albertine, which the narrator obsessively imagines as imaginatively inaccessible to himself, then, maintaining the female gender of their love object, be transposed in orientation into heterosexual desires? Or, maintaining the transgressive same-sex orientation, would they have to change the gender of their love object and be transposed into male homosexual desires? Or, in a homosexual framework, would the heterosexual orientation after all be more transgressive?’ Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick, \textit{Epistemology of the Closet} (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 233. Wilson determines that these very questions serve to support the argument that to choose to read Albertine ‘as’ a man, finds no strength or grounding in attempting to either clarify or deny the Narrator’s heterosexuality within the novel. See Wilson., p. 70
La Captive opens with a nocturnal shot of an unnamed sea. Shot on 35mm, the focus is slow, introduced moodily, with the sound of waves crashing. These waves will haunt the film in its cyclical movement, it will return to the sea at its end. As the film ‘proper’ begins, the click and whirr of a film projector is heard, replacing the waves, superseding the natural with the mechanical. The ‘silent images of the Super8 film which opens La Captive’, write Beugnet and Schmid, ‘make a nostalgic reference to A l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs where Marcel first meets Albertine and her ‘little band’ at the beach at Balbec in Vol. IV: Sodom and Gomorrah.336

Pressing deeper, Wilson evocatively describes Akerman’s opening move:

The film cuts from images of the sea to mnemonic traces of a lost aquatic world, a mirage or memory collage. We see a long shot of girls running into the sea. The camera then comes into their circle in the waves. The water here is milky and viscous, expressly tactile, as the waves collide with the female figures. Spray, iridescent, is caught between the camera and the forms it films, adding sensory proximity to the distanced viewing process. The camera is always moving, as the projected image itself also flickers almost imperceptibly on the screen, its images in part evanescent, retrospective, a fragile imprint of a subjective memory.337

We are witnessing the entrance into the second of Gilles Deleuze’s circles of signs that he reads through the Search. In Proust and Signs, he writes, ‘the second circle is that of love.’338 ‘To fall in love,’ states Deleuze, ‘is to individualize someone by the signs he bears or emits. It is to become sensitive

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336 Beugnet and Schmid, ‘Filming Obsession’, p. 174
337 Wilson, “Les Rendez-vous d’Ariane”, p. 60
338 Deleuze, Proust and Signs, p. 7. For Deleuze, the first circle of signs is that of the ‘worldly’, that is, where the ‘sign appears as [stands for] the replacement for an action or a thought.’ (p. 6). The third circle follows love, and is ‘that of sensuous impressions or qualities… madeleine, steeples, trees, cobblestones, napkin, noise of a spoon or a pipe’ (p. 11). Finally, ‘at the end of the Search’ comes understanding of the circles of signs that have gone before, that ‘the world of art is the ultimate world of signs… finding their meaning in an ideal essence’ (p. 13).
to these signs, to undergo an apprenticeship to them (thus the slow
individualization of Albertine in the group of young girls) [...] love is born
from and nourished on silent interpretation.' The young man, Simon, watches
his footage of a group of girls filmed as they play in the waters at the edge of
the sea where it meets the beach. An image comes into focus; a face is singled
out from the clustered, happy heads. Sylvie Testud’s Ariane is the object of
Simon’s almost-unblinking gaze. Projected within a projection (a home-
movie film-within-a-film), Ariane becomes the fixated-upon image. (Fig. 16)
From hereon in, note Beugnet and Schmid, the focus on Ariane becomes
‘relentless, isolating and exclusive’. They continue:

[…] in his obsessive drive to possess, Simon will end up losing himself
as well as the object of his desire. Eventually stepping in front of the
projector near the screen in order to come close to the image of his
beloved, the young man blocks the light. He transforms into a dark
silhouette, a gaping hole that threatens to absorb the lover’s image into
its void. As she does at the end of the film proper, Ariane runs away and
seeks refuge in the sea.

For Deleuze, the ‘beloved, appears as ‘as a sign, a “soul”… expresses a possible
world unknown to us, implying, enveloping, imprisoning a world that must be
deciphered, that is, interpreted.’ Here, Ariane is sign or soul of Akerman’s
cinema in her representation of Proust’s Albertine. A ’mise en scène based on a
film within a film’ (a mise-en-ebyme), this first sequence of La Captive singles
out obsession as the driving force behind the entire future-film, and drives it

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339 Ibid., p. 7
340 ‘Testud’s image’, writes Wilson, ‘is self-referentially cinematic’, recalling
the ‘image of the female face in La Jetée (Chris Marker, 1962), with
comparable gaze and wind-blown hair. This image hovers between memory and
fantasy; it is an image remembered as a screen or defense […] In La Captive
Akerman asks what it means to recall or imitate such images in her female-
authored cinema.’ Quoting Wilson, ‘'Les Rendez-vous d’Ariane’, p. 66
341 Beugnet and Schmid, ‘Filming Obsession’, p. 189
342 Ibid., p. 189
343 Deleuze, Proust and Signs, p. 7
back with a circular and repetitive urge. Beugnet and Schmid note in this moment of Akerman’s work a Proustian suspension and subversion of linear time where ‘it is difficult to assess whether the Super8 sequence is an introductory part of the film, or if it belongs to a different ‘present’, as a trace of the lost Ariane, while the film proper is, in fact, a flashback.

Already, Ariane is an unknowable kinswoman to the Narrator’s Albertine. Simon and the Narrator look on, fixated by the projected image before them: ‘while she [Ariane] returns the gaze unflinchingly, the long and recurrent close-ups on her face yield nothing. […] Her core remains impenetrable to question and gaze’.

In Simon’s Parisian apartment, the looked-upon image of Ariane is projected into the room in which her bodily form is absent. In the Narrator’s mind, his image of Albertine protrudes when her own self is not present. Indeed, in regards to Simon’s apartment (which, for the duration of the film is in a state of renovation and redecoration, the dust-sheeted furniture an visual clue that hints at the surface presentations of each character, and what remains hidden, covered away and protected beneath), Kaja Silverman contends that ‘Akerman […] encourages us to think of The Captive as a ‘renovation’ of Proust’s novel by showing us workmen inexplicably replastering and repainting Simon’s apartment.’ Layering image upon text, Akerman’s film is located in the midst of atemporal existence, in a state of unfinished flux, from which uncertainty and claustrophobia emanates. To quote Deleuze, ‘what is involved, here, is a plurality of worlds; the pluralism of love does not concern only the multiplicity

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344 Beugnet and Schmid, ‘Filming Obsession’, p. 189
345 Ibid. Wilson puts forth a comparison of the scene with that of director Luchino Visconti’s Death in Venice (1971), in which the boys on the beach are the subject of Dirk Bogarde as Gustave von Aschenbach’s fixed contemplation. Here, too, water controls the cyclical nature of the film’s sequence, returning, in its ending, with death and the destruction of desire embodied through the passionate fixation on the loved object, the boy, Tadzio. See Wilson, “Les Rendez-vous d’Ariane”, p. 60
346 Ibid., p. 195
of loved beings, but the multiplicity of souls or worlds in each of them.\footnote{Deleuze, Proust and Signs, p. 7} Read in the context of Akerman’s film and Proust’s Search, the pursuit of love here becomes plural, multiple in the realms of the cinematic, the literary, the sensory and the signified. ‘To love’, he continues, ‘is to try to explicate, to develop these unknown worlds that remain enveloped within the beloved.’\footnote{Ibid., p. 7} The pursuit of an uncontainable woman begins, amongst the suspension of disbelief and a time held outside of itself by the focus on atmosphere of Akerman’s settings. As in Hitchcock’s Vertigo, La Captive depicts a male obsession that entraps a female character and finally destroys her. The voyeuristic and jealous gaze of the male protagonist is taken up by Akerman as a means to expressing the character’s obsession, the power of ‘the destructive nature of possessive love’, write Beugnet and Schmid, ‘becomes enmeshed in an exploration of the nature of the cinematic pleasures.’\footnote{Beugnet and Schmid, p. 184} ‘In cinema as in love’, contend Beugnet and Schmid, ‘distance is a prerequisite to the preservation of the illusion.’\footnote{Ibid., p. 185}

Sculpting the Image

Apart from when she is sleeping, Simon, under Akerman’s direction, attempts to maintain an active distance between himself and Ariane. As if to try and see things more clearly, or perhaps to preserve the illusion of his maddening thoughts of her own character, her own desires and her own activities, Simon pursues Ariane in her daily outings and excursions always at several paces remove. Reliant on a shot-reverse-shot technique that she resisted in Jeanne Dielman (instead favouring long-takes and fixed camera heights, which, too, feature in several long car and bedroom scenes in La Captive), Akerman traverses the spatial boundaries between her camera’s looking and the looked-upon protagonists. In a clear nod to Hitchcock’s Vertigo, Akerman has her characters enact a museum sequence in which Simon tails Albertine, convinced of some mistruth and desiring a discovery, some evidence of a second life
Ariane might live without him. Pursuing her across the city in lengthy car-chase sequences, just as Scottie tails Madeleine across San Francisco (the classic cars keeping La Captive moving beyond any definable historical moment), in both films the windscreen providing a mobile proscenium arch into the theatre of the inquisitive mind of the troubled male protagonist. Simon then follows Ariane on foot into Paris’ Musée Rodin (just as Scottie, hot on Madeleine’s smart, black, court-shoe heels, enters the Palace of the Legion of Honor) intent on discovery. In Vertigo, where Scottie observes Madeleine contemplating the Portrait of Carlotta, with her hair tied in a matching chignon bun, in Akerman’s La Captive, Simon slowly and deliberately follows Ariane, always one room behind, until she confronts the sculpted bust of a woman, with her hair coiled at the nape of her stone neck. The viewer, watching Simon, watches the fascinated Ariane contemplating the sculpture before her. The marble piece is Rodin’s La Femme Slave (La Mer) (1906), in which a woman’s head emerges from a sculpted, foaming sea.\(^{352}\) The camera sees the back of the bust first. (Fig. 17) Panning slowly around, Ariane enters the screen, moving around the sculpture. (Fig. 18) In her viewing of the sculpture, Beugnet and Schmid see Ariane positioned before the ‘figure of Woman as object of desire.’\(^{353}\)

The Ariane made of flesh confronts her double in stone: a mythical Aphrodite emerging from the waves, a fantasy shaped by a man, which remains, however, rough and unfinished. Indeed, the other pervasive myth that is associated with the character is one that alternatively

\(^{352}\) In English, Slavic Woman (The Sea). The work is held in the collections of the Musée Rodin, Paris. See http://www.musee-rodin.fr/fr/collections/sculptures/la-femme-slave, first accessed 10/04/2015 The collections notes draw attention to Rodin’s inscription on the sculpture’s reverse. ‘La Mer’ (‘The Sea’) alerts Rodin’s workshop assistants to both the subject matter and the style in which the piece was to be worked. This inscription also serves to draw Ariane closer to the sea, a suggestion of her fate to come, and allows for a reading back to the madeleine and its watery origins. Madeleine Time is contained and pours forth from this moment of studied contemplation, filmed by Akerman.

\(^{353}\) Ibid., p. 194
associates the feminine with threat or with sacrifice, the mythical figure
of the mermaid.\textsuperscript{354}

Ariane, emerging from the waves out onto the beach in \textit{La Captive}’s opening
Super8 footage, is Simon’s mythical mermaid figure. Ariane, like Aphrodite, is
the image of fantasy. Venus, Aphrodite’s Roman counterpart, emerges from the
scallop-shell of Sandro Botticelli’s \textit{The Birth of Venus} (ca. 1484-1486).
Propelled forwards towards the shore on the breaths of puff-cheeked Zephyr
and Aura, the air perfumed by tumbling blooms, golden hair billowing, the
Venus is forever approaching, always just-birthed. The Grace figure advances
to dress her in a cloak embroidered with flora and fauna, her always-
outstretched arm drawing the eye to Venus’ perpetual nudity. The painting,
infinity reproducible on souvenir posters, prints, postcards, tote bags, in art
books, analytical studies, in advertising and fashion, in internet memes and
blogs, film and television,\textsuperscript{355} and appropriated throughout the history of Western
visual culture since its conception (as well as inviting a tracing of the history of
Venus and Aphrodite in earlier art works and cultures), collapses linear Time,
makes space for looking.\textsuperscript{356} Referenced here, she traces a line between the Saint
Jacques pilgrim shells, from Genesis’ creation story and the naked Eve, to the
shell-moulds of the madeleine cakes in the bakery and Françoise’s ‘temple of
Venus’ (the back-kitchen) at Combray,\textsuperscript{357} of Swann’s likening of Odette’s face
to that of Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, in Botticelli’s \textit{Trial of Moses},\textsuperscript{358} to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{354} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{355} Indeed, she is the subject of the latest blockbuster exhibition at London’s
Victoria and Albert Museum. ‘Botticelli Reimagined’ runs 5 March-3 July,
2016. See also Brian Dillon, ‘The Beauty of Botticelli Lives On’, \textit{V&A
Magazine}, Issue 39 (Spring, 2016), pp. 36-40
\item \textsuperscript{356} Of Botticelli’s absorption into visual culture I am forever reminded of the
scene of sensuous madness in Terry Gilliam’s \textit{The Adventures of Baron
Munchausen} (Allied Filmmakers/Columbia Pictures, 1989) in which Uma
Thurman as Venus emerges from a mechanical scallop-shell, a fluttering
burlesque, all hidden wires and elaborate drapery, as meticulous in its comedic
critique of appropriation as it is ridiculous in its execution.
\item \textsuperscript{357} Proust, \textit{Swann’s Way}, p. 84
\item \textsuperscript{358} Proust, \textit{Swann’s Way}, p. 267-270. Indeed, Swann prefers to imagine Odette
in the likeness of Zipporah, preferring to turn to a framed photographic
reproduction of Botticelli’s painting to think of Odette, projecting the painted
image onto the body of the living woman: ‘On his study table, at which he

the Madeleines of the waters—from both Nancy’s biblical references and Hitchcock’s San Francisco Bay—to Ariane, born (on camera) of the wave and becoming lost again in its liquid pleats and folds.359

At the museum in Paris, for a moment, Ariane is merged with the sculpture. A Camille Claudel to Simon’s Rodin world,360 she is held in fixed contemplation, subject to the viewing gaze, until Andrée enters the frame from the right. (Fig.

worked, he had placed, as it were a photograph of Odette, a reproduction of Jethro’s Daughter. He would gaze in admiration at the large eyes, the delicate features in which the imperfection of her skin might be surmised, the marvellous locks of hair that fell along her tired cheeks; and, adapting what he had already felt to be beautiful, on aesthetic grounds, to the idea of a living woman, he converted it into a series of physical merits which he congratulated himself on finding assembled in the person of whom he might, ultimately, possess. The vague feelings of sympathy which attracts a spectator to a work of art, now that he knew the type, in warm flesh and blood, of Jethro’s Daughter, became a desire which more than compensated, thenceforward, for that with which Odette’s physical charms had at first failed to inspire him. When he had sat for a long time gazing at the Botticelli, he would think of his own living Botticelli, who seemed all the lovelier in contrast, and as he drew towards him the photograph of Zipporah he would imagine that he was holding Odette against his heart.’ Proust, Swann’s Way, p. 270. See also Eric Karpeles, Paintings in Proust: A Visual Companion to In Search of Lost Time (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008).

359 It has been long speculated that Simonetta Vespucci, born in Genoa and then a resident of Florence after her marriage to Marco Vespucci, was the muse for Botticelli’s Venus. Considered a great beauty of her age, Simonetta died aged just twenty-two in 1476, almost a decade before it is estimated that Botticelli began his painting. To have created such a work from the remembered image of a dead woman would be wonderfully appropriate legend for this approach (drawing together Albertine, Ariane, Akerman’s mother and grandmother, her female lovers, and Hitchcock’s Madeleine) but there is not the scope within this research for an in-depth pursuit. Instead, a tentative and speculative provocation, something akin to a Proustian dream-field, to be returned to another time. See Ross Brooke Ettle, ‘The Venus Dilemma: Notes on Botticelli and Simonetta Cattaneo Vespucci’, Source: Notes in the History of Art, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Summer, 2008), pp. 3-10.

360 Camille Claudel (1864-1943) was a sculptor and artist who worked in Auguste Rodin’s workshop, where she was also his model, inspiration, lover and confidante, and who spent the final thirty years of her life confined to an asylum at Montfavet, near Avignon in the south of France. See Odile Ayral-Clause, Camille Claudel: A Life (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002). She has been the subject of two feature-length films, Bruno Nuytten’s Camille Claudel (1988), with Isabelle Adjani taking the lead role, and Bruno Dumont’s Camille Claudel: 1915 (2013), starring Juliette Binoche.
Upon their greeting and the women’s kiss, the scene cuts to Simon, the ‘desiring spectator’.

Distancing itself from Hitchcock and returning to Proustian desire, Simon retreats with a smile, ‘leaving the space now the scene has come full circle and he has caught the image of tactile contact, cheek against cheek, that supports his and the film’s fantasy of Ariane.’

Here, states Wilson, the ‘tactile supplements the repetition of the surveillance and scopophilia of Hitchcock’s art.’

So too, the scene mirrors the anxieties and excitements described by the Narrator, recalling an early encounter in which he had hoped to meet both Andrée (Akerman carries her name over into her film) and Albertine, determining to arrive unannounced at the painter Elstir’s studio, to catch them unawares, unmasked, so to speak. Finding only Andrée, relief (the Narrator can maintain his delighted belief that Albertine could not be anything that he wished her not to be) is soon tinged with disappointment (the Narrator can maintain his delighted belief that Albertine could still be everything that he wished her not to be), inciting further musings on the alleged relationship between the two women (fuelled by rumours and hearsay uttered by Cottard).

To quote at length:

One day I learned that Albertine and Andrée had both accepted an invitation to Elstir’s. Feeling certain that this was in order that they might, on the return journey, amuse themselves like schoolgirls on holiday by imitating the manners of fast young women, and in so doing find an unmaidenly pleasure the thought of which tormented me, without announcing my intention, to embarrass them and to deprive Albertine of the pleasure on which she was counting, I paid an unexpected call at Elstir’s studio. But I found only Andrée there. Albertine had chosen another day when her aunt was to go there with her. Then I told myself that Cottard must have been mistaken; the favourable impression that I received from Andrée’s presence there without her friend remained with me and made me feel more kindly disposed towards Albertine. But this feeling lasted no longer than the

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361 Wilson, “Les Rendez-vous d’Ariane”, p. 67
362 Ibid.
363 Ibid.
healthy moments of those delicate people who are subject to intermittent recoveries, and are prostrated again by the merest trifle. Albertine incited Andrée to actions that, without going very far, were perhaps not altogether innocent; pained by this suspicion, I would finally succeed in banishing it. No sooner was I cured of it than it revived under another form. I had just seen Andrée, with one of those graceful gestures that came naturally to her, lay her head lovingly on Albertine’s shoulder and kiss her on the neck, half shutting her eyes; or else they had exchanged a glance; or a remark had been made by somebody who had seen them going down together to bathe: little trifles such as habitually float in the surrounding atmosphere where the majority of people absorb them all day long without injury to their health or alteration of their mood, but which have a morbid effect and breed fresh suffering in a nature predisposed to receive them.  

‘We are sculptors,’ the Narrator proclaims, ‘we want to obtain of a woman a statue entirely different from the one she has presented to us.’ Simon, like the Narrator, believes Andrée (whom he has charged with accompanying Ariane on her excursions beyond the confines of the apartment) to be an active participant in his fantasized image of Ariane’s lesbian sexuality. Leaving the museum upon her entrance into the frame, like the Narrator in Elstir’s studio, he suspends his disbelief and paradoxically proves nothing. The viewer, too, is left without clarity. Wilson contends that this is most likely Akerman’s intention, proposing that, in the framing of the two women kissing in greeting over the bust of the statued Woman, the sequence ‘may work to bring to bear a greater understanding of the ways in which all love relations are enabled and constructed through memory and fantasy.’ Rodin’s sculpture presents Woman as cultural object. Always forever emerging out of the stone from which it is born, this bust, carved and filmed and viewed, proffers no resolution. Instead, it recalls the origin, the mother. Thus, argues Wilson,

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364 Proust, Vol. IV: Sodom and Gomorrah, p. 234
365 Proust, The Captive, p. 155
366 Ibid., p. 68
[T]he ideal construct of femininity may be retrospectively cast over the image of the mother to shape her ideal remembered form. For women too, the other woman may always be unknowable; fantasy becomes a screen to protect against the radical opening of her desire. Such fantasies, culturally mediated, may partake of the same literary, pictorial, sensory and erotic heritage as male fantasies of femininity.\textsuperscript{367}

Crucially, in the case of reading Proust through Akerman, for Wilson, this works ‘not so much to corroborate the enigma of femininity, as to illustrate the illusory and impossible love relation: here the other is always enigma, more or less effectively screened from our view.’\textsuperscript{368} Akerman’s Ariane thus serves to contest the notions of identification (both psychoanalytic and more commonly in relation to reading text or viewing a film). \textit{La Captive}, therefore, serves to project Wilson’s proposal that ‘for the reader, as well as the spectator, the self may be \textit{re-viewed} and identification may thus precede, endorse, or disrupt a fiction of stable identity.\textsuperscript{369} Akerman too, in her true dry and contradictory style told Nicole Brenez:

I believe more in books than in images. The image is an idol in an idolatrous world. In a book, there’s no idolatry, even if you can idolise the characters. I believe in the book; when you immerse yourself in a huge book, it’s like an event, an extraordinary one.\textsuperscript{370}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[367] Ibid.
\item[368] Ibid.
\item[370] Chantal Akerman quoted in Brenez, ‘The Pajama Interview’, \textit{Lola}. Akerman, the filmmaker, daughter of Jews, recalls the rebuking of false idols as stated in the Second Commandment: ‘You shall have no other gods beside me. You shall not make for yourself any graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is heaven or above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them, nor serve them, for I, the Lord Your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.’ (Exodus 20:2)
\end{footnotes}
In her specular relation gone awry, each viewer’s own projections, desires, and ‘identifications’ may, in fact ‘exceed the parameters of his/her pre-inscribed role.’\textsuperscript{371} In her remembrance of reading Proust from her teenage years and beyond, Akerman’s adaptation supports Wilson’s argument that the text can ‘testify at once the freedom of the reader \textit{and} to the formative power of the reading encounter.’\textsuperscript{372} She asks, ‘If, in dramatizing the narrator’s deluded quest for knowledge of Albertine, Proust may be seen both to form and reflect the experience of his external reader, what effect may this be said to have on our own construction of desire?’\textsuperscript{373} Akerman’s Ariane does not seek to uncover the ‘truth’ of Albertine’s lesbianism, in Proust, it is ‘teasingly ambiguous’, however, in the proximity between reading around Albertine (a movement that echoes Ariane’s slow movement around the stone bust), the question can be posed as to ‘what is the possible effect of a desiring reader on the text?’\textsuperscript{374}

The seduction of Proust’s writing can be regarded as an elusive enticement. It certainly seems to be the case in Akerman’s film. ‘Lies’, writes Wilson, ‘lead the reader into a volatile realm of dis-ease where it can be painful or pleasurable, deluded or illusory.’\textsuperscript{375} These lies, constructed by the Narrator to meet his own desires, drummed up by Albertine as a means to fleetingly escape his suffocating embrace, deflected by Ariane who gives no straight answers, sought determinedly by Simon, serve to build the atmosphere, the mood, the sense of unbalance in which both the novel and the film in turn must operate. The image of the madeleine as both consumer and consumptive object of memory and desire presents itself once more. Lies that nibble away at the idolatrous image, ‘the one who eats the madeleine’, writes Silverman, ‘is both the explorer and the ‘dark region’ through which he must search; both consciousness, and the unconscious memories that ‘overtake’ it.’\textsuperscript{376} Oral fixation returns in the mouths that have a taste for lies. As Anne Carson notes, ‘Albertine lies so much and so badly that Marcel is drawn into the game. He lies

\textsuperscript{371} Wilson, ‘The Reading Encounter’, p. 6
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{373} Wilson, ‘Reading Albertine’s Sexuality’, p. 60
\textsuperscript{374} Ibid., p. 60
\textsuperscript{375} Wilson, ‘The Reading Encounter’, p. 25
\textsuperscript{376} Silverman, ‘Je Vous’, pp. 453-454
too.\(^{377}\) Thus, inevitably, ‘Marcel’s jealousy, impotence and desire are all exasperated to their highest pitch by the game.’\(^{378}\)

Returning with Kristeva to Proust’s novel recalls the origin from which the ‘insatiable desire’ of the Narrator pours forth:

> Softened in the tea, the mouthful of cake touches the palate, and this contact – which is the most infantile and archaic that a living being can possibly experience with an object or a person, since food like air is the exquisite necessity which keeps us alive and curious about our fellows – sets off an ‘extraordinary process in me’ […] ‘An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses […]’\(^{379}\)

Both infantile and archaic, the Narrator moves from the moment of first recognizable contact, taste, and pleasure, to that of the recollection of a life lived through the memories of experience, and the identification of pleasures with those objects or persons from which the flavour exuded. Alas, for the despairing Narrator, from the pleasure of encounter follows the shattering of illusion. Upon contact with the object of perceived pleasure and longing comes an end of curiosity through its being made real.

> And yet one knows that this first rendezvous will bring the end of an illusion. No matter: as long as the illusion lasts one wants to see whether one can convert it into reality […] Amorous curiosity is like the curiosity aroused in us by the names of places; perpetually disappointed, it revives and remains for ever insatiable.\(^{380}\)

In Proustian cyclical sensibility, the amorous curiosity of the taste of the madeleine perpetually disappoints, and yet its crumbs revive the insatiable

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\(^{377}\) Carson, *The Albertine Workout*, ’42.’, p. 14  
\(^{378}\) Ibid. ’43.’, p. 14  
\(^{380}\) Proust, *The Captive*, p. 156
appetite for a future curiosity remembered through contact with the enamoured object. The taste of the madeleine sparks a transcendence of the Narrator’s experiences of sensation both within and beyond the realm of the tangible. As Kristeva explains:

Since taste is a taste for tea and cakes, it is unquestionably rooted in the things of this world. Taste is of the world in just the same way as the experience that restores both taste and all the other forms of sensation. And yet at the same time the narrator is convinced that his experience has ‘infinitely transcended’ taste and sensation: it ‘could not, indeed, be of the same nature’. Right from the start, in fact, this joy born of experience is a meaningful one: ‘What did it mean?’ asks the narrator.\(^{381}\)

In the image that surges forth from the tea-soaked madeleine cake, it is ‘Taste’, writes Kristeva, which ‘has opened up the doors on representation’.\(^{382}\) Thus, in the case of Albertine, and in turn, Ariane, it is \textit{taste} and \textit{vision} that are the ‘inseparable paramours’ of both Proust and Akerman’s works.\(^{383}\) The visions that pour forth from the taste of the madeleine, rather than resolving memory, instead announce more resoundingly the lack of fit between ‘what is \textit{perceived} and what is \textit{signified}’ that should, for Kristeva, be the task of the Narrator to resolve, but that his ‘cowardice, stemming from boredom and desire’, succeed instead in always ‘deterring’ him from his task.\(^{384}\) Thus, the Narrator as both ‘explorer’ and the ‘“dark region” through which he must search’ tastes in the madeleine both the conscious reality and unconscious memories of his future writing.\(^{385}\)

\(^{381}\) Kristeva, \textit{Time and Sense}, p. 45
\(^{382}\) Ibid., p. 18
\(^{383}\) Kristeva, \textit{Proust and the Sense of Time}, p. 47
\(^{384}\) Ibid.
\(^{385}\) Silverman, ‘Je Vous’, p. 453. The following quote from Kristeva further supports this line. She writes, ‘Take note of the process: actual experience (the mother’s madeleine) is imbued with a disabling intensity and gives rise to states of emptiness and confusion which would be ungovernable, if the narrator were not able to stabilize his pleasure through a displacement.’, Kristeva, \textit{Proust and the Sense of Time}, p. 47
Mother/Lover

Madeleine and Albertine as both taste and vision recall the ‘name of the cake as woman and bring the house of his birth to life again’, whilst recalling too their ‘origin’ in the ‘notable lady who believes her son to be indifferent without suspecting […] that indifference is fostered by vice.’ 386 In this dark region of elusive paramour, taste for the Narrator in Kristeva’s reading, has changed into an ‘elusive whirling medley of stirred-up colours’ in which a ‘form in gestation’, and, I would add too, in death, is confused and ‘incapable’ of translation. 387 In bringing the house of his birth to life once again, the Narrator pre-empts its death through the recollection of the cake, as viewed in the taste of woman (Albertine, the grandmother, or the mother’s goodnight kiss). In the same way, Akerman’s Jeanne collapses the distance between her own mother, Proust’s mother, Jeanne Clémence Weil, and his protagonist Jean of Jean Santeuil. 388 The conjoined sensory experience of taste and vision thus make the claim for the Narrator’s writing experience as being, Kristeva argues, ‘oral by origin’. 389 The spoken name of Madeleine (read aloud by the mother in George Sand’s François le champi), 390 and the Narrator’s pleas to Albertine in her stead will succeed, Kristeva argues:

386 Kristeva, Proust and the Sense of Time, p. 44
387 Ibid., p. 46
388 Jeanne Weil, like Nelly Akerman, was Jewish. The faith taking the maternal lineage, both Marcel and Chantal were Jewish by birth. Neither author nor filmmaker were devoted practitioners of their inherited faith, but the presence of their mothers’ Jewish heritage was keenly felt and extremely complex within both their life and works. For more on the life of Jeanne Weil, see Évelyne Bloch-Dano’s Madame Proust: A Biography, trans. Alice Kaplan (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 2007). Jeanne Santeuil was an uncompleted novel, written by Proust between 1896 and 1900 (pre-emptying the Search), whose protagonist, Jean, is drawn from Proust’s own childhood experiences and entrance into Paris high society. See Marcel Proust, Jean Santeuil, trans. Gerard Hopkins (London: Penguin, 1994). First French edition published by Gallimard in 1952.
389 Ibid., p. 41
390 See Kristeva, Proust and the Sense of Time, ‘In its unusual, moulded form, a kind of mushroom born of a shell, the madeleine stands between the narrator and his mother in the same way as George Sand’s François le champi had done a few pages before (I. 42). For the madeleine scene is a sequel to a story which has already begun – one in which, immediately before our episode, the reading
[...] In ousting the unfortunate rusk and in granting her maternal flavour, which is at the same time blandly inaccessible and delightfully exciting, to a little madeleine which lurks tasteless in my mouth, but also has the power to arouse insatiable desire.\(^{391}\)

As noted on page 116, Nelly Akerman’s own past was kept hidden from Chantal. The inaccessible memories of her life as a young woman were withheld. Nelly and Jewish family, having fled to Belgium from Poland, were deported during the Second World War to Auschwitz. Her own mother died in the camps. Nelly was helped by an aunt and rescued by American soldiers. Chantal, as a second-generation survivor of the Holocaust, felt the presence, the pressing silence of the unspoken horrors of the Shoah throughout her own life and work. \(“\text{She never wanted to speak about Auschwitz … I asked her once to tell me more, and she said, ‘No, I will get crazy.’ So we could speak around, or after, or before, but the real moment, never. Not directly.’}”\(^{392}\) She would often recall in interviews that, during her first major mental breakdown, her mother gave her the diary that her own mother had kept as a young woman. \(“\text{She gave me text when she could not speak herself,” said Akerman. The diary—which opens with the words ‘I am a Woman’ written in her grandmother’s hand—was the starting point behind Akerman’s fiction film } \text{Demain on déménage/Tomorrow We Move (2004), and features at the heart of her installation exhibition } \text{To Walk Next to One’s Shoelaces in an Empty Fridge.}^{393}\) The diary text stands in for the mother’s missing voice, and the mother’s own

\(\text{of } \text{François le champi} \text{ by the mother to the narrator (at this point, a pampered child) forms a bond in voice and sensation between the future novelist and his progenitor […]’}, \text{ p. 32}\)
\(\text{Ibid., p. } 39\)
missing, giving space for the daughter’s own voice too. Episodes contained within one whole that had been blasted apart by the weight of History upon one family line. Kristeva continues:

[…] ‘the madeleine episode’ – framed as it is by the memory of the mother rejected because she does not offer herself, and by the story of Swann – serves as a special invitation to us to reinstate the oral link which holds the narrator to a woman he loves, who is yet capable of remaining indifferent to him.

Albertine (and Ariane in her turn) contains the indifference of the memory of the mother through the madeleine in her mouth.

I was performing the duties of an ardent and painful devotion dedicated as an oblation to the youth and beauty of Woman. And yet with this desire by which I was honouring youth with a votive offering, with my memories too of Balbec, there was blended; in my need to keep Albertine thus every evening by my side, something that had hitherto been foreign to my amorous existence at least, if it was not entirely new in my life. It was a soothing power the like of which I had not experienced since the evenings at Combray long ago when my mother, stooping over my bed, brought me repose in a kiss.

The Narrator’s fixation upon Albertine turns his mind to the early rivals of Swann and the father through the memory of the longed-for kiss from the mother at Combray. In Paris now, these male rivals are subsumed by the intangible threat of Albertine’s otherness, the threat of her lesbianism, embodied in the lingering presence of the names of Andrée, Léa, Mlle Vinteuil, and countless others who are observed with suspicion. Albertine’s tender charms are affected by the Narrator’s collision with the past through his jealousies of ‘not-knowing’. ‘To love carnally’, he states, ‘was none the less, for

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394 Chantal and her sister Sylviane also made their own additions to the diary.
395 Ibid., p. 40
396 Proust, *The Captive*, p. 79
me, to enjoy a triumph over countless rivals.’ The taste of Albertine is bitter-sweet, dry, and yet fills the Narrator with an unquenchable thirst. As Kristeva writes:

The flavour of the past, still slumbering in the depths of the memory, which had been thought, quite wrongly, to have disappeared, comes back again to endow with image and body the narrator’s mounting sense of vertigo.

Proust’s Narrator supports this image of life positioned precariously upon a dizzying standpoint:

Sweet, gay, innocent moments to all appearances, and yet moments in which there gathers the unsuspected possibility of disaster, which makes the amorous life the most precarious of all, that in which the unpredictable rain of sulphur and brimstone falls after the most radiant moments, whereupon, without having the heart or the will to draw a lesson from our misfortune, we set to work at once to rebuild upon the slopes of the crater from which nothing but catastrophe can emerge. I was as carefree as those who imagine their happiness will last.

Thus, whilst attempting to ‘stabilize his pleasure’ (Kristeva’s phrase), the ‘disabling intensity’ of his fixation upon Albertine leads to the displacement of his desires as projected onto her body which he believes himself to love.

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397 Proust, The Captive, p. 80
398 Kristeva, Proust and the Sense of Time, p. 47. The Narrator confronts his past: ‘When we have passed a certain age, the soul of the child that we were and the souls of the dead from whom we sprang come and shower upon us their riches and their spells, asking to be allowed to contribute to the new emotions which we feel and in which, erasing their former image, we recast them in an original creation. Thus my whole past from my earliest years, and beyond these, the past of my parents and relations, blended with my impure love for Albertine the tender charm of an affection at once filial and maternal.’ Proust, The Captive, p. 82
399 Proust, The Captive, p. 83
400 Kristeva, Proust and the Sense of Time, p. 47
(Un)Dressing Albertine

The Narrator sites his memory of the madeleine at what he believes to be the maximum remove from his childhood goodnights. Recalling the magic Japanese pieces of paper that take their form once being dipped into bowls of water, Kristeva recognises the distance taken by the Narrator to attempt to separate his memory from his sensory capabilities.

As it were necessary to set up a maximum distance, a foreign country, to enable us to see, again to the maximum extent, how evanescent is the object of desire that the little madeleine offers to be sensed. Both elsewhere and here at hand, past and also present, a sensation and an image at the same time, just as it is both a name and a meaning – our madeleine is kneaded out of all of these and excites a taste for one as much as for the other.401

In Albertine, Gomorrah stands as the ‘foreign country’ that produces the Japanese flowers that blossom and yield as they make contact with the liquid source of their metamorphosis. ‘Now’, continues Kristeva, ‘we are inside the imaginary world of the madeleines’.402 To recall Wilson’s earlier argument regarding the impact of Proust’s text upon the reader, Kristeva asks:

And are we now indifferent to this, in turn? No. But it is a secret, and Proust’s whole novel will be a search for the sweet as well as the ignoble aspects of this central erotic secret.403

Delicate and fragile, yet blooming and beguiling, Akerman dresses Testud’s Ariane in Japanese paper flowers. Seen first in her pink swimming costume, and then curled into a pale towel, the first Super8 sightings of Ariane see her moulded into the madeleine shell of her narrative lineage. As Wilson writes, the towel’s envelopment ‘folds like a second skin. The fabric is at once tactile and

401 Ibid., pp. 48-49
402 Ibid., p. 49
403 Ibid.
soft, encircling Ariane, recalling maternal images of nurturing and protection.†\textsuperscript{404} Later, the silk robe she wears on a night-time visit to Simon’s room works to evoke the erotic secret of the Narrator’s text, ‘working’, Wilson continues, ‘as a sheath or a skin both covering and outlining Ariane’s form.’\textsuperscript{405} Pressed under both the physical weight of Simon’s body and his heavy desire for her, but always at the slightest of removes, the silk is both her strength and seduction, she is ‘clasped and encircled, yet slippery in his grasp.’\textsuperscript{406} When Simon (like the Narrator over Albertine before him) masturbates against her whilst she is suspended in (feigned?)\textsuperscript{407} sleep, Ariane’s ‘whole body has the fluid impassivity of her silk garment.’\textsuperscript{408} In her daywear too, Wilson reads a further impression of the body at the slightest of removes from Simon’s desires. ‘Her signature outfit’, Wilson describes, ‘is a pale blue flimsy dress, whose fabric moves with her body, and silvery white heels.’ Dressed in ‘these blanched, nursery colours in lace and silk’, the body of Ariane, and ‘its tactile surface’, she continues, ‘are at once displayed and disavowed, as […] Ariane is imaged as body only through a series of shimmering veils.’\textsuperscript{409} Ariane is all at once mould, mannequin and madeleine-manifestation that encompasses both Simon’s desire for her, and too, his inability to make contact with her own fleshy substance, despite his holding her in both captivity and embrace. (Fig. 20)

A fantasy spun in Simon’s mind but left both emptied and unsatisfied in the ‘overvisible’ long shot of their bed scene, Ariane’s silk dressing resists and provokes his desire to possess whilst remaining at a remove from her intangible

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Wilson, ‘“Les Rendez-vous d’Ariane”’, p. 65.}{404}
\footnote{Ibid., p. 65.}{405}
\footnote{Ibid.}{406}
\footnote{Recall Anne Carson: ‘There are four ways Albertine is able to avoid becoming entirely possessable […]: by sleeping, by lying, by being a lesbian, or by being dead.’ Carson, ‘53.’, \textit{The Albertine Workout}, p. 18.}{407}
\footnote{Ibid. In \textit{Vertigo}, too, Madeleine, having been rescued by Scottie after her feigned suicide by drowning in the San Francisco Bay, is clad in his bachelor’s red silk dressing gown. Hitchcock presents her to the viewer cloaked in Scottie’s desire, and yet in this slim covering she remains removed from his touch, intensifying his desire and identification of his own psyche onto her projected image as object of his passion.}{408}
\footnote{Ibid.}{409}
\end{footnotes}
The wet swimming costume, the ocean-blue sheets and heavy gold draperies of the bed (a Baroque-framed painting of mythological dimensions), the slippery bed robe that suggests anything but sleep, the dress that slips and rides up around her body under Simon’s advances in the back of his chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce, each, in their turn, echo the tactile movements of the silkworm. He plants his wet kisses on the surface of her face, projecting his anxieties onto her, whilst she returns the kisses that he spins into further confirmation of her infidelity and lies. As the silkworm spins its creation from its mouth, Simon spins his yarns into the shape of a shimmering veil which he places over Ariane. Spinning his obsessive tale across the fabrics of her territories, Simon’s creation is a web of constructed desires that come into conflict with Ariane, Ariadne-like, in her labyrinthine unknownness. Spun from one mouth to another, these sequences, to borrow from Kristeva, have the effect of ‘[…] bringing places and moments together under the auspices of desire and condensing their intermittent appearances into a pure form of oral sensuousness’. Returning to a memory that is born of and yet predates the concentric circles made by the plump squat cake dipped in tea, Ariane and Simon as moulded forms of the unknowable mother and the jealousy-driven Narrator, are ‘bathed in a luke-warm’ and yet eroticised ‘atmosphere which is not yet teatime but is redolent of a warm, wet kiss.

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410 “Overvisible” is borrowed from Ivone Margulies in her description of the experience of the long-shots in close camera proximity to the love-making scenes of the two women (one of them Akerman) in her film Je tu il elle (1976). See Margulies, Nothing Happens, p. 126

411 See J. Hillis Miller, Ariadne’s Thread: Story Lines (London: Yale University Press, 1992)

412 Kristeva, Proust and the Sense of Time, pp. 43-44

413 Ibid., p. 32
Precipices of Desire

Desire […] is always in excess of the object’s capacity to satisfy it.  

In returning the kisses of the Narrator, in her refusal to refuse, Albertine, like the mother, generates for him a further set of anxieties and conflicting emotional responses. ‘When this identity-figure does not flee, […] but offers herself,’ notes Kristeva, ‘the kiss becomes a new whirlwind.’ However, she continues, ‘the flux that was once innocent has since become destructive.’ As we have learned already, kissing Albertine evokes the same dizzying vertigo that is summoned forth in the taste of the madeleine cake. For the Narrator, she becomes, in a moment, all at once too much substance, too big, and too vast for the small morsel that she proffers or that he steals from her.

‘This pictorial multiplicity of Albertine’, writes Anne Carson in her recent summary-poem of Albertine’s mad, humorous and often ridiculous and obsessive presence in Proust’s Search, ‘evolves gradually into a plastic and moral multiplicity. Albertine is not a solid object. She is unknowable. When he brings his face close to hers to kiss she is ten different Albertines in succession.’ A look to Silverman’s photographic reading of the scene in question expands these simple statements. She writes:

> Marcel expresses his desire to plumb the depths of this ‘universe’, and he later attempts to satisfy this desire by kissing her. When he approaches Albertine for this purpose, she turns not just into a grainy photograph, but one that can be viewed from a potentially infinite number of angles, only one of which can be occupied at a time. ‘At first, as my mouth began to approach the cheeks which my eyes had

415 Kristeva, Time and Sense, pp. 73-74
416 Ibid.
recommended it to kiss’, Marcel writes, ‘my eyes, in changing position, saw a different pair of cheeks; the neck, observed at closer range and as though through a magnifying-glass, showed in its coarser grain a robustness which modified the character of the face.’

The Narrator’s perceptual apparatus, argues Silverman, is incapable of fixing the image of Albertine without resorting to immobilization or the impediment of their development. She explains that, in Proust, the ego of the Narrator:

[…] attempts to stabilize itself and its objects in two ways: by immobilizing them conceptually (that is, by pushing the ‘pause’ button on the mental slide projector); and by impeding or even reversing the development process (that is, by returning every print to the negative from which it was struck, or reducing a multiplicity of negatives to a single prototype).

‘Je Vous’

In the face of Ariane in Super8 film thrown across Simon’s shadowy apartment room, Akerman follows Proust in presenting to the viewer the male protagonist’s ‘mental slide projector’, which pauses, loops, and returns the figure of his desire to her original prototype as the desired girl on the beach. Yet even here, there are too many possibilities, too many loves. As her face draws closer to the camera lens, and Akerman’s camera lens in turn draws closer to the projection, Simon is heard, uttering from his own barely-open mouth in an almost-silent whisper, ‘je… je… je… vous.’ In this, Silverman determines that:

‘Since he looks at Ariane as he utters these words, she is clearly the referent for one of them, but it is impossible to determine which, since he could be speaking either for her, or for himself.’

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419 Silverman, ‘Je Vous’, p. 460
420 Ibid. p. 463
Cutting back to the home movie however, language becomes further disturbed. ‘The pronouns become even shiftier’, states Silverman. As Ariane and Andrée stand together on the screen, wrapped in their towers and leaning into one another, Simon utters ‘je… je vous… je vous… je vous aime bien.’ Who is speaking? To whom are the words being said? Silverman offers this interpretation:

Since ‘vous’ is the plural as well as the formal version of the second-person pronoun in French, its field of possible referents now expands to include Andrée. Initially, this expansion seems to secure Simon in the position of the ‘je’, but before long another possibility emerges: the possibility that the first- and second-person pronouns are the reversible designators of another intersubjectivity: Ariane’s and Andréé’s.

As in a later scene at the Musée Rodin, Akerman’s shot cuts to Simon’s face. Facing the image of the two women, he smiles. Whilst the home movie continues to run, he approaches the screen, and sits himself before it, his face too-close before the image of Ariane. Again, he says ‘je vous aime bien.’ Now, Silverman writes, ‘the emphasis now falls as much upon the last two words as upon the first two. In this iteration, ‘aimer bien’ means not only ‘to love a lot’, but also ‘to love well’. The screen of the projector, like the silk of Ariane’s dressing gown is a further representation of Simon’s pressing of the pleasure and suffering he derives from pressing against the female body.

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421 Ibid.
422 Ibid.
423 Ibid.
424 Silverman couples the masturbatory bedroom scene in which Simon climaxes and Ariane manifests sexual pleasure, whispering the name ‘Andréé’ as she opens her eyes, to the projected Super8 footage of the film’s opening. She writes ‘The second time Simon says ‘je vous aime bien’, he acknowledges that his own pleasure derives from the same source – that he loves Ariane because she and Andréé love each other. The third time, he goes even further: he affirms their right to address these words to each other. And since by doing this, he loves them well, he also finds his own way back to the ‘je’. Silverman, ‘Je Vous’, p. 464
Ariane and André are separated from Simon by the fourth wall, which means that they should not be able to return his look, but they miraculously do; after he acknowledges the interdependence of his desire for Ariane, and hers for André, and affirms the girls’ right to say ‘je vous aime bien’ to each other, they respond by smiling first at each other, and then at him. And when Simon walks over to the screen, and presses his head against Ariane’s image, he responds to their response.425

Mirroring the Narrator of Proust’s text, Simon attempts to fix his language onto the body of Ariane by containing her within his own mental projection. So too, writes Wilson, the ‘narrator’s desire to possess Albertine becomes concentrated, in displaced terms, on the desire to limit her movements in space.’426 ‘His desire,’ she contends, ‘is aroused by the impossible conundrum to which she allows him to return’, and this, in turn, ‘is itself a game of recollection in which Proust also engages the reader.’427 Wilson situates her argument in a specific moment of the text, which is later recalled throughout the Narrator’s troubled existence with Albertine:

At Montjouvin, as a child, the narrator falls asleep in the bushes surrounding Vinteuil’s house. He wakes when it is almost dark, and he sees Mlle Vinteuil in the room immediately in front of him […] The child is in an ideal position to see without being seen […] Here the half-open window is placed perfectly ambiguously neither entirely to exclude nor to include the narrator in the diegetic space of the drama he will witness. Outside he watches the women’s kisses and their desecration of Vinteuil’s portrait through a screen of glass which is itself seductively open.428

In placing her possible affairs with women behind the ‘glass of his imagination’, the Narrator, for Wilson, ‘places himself always outside the

425 Ibid., p. 464
426 Wilson, ‘Reading Albertine’s Sexuality’, p. 80
427 Ibid., p. 73
428 Ibid., p. 77
“room” where her love is consummated; and he loves her precisely because her mobile desires can place him in this torturous position of exclusion.”

To Montjouvain is tied the Narrator’s childhood, which places it, in linear time, close to the desiring kisses for the mother, and the taste of the madeleine. In the body of Albertine, re-projected into Vinteuil’s room, Silverman locates in the Narrator’s writing, a ‘utopian sexuality’ that can be found ‘precisely where it consistently situates its more quotidian counterpart – at the site of the mouth.’

She continues:

That orifice consequently functions not only as the preferred site for erotic reception, but as the imaginary locus for an organ capable of penetrating other bodies. It represents the narrator’s erotogenic zone of choice, in other words, both when he identifies with the youth he once was, and when he identifies with the mother.

Deliberating Silverman’s argument, Wilson locates a focus that dwells at length on kissing as the ‘preeminent synecdoche not only for sexual pleasure, but for desire and carnal “knowledge.”’

But, as we have seen, in Akerman’s La Captive, the body of Ariane as Albertine yields no knowledge for Simon as Narrator of his own lost cause. Echoing Kristeva once more:

No, all I can taste is an indifferent madeleine, the deferred recollection of another thing, of another woman, a woman you could have been or have been but are no longer […] all we have is the polite indifference of a cup of tea. And my imaginings, in secret.

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429 Ibid.
430 Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins, p. 381
431 Ibid. Silverman’s discussion is further concerned with a questioning of the Narrator’s own sexuality, in which she posits a theory that his much-speculated homosexuality might be a significantly contributing factor in his description of Albertine’s naked female body, and of her genitalia in particular. See Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins, pp. 383-386
432 Wilson, ‘Reading Albertine’s Sexuality’, p. 71-72. Quoting Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins, p. 383
433 Kristeva, Proust and the Sense of Time, p. 40
As psychoanalyst Adam Phillips notes in *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored*: ‘Truly infectious, kissing may be our most furtive, our most reticent sexual act, the mouth’s elegy to itself.’ At once possessive and submissive, the kisses shared between Simon and Ariane on screen, as well as those shared between the Narrator and Albertine are, once again, an echo of the maternal kiss between mother and child. To quote Phillips again:

There is the return of the primary sensuous experience of tasting another person, one in which the difference between the sexes can supposedly be attenuated – the kiss is the image of reciprocity, not of domination – but one that is also unprecedented developmentally, since it includes tasking someone else’s mouth.

As both a ‘threat and a promise’, the ‘signature as cliché of the erotic’, for Phillips, the kiss reads as a pressed, resonating gesture that leads always to disappointment. And, as in the case of the madeleine, because it leads always to disappointment, the kiss, like the little cake ‘as the object of desire’ that presses against the lips, can ‘always be returned to’. Thus, ‘With the mouth’s extraordinary virtuosity, it involves some of the pleasures of eating in the absence of nourishment.’ Phillips remarks that stories, in contrast to films, often ignore the intrinsic power of the kiss. In Proust however, the kiss is, I argue ‘a story in miniature’, writ large.

In *Vertigo* too, the too-closeness of the Hollywood kiss is emblazoned across the narrative of desire imparted onto the body, the face, the head of a woman who cannot be held longer than the duration of the pressed kissing embrace is held. Scottie and Madeleine’s kiss is shown in 360° embrace. Stewart and Novak were placed on a pedestal that was rotated as their kiss was filmed,

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434 Phillips, *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored*, p. 100
435 Ibid., p. 96
436 Ibid., p. 100
437 Ibid., p. 96
438 Ibid., p. 94
439 Ibid.
440 Ibid.
allowing the fixed camera to capture them in their entirety. The trickery of shot allowed too for the change in backdrops of the scenes behind them – transporting the couple from Judy’s room at the Empire Hotel, across time and memories and already filmed encounters. Thus, their kiss both contains and projects the narrative thus far, the reawakening of once-dead Madeleine in the eyes of Scottie, and fate of the deceptive Judy to come.

Proust’s Narrator’s kisses in turn move from Balbec, to Montjouvain, to Combray, Paris, Albertine, the mother, the sea and beyond. In a sense, the kiss is the compression, collapse and containment of Time in Proust’s *Search*. The elimination of linear time in his novel establishes the space in which the characters are formed, inside, outside and alongside one another.

53.

There are four ways Albertine is able to avoid becoming entirely possessable in volume 5: by sleeping, by lying, by being a lesbian or by being dead.

54.

Only the first three of these can she bluff.441

**Living, Loving, Lying, Dying**

In Proust, death and passion are always in close quarters with one another. Akerman, in *La Captive*, echoes this proximity by resuscitating the figure of the grandmother (in the novel, she is long-dead, whilst she continues to haunt the Narrator, she meets her life’s end in *Vol. II, The Guermantes Way*) and installing her into the room next door to Simon’s in his Paris apartment. Simon, like the Narrator before him, puts his own demands before the needs of his grandmother. Missing a doctor’s appointment to follow Ariane to a hotel room across town, pleasure takes precedence over health, age and the persistence of...

time as represented by the ageing and ailing (and always absent from view) grandmother. However, she can be heard. As Beugnet and Schmid note:

Here [the grandmother’s silent] ailing presence serves as a constant reminder of the morbidity evoked amongst other things of Simon’s relationship with Ariane, a morbidity evoked amongst other things by the painful coughs from the grandmother’s bedroom which are more than once juxtaposed with the two lovers’ erotic games in Simon’s room next door.\textsuperscript{442}

The presence of future death can be heard not just in the grandmother’s spluttering coughs, but in Akerman’s choice of music. In her choice of Rachmaninov’s symphonic poem \textit{Isle of the Dead} (1908), introduced in the first driving sequence and later at the film’s deathly finale, Akerman selects ‘a perfect accompaniment to the lover’s jealous morbidity, both through its theme centred on death and its highly emotional musical score’.\textsuperscript{443} Coupled to the use of Mozart’s ‘cheerful, soothing and life-affirming’ \textit{Cosi fan tutte} (1789), Akerman’s choice of music echoes the opposing forces at work in both the film’s progression, and within the two apartment rooms with the adjoining wall.\textsuperscript{444} Not forgetting here, too, that Luce Irigaray borrowed from Mozart’s

\textsuperscript{442} Beugnet and Schmid, ‘Filming Obsession’, p. 176. They continue, ‘As the two lovers embrace, Simon, in typical Proustian \textit{double entende}, proposes to ‘jouer aux dames’ in the dark (to ‘play draughts’, that is in French, literally, to play ‘ladies’, i.e. to imitate lesbian love.’ Thus, whilst the grandmother’s body fights against draughts, dust and death, Simon and Ariane are tied into their own desirous activities, death has no place for them yet.

\textsuperscript{443} Ibid., pp. 195-196

\textsuperscript{444} Ibid., p. 196. Ariane sings the duet from \textit{Cosi} on Simon’s balcony, and is greeted by a response from a woman who is kept in shadow, only half-visible, standing at a window opposite. In subverting the theme of male suspicion and female infidelity of \textit{Cosi}’s plot, Ariane’s voice, met by that of the female counterpart subverts her imprisonment under Simon’s watchful gaze, and makes music of it from within its confines. Once again, as in the case at the museum and in the Super8 footage, Simon, witnessing Ariane sharing the company of another woman in a sequence in which he has no written or permitted part, withdraws. Beugnet and Schmid argue that, ‘by recasting it in the context of lesbian love, La Captive doubly undermines Cosi’s inherent gender politics’, p. 196. Thus, they propose, the ‘metaphorical ‘curtain’ of emotional and gender difference makes any further insight impossible. Because he cannot experience
title for her ‘Così Fan Tutti’, in her This Sex Which is Not One that seeks to stake a claim for the power of female pleasure as distinct from male-driven laws of sexuality. Ariane at her bedroom window, directing her untrained voice towards the woman at a balcony (Akerman intersperses the cuts making theirs a rare shot-reverse-shot conversing between two mouths, two bodies, two women) and being greeted by her refined voice in return, marks a defiant language of pleasure into which Simon, helpless looking up from the ground below, has no access. The return of Rachmaninov at the film’s ending returns Ariane back to her watery beginnings. From her imprisonment in both Simon’s physical world and his mental distortions, she is prised open. Both container and construct of the plot, she returns back to a liquid memory.

The surest sign of wonder is exaggeration. And since the inhabitant of a shell can amaze us, the imagination will soon make amazing creatures, more amazing than reality, issue from the shell.

Screening Separation

In a scene that echoes a sequence from Proust’s text, Akerman in La Captive places Ariane inside a frosted glass case. In Proust’s passage, Albertine and the Narrator wash and converse in adjoining bathrooms through a small partition – the slightest of openings which allows for their voices to fill up one another’s space whilst they bathe:

The partition that divided our two dressing-rooms (Albertine’s, identical with my own, was a bathroom which Mamma, who had another at the opposite end of the flat, had never used for fear of disturbing my rest)

lesbian love himself, Gomorrhean pleasure will forever remain inconceivable for Marcel.’, pp. 200-201 Recalling Vertigo, Midge (Barbara bel Geddes) stands before a gramophone in the room at the Sanatorium watching a helpless Scottie sit lifelessly in his chair, stunned at his inability to hold onto Madeleine and prevent her fateful fall, “I don’t think Mozart’s going to be much help here.”

Irigaray, ‘Così Fan Tutti’, pp. 86-105

was so thin that we could talk to each other as we washed in double
privacy, carrying on a conversation that was interrupted only by the
sound of the water, in that intimacy which is so often permitted in hotels
by the smallness and proximity of the rooms but which, in private
houses in Paris, is so rare.\(^{447}\)

In Akerman’s film, the two bathers’ intimate separateness is recreated by the
presence of a frosted glass, gold-framed window that stands as the wall between
the two separate rooms for each lover as they synchronise their wash time. With
Simon in the foreground, Ariane is placed (as in the Super8 footage) behind a
second screen, she is doubly distanced, firstly from Simon, and secondly from
the viewer, between whose looking eyes and the body of his beloved he
bathes.\(^{448}\) For Beugnet and Schmid, Akerman establishes here a ‘mise en scène
for the projection of Simon’s fantasy, a protection against the reality of his
lover, and a metaphor for the cinematic screen, the window is an obvious
expository device.\(^{449}\) Wilson notes that this delicately subdued scene, in which
the camera remains fixed, is the only time in *La Captive* in which Ariane is
naked, ‘she is visible again only through the semi-translucent frosting of the
glass partition.’\(^{450}\) (Fig. 21) Here, the fixed camera position echoes that which is
used consistently throughout Akerman’s *Jeanne Dielman* (1975), in which we
see Delphine Seyrig sit in a green-blue clean bathroom, and wash her entire
body clean after her first two male customer’s leave the apartment on two
consecutive days. (Fig. 22)

The seductive, calm, and subdued scene of *La Captive* contrasts with the
content of the dialogue. Ariane confesses, as Albertine has before her, that her
female bodily scent sometimes causes her embarrassment, her self-awareness

\(^{447}\) Proust, *The Captive*, p. 3. Note here, the proximity between the Narrator’s
‘Maman’ and Albertine in the wet space of the bathroom. Where the former, in
maternal devotion, had absented herself in a bid not to disturb her son, the latter
fills up the room, both rooms, with her voice and her presence.

\(^{448}\) As in the sequence with the Super8 home movie footage, ‘Simon’s body also
acts as a screen, blocking the view of Ariane’s silhouette.’, Beugnet and
Schmid, p. 188

\(^{449}\) Beugnet and Schmid, ‘Filming Obsession’, p. 188

\(^{450}\) Wilson, ‘Les Rendez-vous d’Ariane’, p. 65
causes her to clasp her legs together in an attempt at concealment, it brings her an unexpected consciousness of her own womanhood. Beugnet and Schmid relate this retelling to another ‘pervasive myth’ that is associated with Ariane’s character as determined by Akerman. For them, it is one ‘that alternatively associates the feminine with threat or with sacrifice, the mythical figure of the mermaid.’ In what they question to be ‘the part-animal quality of her being?’, Beugnet and Schmid return Ariane through scent to the sea’s edge, to the ‘pull of the water element and of her sisters’ song.’ In ‘Je Vous’, Silverman recalls the scene in which the Narrator recounts the undressing of Albertine’s naked body. To quote the scene from Proust:

Before Albertine obeyed and took off her shoes, I would open her chemise. Her two uplifted breasts were so round that they seemed not so much to be an integral part of her body as to have ripened there like fruit; and her belly (concealing the place where a man’s is disfigured as though by an iron clamp left sticking in a statue that has been taken down from its niche) was closed, at the junction of her thighs, by two valves with a curve as languid, as reposeful, as cloistral as that of the horizon after the sun has set. She would take off her shoes, and lie down by my side.

Silverman goes on to read the scene as a means to discussing the Narrator’s disinterest in Albertine’s female genitalia, and, as such, as an example of a reading of his homosexual (dis)interest in the body of his captive woman through the disjointed description of its male counterpart. Instead, I wish to couple Ariane’s thighs to Albertine’s curve as a means to returning her back to the sea as part-woman, part-fish, mythical mermaid from the belly down, of Simon’s home movie imagination and the Narrator memories of Balbec. As Kristeva writes: ‘the madeleines are what preserve both the underwater

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451 Beugnet and Schmid, ‘Filming Obsession’, p. 194
452 Ibid., p. 194
453 Proust, Vol. V: The Captive and The Prisoner, p. 82
memories and the vestiges of shells and aquatic molds that emerge from this liquid and maternal world of reading.\textsuperscript{454}

Liquid Blues and Memory Shells

In London-based artist Esther Teichmann’s *Untitled* moving image piece from her series *Fractal Scars, Salt Water and Tears* (2014), a dark-haired nude female performance artist turns her body slowly, softly over the aquatic blue-sheeted mattress surrounded by gold draped curtains, encircled in darkness. Shot in real time, the slow, slow movements become a mesmerizing study. Over the looping video, fifteen minutes of silence are followed by ten minutes playing by a string quartet. Although ‘nothing is slowed down—all footage is real time’,\textsuperscript{455} reel time seems to collapse and loop, space is narrowed but exploded by the hypnotic twists and turns of the body, hair falling in waves across the woman’s face.\textsuperscript{456} (Fig. 23) The film recalls the rich blues and golds of Ariane in her canopied bed. Teichmann’s bed is transported from the San Francisco garden cabin where she lived for a short period. Like Akerman, Teichmann’s film is tied closely to text, and to life. ‘My work is always very closely autobiographical, then fictionalizing autobiography—so the stories are the starting point.’\textsuperscript{457} A short story, ‘Fractal Scars’, accompanies the film. In June 2015, a string quartet joined to bring live sound performance before the work’s screening in the launch of Teichmann’s *Mondschwimmen* exhibition at Zephyr, in Mannheim, Germany. In ‘Fractal Scars’, the fiction bathes in the moving image, and the memories of the Bay Area waters. Moving from the city’s giant Camera Obscura to the canopy bed to her seaweed-filled bath, ‘V’ is submerged, immersed in memory. Sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell well up

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\textsuperscript{454} Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, p. 5
\textsuperscript{455} Esther Teichmann, in email correspondence, 10\textsuperscript{th} November 2015
\textsuperscript{456} A stilled (fixed camera) sister to Akerman’s first film *Saute ma Ville/Blow Up My Town* (1968), in which the eighteen-year-old Akerman plays a woman who prepares her suicide in the kitchen of her high-rise apartment, and *La Chambre/The Room* (1972) in which she once again films and features in her New York studio, slowly moving across the compressed, interior space.
\textsuperscript{457} Esther Teichmann, in email correspondence, 10\textsuperscript{th} November 2015
\end{flushleft}
in this short but full piece, as the performer’s body fills up the screen of the film:

V keeps a thicker kind of seaweed in her bathtub, the brackish salty smell reaching her boat-bed when a breeze moves across the room. She keeps these washed up branches of slippery leather, so as to bathe within their drowned mermaids’ embrace. Filling the bath with warm water, V lowers herself into their tentacles as he sleeps oblivious, a few feet away.

As is the sea beneath them, so is she: swelling, roaring. She tastes her saltiness in his mouth, the taste of the ocean, the sweet smell of swamps. Deep-sea diving, eyes open, swimming from luminous turquoise into dark blue towards almost black waters. Unafraid, she swims down, through ocean caves, under waterfalls, no longer needing to breathe. Past and with all the women who are a part of her. The soft downy hair of his armpit feels like the cradle next to her mother’s breast in which her head still fits exactly. She wraps herself around him the way she and her sisters used to sleep entwined, slowly realizing she is no longer homesick. ⁴⁵⁸

Sensory, sensual, sexual, and maternal, Teichmann, like Akerman and Proust, returns the lover to the mother. The madeleines of Proust’s novel, as represented and embodied in Albertine and Ariane, are contradictory moulds and memories of projected fantasies of desire. Gaston Bachelard, in *Poetics of Space*, devotes a chapter of his writing to the consideration of shells. ⁴⁵⁹ In it, he contends that ‘Everything about a creature that comes out of a shell is dialectical. And since it does not come out entirely the part that comes out contradicts the part that remains inside.’ ⁴⁶⁰ In advocating a phenomenological

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⁴⁵⁹ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, pp. 105-133

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 108
reading through an embracing of a ‘conchologist’s’ curious mind, he determines that ‘a creature that comes out of its shell suggests daydreams of a mixed creature that is not only “half fish, half flesh,” but also half dead, half alive, and, in extreme cases, half stone, half man.’ So too, we have seen Albertine and Ariane (as well as the episode of the madeleine, and the mother in her goodnight kiss) as all-at-once ‘half fish, half flesh’, but also tied explicitly to the threat of death and the playful existence of a life born of desire. In Ariane’s movement around the sculpture in the Musée Rodin, she too is revealed as half stone, half woman. In Albertine, as in Ariane, it is the formation of her existence (as opposed to her form) that remains mysterious to both the Narrator and Simon, the reader of the text and the viewer of Akerman’s film. Bachelard’s reading of the shell compliments with precision the questions posed by the Narrator’s writings of Albertine, her person, her body and her sensory proximity to reader of the object of both nature and fantasy, as revealed to us in the complimentary scenes from La Captive:

Here, in the very limited domain in which we are studying images, we should have to resolve the contradictions of the shell, which at times is so rough outside and so soft, so pearly, in its intimacy. How is it possible to obtain this polish by means of friction with a creature that is so soft and flabby? And doesn’t the finger that dreams as it strokes the intimate mother-of-pearl surface surpass our human, all too human, dreams?

The placing of Albertine at the beach, at the edge of the sea, returns Ariane, the viewer, Simon and the reader of the Narrator’s text to the water’s edge of the madeleine’s origins.

The beloved object is successively the malady and the remedy that suspends and aggravates it.

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461 Ibid., p. 109
462 Ibid., p. 115
463 Proust, Sodom and Gomorrah, p. 268
Albertine is the mould from which the Narrator’s jealousy is held captive, and from which his desire grows from. Whilst the Narrator prefers the sufferings caused by his self-imprisoning life with Albertine, it is his inability to ingratiate himself into her lies that serves to bring about her eventual departure. As Beugnet and Schmid recount:

In the absence of any final knowledge to be gained, and faced with Albertine’s mystery and irreducible alterity, the destructive machinery of jealousy cannot be brought to a halt. Marcel is caught in a mental prison of his own making from which only Albertine’s death will eventually free him, though, as he learns in *Albertine disparue*, jealousy may continue to torment the lover even if the object of his jealousy no longer exists.⁴⁶⁴

Ariane’s death is the clearest distancing of Akerman’s *La Captive* from Proust’s departure of Albertine. Whereas Albertine flees through an open window, and the Narrator later learns that she has been killed in a horse-riding accident, Ariane, on the other hand, the viewer presumes, meets a watery grave in her return to the sea. And yet, Beugnet and Schmid note a scene in *Sodom and Gomorrah*, that pre-empts both Albertine and Ariane’s futures, where, ‘after a painful interrogation by the Narrator, the woman threatens to throw herself into the sea’.⁴⁶⁵

“It’s too bad of you, I alter all my plans to spend a nice evening with you, and it’s you that won’t have it, and you accuse me of telling lies. I’ve never known you be so cruel. The sea shall be my tomb. I shall never see you any more.” At these words my heart missed a beat, although I was certain that she would come again next day, as she did. “I shall drown myself, I shall throw myself into the sea.” “Like Sappho.” “There you go, insulting me again. You suspect not only what I say but what I do.” “But, my lamb, I didn’t mean anything, I swear to you. You

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⁴⁶⁴ Beugnet and Schmid, ‘Filming Obsession’, p. 170
⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 75
know Sappho flung herself into the sea.” “Yes, yes, you have no faith in me.” She saw from the clock that it was twenty minutes to the hour; she was afraid of missing her appointment, and choosing the shortest form of farewell (for which as it happened she apologised on coming to see me again next day, the other person presumably not being free then), she dashed from the room, crying “Good-bye for ever,” in a heartbroken tone. And perhaps she was heartbroken. For, knowing what she was about at that moment better than I, at once more severe and more indulgent towards herself than I was towards her, she may after all have had a fear that I might refuse to see her again after the way in which she had left me. And I believe that she was attached to me, so much so that the other person was more jealous than I was.466

By choosing Ariane’s death by drowning, Akerman underlines the circularity of the narrative from which her film pours forth. Having driven Ariane to the coast (and almost to the point of madness), Simon believes himself to be in control of their relationship. His strength is buoyed, he takes charge, at the hotel he orders eggs (a further reminder of the part-animal, maternal origins of the narrative) whilst Ariane goes outdoors for an evening swim and some air. As his wait lengthens, he becomes increasingly aware of the pressing of Time upon his fantasized form of the woman he has held for so long in his sight. So too, the elements of nature compress upon his senses. The sea breeze blows the flimsy hotel curtains into the room, whilst the tide crashes beyond. The return of Rachmaninov’s *Isle of the Dead* becomes increasingly loud, its presence weighs heavy on the finality of the scene to come. A panicked Simon runs outside, strips to his trousers (in remaining partly-clothed, he too, like Ariane, remains part-human, his lower body concealed, perhaps he is part-mythical too?) and runs into the dark sea.

As the music swells and the darkness of the scene persists, the viewer’s gaze is fixed morbidly on the camera’s unseeing eye. As dawn breaks, Simon appears,

a hazy figure on the horizon, atop the sea, a man in a boat steers him back to land.

‘As if crossing the Styx’, Simon must be a man of the land, whilst Ariane has been welcomed again by the water. As the boat approaches the shore and Simon’s face draws closer to the camera’s lens, Akerman’s focus is of a shivering, sodden man, cloaked in blankets, his lips parted, his face open in grief. Simon draws closer still, and his body moves out of the frame, breaking the wall and joining the viewer, as he did in the opening scene when he stood before his home movie footage. ‘His position’, writes Bernard Benoliel, ‘doubles his impotency’:

When he filmed these images, he wasn’t on the one side of the women, but on the side of the camera, and, once again, he cannot cross the frontier, he is forced to stay where he is, very close, but nonetheless distant […] Thus, when, in the film’s last shot on the water, Simon moves towards us in a small boat from the depth of the image, from a point furthest away to one which is closest, until he passes under the frame, and, in short, enters the cinema, one feels that he is coming back to her original place.

For Simon, her (Ariane’s) original place is contained within his own interior projection room of his mind. In contrast, Beugnet and Schmid claim that, as in the opening sequence, it is instead ‘the depth of field (and the sea which, with its ever changing horizon, defies the defining power of vision) that offers relief from the camera and her lover’s controlling gaze.’ Whereas it is Simon whose body is now surrounded by fabric, cloaked in heat-giving blankets, Ariane’s body has been committed to the water, she has slipped into a watery gown that echoes, vastly, the silken, liquid-like robe that Simon could only ever touch at in his dimly-lit room.

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467 Ibid., p. 189
469 Ibid., p. 190
Thus, in *La Captive*, Akerman returns the viewer to Proust’s Narrator’s controlling, jealous love, and its fateful consequence. Wilson writes that Proust’s Narrator is consumed in his quest ‘to seek a love which is as solipsistic, as intense, and as impossible as the child’s initiatory encounters with love in fictions.’\textsuperscript{470} In his text of ‘inescapable substitutions’, the dangers of a fictional love are writ large in the final moments when ‘heightened encounter displaces ‘reality’’.\textsuperscript{471} His Narrator’s failure to decode the ‘ricocheting drama’ in which he has placed both his fantasies and his desires can only end when the reader as ‘complicit victim’ come to witness the culmination of his ‘series of imperfect re-enactments which at once recall and occlude the previous roles he has performed’ in his pursuit of the madeleine.\textsuperscript{472} Where the Narrator fails in his projected performance of obsessive love, Proust’s achievement, for Wilson, lies in ‘the very destabilizing of desiring reading positions.’\textsuperscript{473} Akerman, too, in her exposure of Ariane to the viewer through Simon’s unflinching gaze, explodes the vanity of the illusion of her fictional presence within his constructed fantasy. As ‘a fiction upon which his identity is dependent’, both Simon and the Narrator are faced with the enormous task of contending with the return of memories, whilst both Ariane and Albertine take a line of flight from the pages and film reels in which they were held captive. Becoming now-absent captors the haunting presence of their femininity determines that, in Simon and the Narrator, jealousy ‘may continue to torment the lover even if the object of his jealousy no longer exists.’\textsuperscript{474}

Indeed, Albertine’s delayed “Good bye forever!” is the resounding echo that prompts the Narrator to begin to write. In her flight, she frees the Narrator from her imaginary confines, and allows him to produce a text of memory and recalled desire. In the memory of her too-close face pressed against the screen of the novel, Proust’s Narrator begins to mould his own ‘world of reading’ in

\textsuperscript{470} Wilson, ‘Reading Albertine’s Sexuality’, p. 85
\textsuperscript{471} Ibid., p. 93
\textsuperscript{472} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{473} Ibid, p. 90
\textsuperscript{474} Beugnet and Schmid, ‘Filming Obsession’, p. 170
which the madeleine both disturbs and fills the surface. From the madeleine which was always all at once outside of time and container of it, a tiny vessel that collapses linearity in its little shell-shaped folds, opens up, dizzyingly, magically like a little Japanese flower. The Narrator recognises Time in the space of the absorbing sponge of madeleine:

And I felt, as I say, a sensation of weariness and almost of terror at the thought that all this length of Time had not only, without interruption, been lived, experienced, secreted by me, that it was my life, was in fact me, but also that I was compelled so long as I was alive to keep it attached to me, that it supported me and that, perched on its giddy summit, I could not myself make a movement without displacing it. A feeling of vertigo seized me as I looked down beneath me, yet within me, as though from a height, which was my own height, of many leagues, at the long series of the years.

‘Profound Albertine, whom I saw sleeping and who was dead’ carries in her the weight of the madeleine’s resonance, the kiss of the mother, the excesses of sexual fantasy, the shell of the Narrator’s timely existence, from which Proust’s novel pours forth, from the great height of a fictional reality recalled, in order that it can be lived in return.

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475 Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, p. 5
Conclusion: ‘Seek? More than that: create.’

Madeleine Time both holds and moves, transcending the divisions of literature, still, and moving image. To read Madeleine Time through film is to recognise the cinematic in Proust’s *Search*, where, through the reading encounter, written images move the holding text.

In *Boston, 2000*, Christian Marclay turns a quick snap-shot of a late-19th-century sculpture in an art museum into an isolated, photographed subject, reproducing it in print form, and shown in his 2013 solo exhibition, *Things I’ve Heard*. Reproduced again, re-presented, it forms the frontispiece image for the cover of the exhibition’s catalogue, available to buy after visiting the show at Fraenkel Gallery in San Francisco, and the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York, or as an e-commerce purchase, made available to be mailed out internationally through various online stores. *(Fig. 24)* The sculpted marble subject of Marclay’s photograph is Randolph Rogers’ 1856 *Nydia the Blind Girl of Pompeii*. It forms part of the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts, and, at the time of writing, is to be found on display on the institution’s Level Two, within the Art of the Americas Wing, in Gallery 233: The Penny and Jeff Vinik Gallery. Rogers’ sculpture is based on a character from the Right Honourable Lord Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s 1834 novel, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, who, in turn, was inspired by Russian artist Karl Briullov’s large-scale oil on canvas painting *The Last Day of Pompeii* (1830-33). In Lord Lytton’s novel, set in AD 79, the year of the destruction of Pompeii, Nydia, a young woman from a well-standing family, is kidnapped. Blind and forced into slavery, she weaves and sells garlands of flowers to earn money for her captors. Freed by the handsome Athenian protagonist, Glaucus, Nydia then suffers the pains of her unrequited love for him. With a plot of murder and conspiracy culminating with the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, Nydia leads Glaucus and Ione, his beloved, and his close friend Sallust to safety, helping them to escape out into the Bay of Naples on a ship. The next morning, unable

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to live without Glaucus, the broken-hearted Nydia slips quietly into the sea, meeting her death by drowning. The novel ends with a letter written from Glaucus, now living in Athens with Ione, to Sallust in Rome, in which he tells his friend that the two live together in happiness, having converted to Christianity, and built a tomb there in Nydia’s memory.

American Neo-classicist sculptor Randolph Rogers (1825-1892), worked as an engraver in New York before travelling to Italy in 1848, studying first in Florence before moving to Rome where he lived for over thirty years until his death. Rome was where Rogers found his fortune, his works proving a popular success. More than fifty marble copies exist of Rogers’ *Nydia, the Blind Girl of Pompeii*, commissioned by admirers, and carved by Italian craftsmen after Rogers’ original model.\(^{478}\) Today, they are housed in private and public collections across the globe.\(^{479}\) In addition to Boston, copies reside in the collections of many leading American cultural institutions, from the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, Princeton University Art Museum, NJ, and the Art Institute Chicago, IL. The ‘most popular American sculpture of the nineteenth century,’ Rogers’ *Nydia*, almost life-size (in Boston she stands at 137cm in height), depicts the character’s driving movement forwards in her attempt to lead Glaucus to safety out of Pompeii, as Vesuvius erupts overhead. The closed marble eyes and the long staff clutched in her right hand allude to her blindness. Her left hand stretches across her body, cupping her right ear, listening out for danger, suggesting the use of an acute aural sense to guide her carefully forward, as the crumbled Corinthian capital at her foot marks the terror of the destruction of the city under the might of the volcano.\(^{480}\)

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\(^{478}\) Indeed, the information label of the Met Museum’s copy states that ‘According to Rogers, it was replicated 167 times in two sizes’, a hugely popular reproduction http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/11951 (first accessed 10/01/2015)


\(^{480}\) See http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/11951 (first accessed 10/01/2015)
Born in San Rafael, California in 1955, the son of an American mother and a Swiss father, raised in Geneva, and now based between London and New York, Christian Marclay has long worked with sound, film and photography. In 2002, his *Video Quartet*, ‘an anthology of film clips joined top-to-bottom’ that runs as ‘four loops of clips from commercial sound films on four DVD screens, spaced out along a wall’ marries film to sound in a staging of ‘pure synchronicity’ that Rosalind Krauss deems his most appealing and biggest strength in his artistic practice.\(^{481}\) But Marclay is best known for *The Clock*, another compilation of film clips, albeit on a far larger scale, this is the twenty-four hour moving image piece for which he was awarded the Golden Lion whilst representing the USA at the 2011 Venice Biennale. *The Clock* comprises ‘fragments of commercial films, joined end-to-end’ that are ‘projected in video on a wall as a segmented twelve by twenty-one foot image’.\(^{482}\)

Spliced, fused, cutting, snapping, *The Clock* presents montage footage lifted from film and television, marking real-time references to specific temporal moments throughout the day with images of time pieces or announcing them through dialogue or subtitling, tolling bells, and scene fragments as miniature (or rather, minute) portraits of moments.\(^{483}\) Stretching over twenty-four hours of audience and projected time, Krauss regards this as a doubling of the temporal focus.\(^{484}\) To watch *The Clock* is to become mesmerized by Time. ‘We confront’, expands Krauss, ‘another of the underlying conditions of film—synch time: which is to say, projection at twenty-four frames a second, synchronized with the psycho-physiological facts of optics, as the retinal projection of the after-image from one frame’s visual stimulation slides invisibly into the next.’\(^{485}\) Here ‘the illusion of movement overrides the film frame’s appearance, creating the visual slippage we call the “movies.”’\(^{486}\) Held within the continuum of man-made construction that dictates human experience, Marclay’s curated time-

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482 Krauss, ‘Clock Time’, p. 213
483 ‘The Clock selects fragments in which the dials of wristwatches and large free-standing clocks figure prominently,’ Krauss, ‘Clock Time’, p. 213
484 Ibid.
485 Ibid., p. 214
486 Ibid.
piece makes visual the persistence and power of clock time that Jonathan Crary explores textually in his 24/7.\textsuperscript{487}

Marcy, in his use of moving imagery montage, cuts time in order to remake it. In lifting from film and television, mediums built upon the mechanisms of movement, he adopts the disruption of linearity to rebuild a new apparatus for experiencing a chronology built from the illusion of time. For Krauss, it is the successful exploitation of ‘the cutaway as its “plot” that marks the power of The Clock.’\textsuperscript{488} Unfolding ‘through the sights of the dials displayed on clocks and watches, and the reaction shots of horrified characters in the film clips Marclay anthologizes into his own work’, Marclay, like Hitchcock, works with the face and with light, to plot out his time piece. Indeed, some of Hitchcock’s most well-known visual references to time are featured in Marclay’s Clock, alongside other Hollywood greats (‘We recognize Sean Connery, Charlie Chaplin, Steve McQueen, Gregory Peck, but unlike the temporal arcs that produce the plots of Dial M for Murder, or Strangers on a Train’).\textsuperscript{489} As Krauss notes, ‘the suspense unreeling inside the screen is not synchronized with the suspense unfolding in the viewer’s real time.’ She continues, ‘it doesn’t take long before members of the audience glance at their watches and realize that the precise moment displayed on the screen matches the moment registered on their own wrists.’\textsuperscript{490}

In ‘transforming the reel time of film into the real time of waiting’, Marclay’s Clock enacts a synchronous simultaneity that celebrates and suspends the film medium in and of itself, as supported by and embedded in the “technical support” of the commercial sound film.\textsuperscript{491} In alluding to time, the film medium

\textsuperscript{487} Jonathan Crary, 24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep (London and New York: Verso, 2014)
\textsuperscript{488} Krauss, p. 214
\textsuperscript{489} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{490} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{491} Ibid., p. 217. Krauss explains her term “technical support”: ‘If traditional art required artisanal supports of various kinds—canvas for oil painting, plaster and wax for bronze casting, light-sensitive emulsion for photography—contemporary art makes use of technical supports—commercial or industrial products—to which it them makes recursive reference, in the manner of modernist art’s reflex of self-criticism.’ Ibid., p. 213. See also Rosalind E. Krauss, “Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition,” October No. 116
is experienced outside of time. A single three-minute scene from a blockbuster film, for instance, could quite easily have been made over the course of several days of filming. Time is collapsed. A ‘day in the life of’ film, such as Akerman’s Jeanne Dielman—which, more specifically, depicts three consecutive days in the life of Jeanne—would require several months of filming, not to mention the time spent preparing for the film (sourcing funds, writing, developing, locating sets, hiring actors and so on) and that spent in post-production before its release.

In none of the three films explored in this thesis is it made explicit what time period plays out over the course of each work. Vertigo moves from the moment of Scottie the detective’s rooftop chase, to his recovery, to his infatuation with Madeleine, to witnessing her death, to his admittance to a psychiatric unit, to his release, to his making-over of Judy into Madeleine, to his conquering of his vertigo at the moment of Judy’s death. Céleste moves from recollections to repeat moments, and makes reference to a wealth of memories recalled from a biography that spans a period of eight years living with Proust from 1914 to 1922 (as well as summoning memories of childhood and alluding to her future after his death). La Captive appears to take place in a hot and heady Parisian summer, yet recalls a summer at the seaside sometime before, whilst long, slow scenes, stolen sleeps and sleepless nights, and the same blue silk slip dress and crushed grey-blue velvet suit means that Ariane and Simon conduct their lives at their own pace, contained within the same space, but out of sync with one another. In these three films, the passage of Chronos, or old Father Time, is challenged by the movement of the women who play out across the screen. To experience these films is to be all at once inside time and outside of it. To become the viewer is to dedicate a time to watching in which chronological time passes, whilst film time moves outside, beyond the parameters of experience. Real time presses up against reel time. The contiguity of the two as experienced in a single moment, echoes the experience of the Narrator in the madeleine moment—the individual encounter, the memory, and the impetus to

(Spring, 2006) and “A Voyage on the North Sea”: Art in the Age of the Post-Modern Condition (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999).
create, all spilling out from the same, single, fragmentary morsel in the reading encounter. This then, is Madeleine Time.

In Marclay’s *Boston, 2000*, linear time collapses. A copy of Rogers’ sculpture *Nydia* stands in a Boston gallery, where, using a handheld digital camera, it is photographed by Marclay. Now already doubled—a copy of a copy—then sculpture becomes a digital impression, an everyday technological feat that transforms marble and air into pixels and data in an instant. Reproduced as a print, pressed and prodded manipulated through the processes of computer editing, development and printing and hung in a gallery, the copied copy becomes a three-dimensional work once more. Re-produced again, this time flattened and bound, becoming the image for the exhibition catalogue, *Nydia-as-Boston, 2000*-as-book cover to be held and picked up and turned over, is text made tangible through touch. We are returned to the origin, tracing the movement back between mediums and history, almost three hundred years collapse in an instant, Lord Lytton’s fictional Pompeii returns. Vesuvius, Pompeii, Lytton’s London, Rogers’ Florence and Rome, *Nydia*’s Boston, Marclay’s show in San Francisco and New York, my own copy of *Boston, 2000* at my desk in Manchester, all overflowing from the stilled and silent cover of *Things I’ve Heard*. Nydia, the blind girl of Pompeii, is as mythical and mesmerizing, as imagined and as real as Golo who terrifies the Narrator as he rides across his bedroom walls, shining out of the magic lantern before bedtime at Combray. She makes the space for seeing. Sculpted, she would always be sightless, for statues, like photographs, like films, cannot see. Instead, Nydia stands as an invitation to seeing, to seeking out experience through the collapse of time in the medium as it presses up against the linear time of the viewing encounter. As Hitchcock’s Madeleine contemplates the portrait of Carlotta, as Céleste rushes by a painting of Proust’s mother on her way to answering his service bell, as Akerman’s Ariane circles the Rodin bust, each of these filmed women encounter and engage with visual representations of other women. Nydia’s postured movement forward leans in towards a reading in and a listening to the image that pours forth from her own fiction. Her narrative echoes that of the madeleine. Her hand cupped around her ear speaks of scallop
shells and pilgrim badges, of the seaside, of Balbec and Saint Jacques and fluted cake moulds. Her sculpted dress has the delicacy of Ariane’s slippery silks, and Albertine’s classical inspired Fortuny gowns. Her hair twisted back is Madeleine’s spiralled chignon. Some tresses falling loose, she is come undone, like Madeleine after her plunge into the water. The sea, the liquid origin, and wide expanse seen by Céleste with Proust at Cabourg, Ariane’s fate, of Madeleine’s plunge, of Nydia’s own death by drowning, all are held in this image. Marclay’s image stirs me. It moves me to lean forward, to listen in and look beyond the visual of the three women filmed by Hitchcock, Adlon, and Akerman. They press against me, around, swim in my senses and resound like the clanging bells of Combray’s church on Sundays. Contained in the madeleine is the provocation to create. From the initial reading encounter, sprung a desire to seek the origin of the provocation. Madeleine Time is the space between reading and writing made tangible through the visual encounter of the film as played across the senses.

‘Dwelling in every written text,’ writes David Toop, ‘there are voices; within images there is some suggestion of acoustic space. Space surrounds, yet our relation to its enveloping, intrusive, fleeting nature is fragile (a game of Chinese whispers) rather than decisive.’\textsuperscript{492} Marclay’s Nydia provokes me, asks me to follow her, to listen in to the dark space that surrounds her. She has something of Ariadne about her, in her asking to be followed, her mythologized movements traced across stories, collapsing histories. In Barthes’ most treasured photograph of his maman in the Winter Garden, he finds some resonance, some essence that provokes him:

Something like an essence of the Photograph floated in this particular picture. I therefore decided to “derive” all Photography (its “nature”) from the only photograph which assuredly existed for me, and to take it somehow as a guide for my last investigation. All the world’s photographs formed a Labyrinth. I knew that at the center of this

Labyrinth I would find nothing but this sole picture, fulfilling Nietzsche’s prophecy: “A labyrinthine man never seeks the truth, but only his Ariadne.” The Winter Garden Photograph was my Ariadne, not because it would help me discover a secret thing (monster or treasure), but because it would tell me what constituted the thread which drew me toward Photography. I had understood that henceforth I must interrogate the evidence of Photography, not from the viewpoint of pleasure, but in relation to what we romantically call love and death.\(^{493}\)

In the Winter Garden Photograph, Barthes discovers nothing, but sensed everything. It provoked in him the desire to write. In Proust’s Narrator’s madeleine cake, the essence that spills over from the triggering of the memory of childhood, sparks the first will towards the desire to write his own great novel. From these objects, sensory stimulation is stirred (seen in Barthes, tasted in Proust). Each finds a provocation to write, to create. To recall Proust’s Narrator’s encounter with the madeleine crumbs one final time:

> It is plain that the truth I am seeking lies not in the cup but in myself. The drink has called it into being, but does not know it, and can only repeat indefinitely, with a progressive diminution of strength, the same message which I cannot interpret, though I hope at least to be able to call it forth again and to find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final enlightenment. I put down the cup and examine my own mind. It alone can discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty, whenever the mind feels overtaken by itself; when it, the seeker, is at the same time the dark region through which it must go seeking and where all its equipment will avail it nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not yet

\(^{493}\) Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 73. He continues: ‘(I cannot reproduce the Winter Garden Photograph. It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the “ordinary”, it cannot in any way constitute the visible object of a science; it cannot establish an objectivity, in the positive sense of the term; at most it would interest your *studium*: period, clothes, photogeny; but in it, for you, no wound.)’ Ibid.
exist, which it alone can make actual, which it alone can bring into the light of day.494

Madeleine, Ariadne, Nydia, Maman, all can be traced along the thread that is drawn between desire and creation. To write. And, ‘just as a silent reader is implicitly a containment of sounds, so the letter itself, the silent speaker, can become a listener.’495 To read Proust’s madeleine is also to create, to listen in. Space-making and memory-tracing, the time of the madeleine is where listening takes place.

At Pompeii, the preservation of wood specimens have allowed for scientists, historians and anthropologists to trace the natural histories that existed in the geographical locale under the volcano. Whilst Lord Lytton and Rogers after him immortalised the fate of the town in the fictional story (the sculpting) of Nydia and her fellow residents, the volcano itself preserved once-living beings, transporting them into a future, to be remembered. As Wihelmina Feemster Jashemski and Frederick G. Meyer note in their Natural History of Pompeii:

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in southern Italy in the year A.D. 79 charred and/or buried vast amounts of wood in its fiery holocaust, which claimed and laid to waste the coastal Roman towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum. The demise of residents of these villages has become the treasure of modern archaeology as excavation of the ruins from volcanic debris has provided countless preserved artifacts that have given us a glimpse of materials and society of the time. Most notable as artifacts are wood and other plant materials. Volcanic eruptions are well-known instruments for charring and morphological preservation of wood and plant parts in the geologic record. Radiologic dating of charred wood

494 Proust, Swann’s Way, p. 52. He continues: ‘But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more immaterial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection., Ibid., p. 54
495 Toop, Sinister Resonance, xiv
has given us a valuable means by which successive volcanic eruptions in tectonically active areas such as the Vesuvian region.\textsuperscript{496}

My mind traces in the distance between the sculpture of Nydia, the ruins of Pompeii, and the ash clouds of Proust’s war-time Paris, where Céleste recalled waiting for her master who returned from a walk with his hat and coat covered in shrapnel and dust, the products of a German bomb. I trace this too, in Carol Mavor’s description of the opening scene of Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais’ \textit{Hiroshima mon amour} (1959)\textsuperscript{497} where:

> The bodies seem to be under a rain of ash, recalling Pompeii. These poetic images of arms, back, and leg twined together, drenched in ashes, were perhaps “inspired by a novel on Pompeii… [that Duras] had been reading.”\textsuperscript{498}

Perhaps Duras, writing her screenplay of a twenty-hour encounter (a compression of Marclay’s full day-to-night piece, ‘it is the clock going round to twelve o’clock once, and then round again to twelve o’clock one more time’)\textsuperscript{499} between a French woman, Elle, and her Japanese lover, Lui, in the wounded city of Hiroshima was reading Lord Lytton’s novel about the destruction of

\textsuperscript{496} Wilhelmina Feemster Jashemski, and Frederick G. Meyer., eds., \textit{The Natural History of Pompeii} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 217

\textsuperscript{497} \textit{Hiroshima mon amour} (Argos Films, 1959). Screenplay by Marguerite Duras, Directed by Alain Resnais.


\textsuperscript{499} Mavor, \textit{Black and Blue}, p. 118. She continues: ‘As Jacques Rivette has noted: “At the end of the last reel you can easily move back to the first, and so on… It is an idea of the infinite but contained within a very short interval, since ultimately the ‘time’ of Hiroshima can just as well last twenty-four hours as one second.”’ Ibid., quoting Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer, Jean-Luc Godard, et al., ‘Hiroshima, notre amour,’ in \textit{Cahiers du cinema, the 1950s: Neorealism, Hollywood, New Wave}, ed. Jon Hillier, trans. Liz Heron (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 69
Pompeii with its unseeing heroine Nydia. ‘You saw nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing.’ says the Japanese lover. It certainly takes on a new resonance. ‘Or,’ Mavor continues, tracing another memory ring, ‘they could have come from Proust’s Recherche (a book of special interest to Resnais).’ In a scene that draws the pages of Céleste’s memoirs close to those of the Search, Proust has his Narrator ‘poetically imagining the gasses of German warfare as able to preserve brief seconds of everyday life, like a photograph,’ thus linking the ‘asphyxiating fumes of the First World War with the toxic vapors of Vesuvius and the burial of Pompeii.’ ‘With and emphasis on the frivolity of the bourgeois,’ Mavor continues, ‘Proust writes his own Le Souvenir d’un avenir’:

In Proust’s Remembrance of things to come, children of the future will study traces of bodies which were frozen by the Vesuvius-like fumes of the Great War: a woman putting on “a last layer of powder

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502 Mavor, Black and Blue, p. 115
503 “Then I began to put away the things he’d taken off when he came in—coat, gloves… When I got to the hat I couldn’t help exclaiming. The brim was full of bits of shrapnel. “Monsieur, look at all this metal!” I said. “Did you walk home, then? Weren’t you afraid?” “No, Céleste,” he said. “Why should I be? It was such a beautiful sight.” And he described the searchlights and the shellbursts in the sky and the reflections in the river.’ Albaret, Monsieur Proust, pp. 93-94. See also Mavor, Reading Boyishly, pp. 298-301.
504 Ibid.
505 Remembrance of Things to Come is also the name given to a 2003 cine-essay by Chris Marker and Yannick Bellon that focuses on the photographer Denise Bellon between 1935 and 1955 but tracing around histories, locations, cultures as only he could. Applying the same technique of laying still photographs one after the other, as in La Jetée, Marker’s montage makes a moving image portrait of Bellon through a multitude of visual subjects. See Remembrance of Things Past (Icarus Films, 2003).
before going out to dine.; or a gentleman “adding the final touches to his false eyebrows.”

The preserved wood specimens of Pompeii stand as a remembrance of things to come, the future remembering, memorialising of a time long gone but held in the present through the mapping of each historical moment that can be traced through it. Once more a movement, from Pompeii back to Paris, to the dystopian future of the post-WWIII city of Chris Marker’s *La Jetée*. As in Proust’s *Search*, Marker’s Narrator, Jean Négroni, tells us that ‘This is the story of a man marked by an image from his childhood.’ For Proust, the madeleine. For Marker, the remaking of Madeleine from *Vertigo* in the Paris of the future. Sent to another time by The Experimenter (Jacques Ledoux), The Man (Davos Hanich) and The Woman (Hélène Chatelain) visit Le Jardin des Plantes. There, amongst the taxidermied animals, preserved and petrified in their own skins, they look at, point to, gesture around the time of the great sequoia tree. ([Fig. 25](#)) ‘*La Jetée* is a remake of *Vertigo*, and *Sans soleil* is a remake of *La Jetée*, which is a remake of *Vertigo*,’ writes Mavor. After making her own pilgrimage, Mavor tracked down the Paris sequoia tree:

A plaque on the tree informs the viewer that it is “a souvenir” and “a gift” of and from the people of California to the people of France. In the spirit of Madeleine’s coiled hair and her remark, “here I was born… and there I died,” little brass plaques mark individual circles on the tree, indicating what happened during the particular rings: AD 79, the destruction of Pompeii; 1039, the first Crusade; 1865, the abolition of Slavery; and on and on and on. (A lot could be said about which events in history are highlighted, but that’s another story.) In sum, the sequoia is history/memory (*souvenir*) as spiraling vertigo.

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507 ‘Ceci est l’histoire d’un homme marqué par une image d’enfance’, in original French. See also Mavor, *Black and Blue*, p. 76
508 Mavor, *Black and Blue*, p. 106
509 Ibid., p. 109
The rings are traced from Pompeii to Paris to California. In *Sans Soleil*, Marker makes his own pilgrimage, following in Scottie’s footsteps, his tyre tracks across San Francisco and the Bay Area coast roads, across to the Muir Woods, where the sequoia section from *Vertigo* still stands. I too, made the pilgrimage. I traced where Sandor Krasna as Chris Marker traced Madeleine’s gesture, at a time outside of my own time, the cut sequoia section placed inside the fantasy of the reel time of the film medium. *(Fig. 26)* There were many others besides me. Several *Vertigo* coach and driving tours run throughout the week, taking fans and curious tourists from San Francisco’s city centre, to Lombard Street where Scottie’s apartment sat, passing the phallic Coit Tower that delight Hitchcock, down to Old Fort Point by the Bay underneath the Golden Gate Bridge, up the coast to Muir Woods, down the coast to Mission San Juan Bautista. It was in Mission Dolores that the madeleine space came to me. Walking along the central aisle of the sparse white church (noting a metal spiral staircase at the rear), I moved through the side door and out into the graveyard. I sought out something I knew already to be missing—the faux headstone of Carlotta Valdes. A prop, just like she, in order to build the Madeleine narrative into which Scottie would fall. In the empty space of the graveyard the memory of Scottie’s dream, animated by Saul Bass, came back to me. In the midpoint of the film, in his fitful state and believing himself to be responsible for Madeleine’s, Scottie’s nightmare sees his figure fall into the gaping void of Carlotta’s grave, plunging into a mad vision of flashing colours and high strings. The tree rings become the vertiginous abyss of the nightmare, and return to the opening credits where the spiralling rings loop out from and over the eye of a woman. Replicated on the poster designs and artwork, they spiral, hallucinatory helixes, the shape of *Vertigo*’s alluring tale. In the poster, both man and woman are silhouetted (though she, it should be noted, is truly transparent, unfilled, always already spectral in her presence), poised over the abyss, always about to fall. *(Fig. 27)* I trace the poster design as I traced the rings of the sequoia. ‘One spiral leads to another and another.’

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More locally, another giant sequoia resides in London’s Natural History Museum. The transverse section of *Sequoiadendron giganteum* stands proudly like a giant amber jewel at one end of the cathedral-like Hintze Hall, an upright altar to History, sharing the grand space with other ancient relics and historical remembrances; a Diplodocus skeleton cast, a statue of Darwin, and a Glyptodon—the now-extinct giant-sized relative of the armadillo. At 1,300 years old, the Museum’s sequoia is far older than the Victorian building in which it is housed, but is a mere baby in comparison to its French counterpart in Le Jardin des Plantes; the Natural History Museum’s beginning its life as a seedling almost half a millennium later in 557 AD (the year that St. Columba founded his mission on the Scottish island of Iona, so the label reads). *Vertigo*’s sequoia in the Muir Woods outside San Francisco is even younger still. Pausing the film reveals the dendrochronological tracing of its cross-section, marking the tree’s first ringed label at ‘909 AD’, from which it grew and grew, expanding upwards and outwards and onwards through the Battle of Hastings in 1066, the 1215 signing of the Magna Carta, Columbus’ discovery of America in 1452, the 1776 Declaration of Independence, up until ‘1930 Tree Cut Down’. Trees are cut, films are cut, locks of hair are cut, each remains powerful in its ability to both retain and resist time, to contain within and project beyond their moments of growth and development.

Dendrochronology is the scientific practice of dating of trees by analysing the ringed patterns of their growth. The term takes its from ‘dendron’, the Greek for ‘tree limb’ and ‘khronos’, ‘time’, ‘logia’, allowing for the historically sequential

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511 At the Natural History Museum the markers of world religions, from St Columba to the origins of Islam (600), the spread of Buddhism in Japan (650), the first English missionaries go to the Continent (700), the establishment of Papal states in Italy (750), the Vikings, the decline of the Mayan civilization, the Norman Conquest, the deaths of Chaucer and Joan of Arc (1400), da Vinci’s design for his flying machine (1500) and the birth of both William Shakespeare and Galileo as the sequoia celebrates its one thousandth year (1550), Newton’s discovery of the laws of gravity (1650), the Declaration of American Independence (1750), the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* and the birth of Mahatma Gandhi (1850), and the felling of the sequoia in 1892, at the ages of 1335 years, a western-oriented history of man’s relation to the world, in which the canon of the museum in which the cross-section of the tree dwells is contained within its rings.
(chronological) tracing of events where, typically, one ring will represent one year of growth. The tree thus takes on a bodily or anthropomorphic connotation in which the trunk (the limb) is bound to human modes of experience by association. To date the felled tree in accordance with markers of human activity is to attempt to bind man with nature whilst acting upon it. ‘Most of us aren’t dendrochronologists—but who isn’t moved by the way trees encapsulate and memorialize time?’ writes Verlyn Klinenborg in her foreword to Bryan Nash Gill’s Woodcut.

Bryan Nash Gill (1961-2013) was a Connecticut artist, reaching notoriety towards the end of his short life for his popular Woodcut pieces, in which he would make relief prints and sculptures from sections of tree trunks and lumber, often sourced from his trees and building materials on his own farm, other times scouted out on other locations and saved for him by friends and contemporaries. Tenderly tending to his tree trunks, Nash would take the time to get the surface of the cross-section ‘just right’ for the printing process and the design he was trying to achieve. Most often, his trunk prints would take the imprint of a cross-section of the ‘leader’, the central, strongest, most prominent growth spurt that guides the tree upwards towards the sky. Like the film leader strip that is attached to the head or tail of reel, a tree’s leader is the tracing instrument, an indicator of the content to follow (the prominent marker of the film content, or the tree’s body of growth). In Chris Marker’s Sans Soleil, the black leader of the film strip surrounds the film content—the images of Icelandic children by a volcano (I think of Pompeii again), to Tokyo and Vertigo, cats and faces—‘circles around it’, this place. As in the shadowy spaces of Marclay’s Boston, 2000, this darkness opens up a space of images, of dreamscapes playing across the backs of closed eyelids, of open graves, of watery depths.

In a ‘failed’ involuntary memory, the Narrator of the Search, travelling in a carriage with the Villeparisis, sees three trees and suffers the same sudden pangs of emotion as those triggered in the incident of the madeleine. However,

513 Mavor, Black and Blue, p. 105
514 Deleuze, Proust and Signs, pp. 54-58, and Mavor, Black and Blue, p. 104.
unlike the madeleine, from which the ‘image pours forth’, the origin of the trees remains forever ungraspable:

I looked at the three trees; I could see them plainly, but my mind felt that they were concealing something which it could not grasp, as when an object is placed out of our reach, so that our fingers, stretched out at arm’s-length, can only touch for a moment its outer surface, without managing to take hold of anything.  

The Narrator attempts to make space for the darkness from which memory might shine forth, illuminating the path along which his mind is fumbling:

I put my hand for a moment across my eyes, so as to be able to shut them without Mme de Villeparisis’s noticing. I sat there thinking of nothing, then with my thoughts collected, compressed and strengthened I sprang further forward in the direction of the trees, or rather in that inner direction at the end of which I could see them inside myself. I felt again behind them the same object, known to me and yet vague, which I could not bring nearer. And yet all three of them, as the carriage moved on, I could see coming towards me. Where I had looked at them before?

Reaching forwards, the Narrator finds no joy, no resolution. The memory evades him, is unlocatable. The happiness comes in the gesture, held outstretched, like the frozen frame of Madeleine reaching out towards the sequoia, like the Saint Jacques pilgrims trailing their way across mountains and flatlands towards Santiago de Compostela. It is in the journey itself, that the essence is sensed, but remains ungraspable. ‘The three trees will remain forever obscured,’ writes Mavor, ‘and that is their power.’ It unbalances, agitates, provokes. The memory remaining obscured, the closing of the eyelids blinks like the slow shutter of a camera lens. It runs dark, like black leader. In *Boston, 2000*, Nydia, eyes sculpted forever-closed, leans forwards, cupping her ear, a

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515 Proust, *The Guermantes Way*, p. 343
516 Ibid.
517 Mavor, *Black and Blue*, p. 104
mirrored gesture of James Conlon’s hand-ear of Feature Film. ‘What comes together through sound’, writes David Toop, ‘is emergent and passing time—a sense of duration, the field of memory, a fullness of space that lies beyond touch and out of sight, hidden from vision. Sound must be trusted, cannot be trusted, so has power.’ In Gill’s Compression Wood, 2011, the rings of a seventy-six-year-old red oak are squashed and distorted, no longer circular, instead warped like a melted Salvador Dali clock face. (Fig. 28) ‘The term compression wood’, the caption notes, ‘describes trees that grow abnormally in the forest. This growth may result from heavy snow or uprooting, or simply a tree reaching for sunlight. The seashell-like pattern of this block implies that the tree was bending in the direction of the top of the print.’ ‘When printing,’ stated Nash in an interview, ‘I always use my thumb and fingernail.’ The touch of Nash’s thumb and finger provide the tools from which ‘the image pours forth.’ I trace the image with my own thumb and forefinger, just as I trace the edges of a seashell, or, leaning in to hear better, might cup my hand to my ear. Tracing the image of the compression wood, time compresses and explodes. Contained within its folds is the invitation to create, to write. In its depths, the centre of the leader flattened out onto the printed page brings to its surface the space to speak the name of what is sought, Madeleine Time.

In drawing to a conclusion within these pleated folds of cut wood, I do not seek to resolve my search. In beginning to trace the place of the madeleine in these three films (and even now, I am still only just beginning), my experience has been driven by an urge to create. I was moved by the madeleine, as so many readers of Proust are. I was moved by the madeleine in motion of Hitchcock’s Vertigo, I wanted to move around its depths, to seek out its continued allure. In Céleste, I was moved by Akerman’s own unknowing, the absence of

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518 Toop, Sinister Resonance, xv
519 Gill, Woodcut, p. 52
memory projected as memory-making. Reading Madeleine Time through each of these Proustian women, has given each experience the space to attend to the missingness, the absence, the lack that stems from Proust’s madeleine, that I have read in each film case study. To take the research further, to extend the thread, would require closer reading of the *Search* through each of the involuntary moments (Venice, uneven cobblestones, steeple, the clink of a spoon, napkins and pipes, all of these need attention, but I prioritised the madeleine, the origin(ary) example). I would turn more closely to each of the key women (I have paid little attention to Françoise, Maman and the Grandmother deserve more, Odette and Gilberte have only been fleeting glanced at, the band of girls, save for Albertine, I have left mostly to their own devices, and I have paid no visit to the princesses at the dinners, and the ladies of the salons). I would pay closer attention to the creative acts in Proust’s *Search*, to the arts (painting, music and theatre in particular), and I would look more closely at the impact of translation and the movement between the two written languages (French to English) as well as the transportation of text to visual communication (from novel to film). Ultimately, I would look to Time, and understanding of its temporal, spatial and emotional impact in both the novel and the films. Unpacking Proust’s own writing time, from his childhood reading to his translation of Ruskin to his life’s project in building the foundations from which his great novel as cathedral slowly, sturdily grew—a labour of love compressed by the mortal time of his years on earth. Madeleine Time provokes me to write. Madeleine Time is the time of the Narrator’s novel-making, of Proust’s life-writing, of my own tracing-making.

In these three filmed women of Proust, Madeleine, Céleste, and Albertine combine to form the Proustian Woman, of the Narrator’s *Search*, and the author’s pilgrimage towards Writing. Mother, Grandmother, Aunt Léonie, Céleste, Marie, Françoise, Gilberte, Odette, the Duchesse de Guermantes, Albertine, Andrée, Léa, all are all-at-once origin and embodiment of the madeleine moment, from which the *Search* pours forth. Thus, Madeleine Time is the *space* of Proustian Woman, as filmed in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*,
Percy Adlon’s *Céleste*, and Chantal Akerman’s *La Captive*. Madeleine Time is the *space* of the Proustian endeavour, to become the reader who reads himself:

Every reader, as he reads, is actually the reader of himself. The writer's work is only a kind of optical instrument he provides the reader so he can discern what he might never have seen in himself without this book. The reader's recognition in himself of what the book says is the proof of the book's truth.\(^5\)

My initial proposal for the concept of Madeleine Time was based on the argument that the reading encounter with Proust’s *Search* is cinematic, and that Madeleine Time was therefore the experience of the feminine through film. Through close reading, visual analysis, historical and biographical research, and theoretical application, Madeleine Time is upheld as a new approach to Proust studies combining filmic, art historical and literary considerations. Informed by Mieke Bal’s sustained visual reading of Proust in her *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually* and Eric Karpeles’ art analysis in *Paintings in Proust*, my research moves beyond the literary and the visual into the *moving* image of film. Through art historical analysis of other visual works and evocative objects (Esther Teichmann, Proust’s lock of hair, and Bryan Nash Gill’s woodcuts), the research is supported in its consideration of the body as acted upon by time in Proust.

Driven by Julia Kristeva’s description of the madeleine as a ‘woman-cake’, my research develops her maternal, sensual imagery further by locating the madeleine in the realm of cinema. In carefully attending to the subject of the maternal, the research goes beyond the confines of biography (such as Evelyn Bloch-Danoe’s study of Proust’s mother) to consider notions of holding and nurture. Expanding from Gilles Deleuze’s *Proust and Signs* as read alongside his *Cinema 1* and *2*, my Madeleine Time emphasizes film’s ability to both hold

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time and to make time move, just as Proust’s madeleine is both container and conductor of memory.

Presenting a framework for reading Proust both through and alongside film, the research is strengthened and supported by the considered and stimulating work of French and Film Studies scholars Emma Wilson, Martine Beugnet and Marion Schmid. My approach differs in its choice of corpus works—moving away from direct adaptations of Proust for cinema (with the exception of Akerman’s *La Captive*), instead selecting films for their evocation of the feminine that I argue is central to the Proustian reading and viewing encounter.

Aligning my research in the centrefold between Proust Studies and Film Studies, I argue, through Madeleine Time, that Proust’s involuntary memory works upon the text’s narrative in a movement that mirrors the cinematic ‘cut’ that disrupts the ‘reel’ time of film. Developing the concept of Madeleine Time in further research, I intend to ask further questions of the work begun here, namely, if Proust is read as always cinematic, can film be read as always Proustian? Refining the concept of Madeleine Time as a methodological framework, I intend to work towards publishing a series of essays that consider the feminine in Proust and film.

Madeleine Time provokes me to write. Madeleine Time is the time of the Narrator’s novel-making, of Proust’s life-writing, of my own tracing-making.

I put down the cup and examine my own mind. It alone can discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty, whenever the mind feels overtaken by itself; when it, the seeker, is at the same tie the dark region through which it must go seeking and where all its equipment will avail it nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not yet exist, which it alone can make actual, which it alone can bring into the light of day.\(^{522}\)

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\(^{522}\) Proust, *Swann’s Way*, p. 52
Still, I am moved by the madeleine.
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Appendices

Two comparative translations of the ‘madeleine moment’ in English language editions of Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu, Vol. I, Du côté de chez Swann*


Appendix 1.


Extract: ‘The Madeleine Moment’, Combray

And so it was that, for a long time afterwards, when I lay awake at night and revived old memories of Combray, I saw no more of it than this sort of luminous panel, sharply defined against a vague and shadowy background, like the panels against a vague and shadowy background, like the panels which the glow of a Bengal light or a searchlight beam will cut out and illuminate in a building the other parts of which remain plunged in darkness: broad enough at its base, the little parlour, the dining-room, the opening of the dark path from which M. Swann, the unwitting author of my sufferings, would emerge, the hall through which I would journey to the first step of that staircase, so painful to climb, which constituted, all by itself, the slender cone of this irregular pyramid; and, at the summit, my bedroom, with the little passage through whose glazed door Mamma would enter; in a word, seen always at the same evening hour, isolated from all its possible surroundings, detached and solitary against the dark background, the bare minimum of scenery necessary (like the décor one sees prescribed on the title-page of an old play, for its performance in the provinces) to the drama of my undressing; as though all of Combray had consisted of but two floors joined by a slender suitcase, and as though there had been no time there but seven o’clock at night. I must own that I could have assured any questioner that Combray did include other scenes and did exist at other hours than these. But since the facts which I should then have recalled would have been prompted only by voluntary memory, the memory of the intellect, and since the pictures which that kind of memory shows us preserve nothing of the past itself, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue of Combray. To me it was in reality all dead.

Permanently dead? Very possibly.
There is a large element of chance in these matters, and a second chance occurrence, that of our own death, often prevents us from awaiting for any length of time the favours of the first.

I feel that there is much to be said for the Celtic belief that the souls of those whom we have lost are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate object, and thus effectively lost to us until the day (which to many never comes) when we happen to pass by the tree or to obtain possession of the object which forms their prison. Then they start and tremble, they call us by our name, and as soon as we have recognized them the spell is broken. Delivered by us, they have overcome death and return to share our life.

And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling. And it depends on chance whether or not we come upon this object before we ourselves must die.

Many years had elapsed during which nothing of Combray, except what lay in the theatre and the drama of my going to bed there, had any existence for me, when one day in winter, on my return home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, offered me some tea, a thing I did not ordinarily take. I declined at first, and then, for no particular reason, changed my mind. She sent for one of those squat, plump little cakes called “petites madeleines,” which looks as though they had been moulded in the fluted valve of a scallop shell. And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shiver ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my sense, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory—this new sensation having had the effect, which love has, of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was me. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal. Whence could it
have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I sensed that it was connected with the
taste of the tea and the cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savours,
could not, indeed, be of the same nature. Where did it come from? What did it
mean? How could I seize and apprehend it?

I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first,
then a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time to stop; the
potion is losing its virtue. It is plain that the truth I am seeking lies not in the
cup but in myself. The drink has called it into being, but does not know it, and
can only repeat indefinitely, with a progressive diminution of strength, the same
message which I cannot interpret, though I hope at least to be able to call it
forth again and to find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final
enlightenment. I put down the cup and examine my own mind. It alone can
discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty, whenever the mind
feels overtaken by itself; when it, the seeker, is at the same time the dark region
through which it must go seeking and where all its equipment will avail it
nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which
does not yet exist, which it alone can make actual, which it alone can bring into
the light of day.

And I begin again to ask myself what it could have been, this
unremembered state which brought with it no logical proof, but the indisputable
evidence, of its felicity, its reality, and in whose presence other states of
consciousness melted and vanished. I want to try to make it reappear. I retrace
my thoughts to the moment at which I drank the first spoonful of tea. I
rediscover the same state, illuminated by no fresh light. I ask my mind to make
one further effort, to bring back once more the fleeting sensation. And so that
nothing may interrupt it in its course I shut out every obstacle, every extraneous
idea, I stop my ears and screen my attention from the sounds from the next
room. And then, feeling that my mind is tiring itself without having any success
to report, I compel it for a change to enjoy the distraction which I have just
denied it, to think of other things, to rest and refresh itself before making a final
effort. And then for the second time I clear an empty space in front of it; I place
in position before my mind’s eye the still recent taste of that first mouthful, and
I feel something start within me, something that leaves its resting-place and
attempts to rise, something that has been anchored at a great depth; I do not know yet what it is, but I can feel it mounting slowly; I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed.

Undoubtedly what is thus palpitating in the depths of my being must be the image, the visual memory which, being linked to that taste, is trying to follow it into my conscious mind. But its struggles are too far off, too confused and chaotic; scarcely can I perceive the neutral glow into which the elusive whirling medley of stirred-up colours is fused, and I cannot distinguish its form, cannot invite it, as the one possible interpreter, to translate for me the evidence of its contemporary, its inseparable paramour, the taste, cannot ask it to inform me what special circumstance is in question, from what period in my past life. Will it ultimately reach the clear surface of my consciousness, this memory, this old, dead moment which the magnetism of an identical moment has travelled so far to importune, to disturb, to raise up out of the very depths of my being? I cannot tell. Now I feel nothing; it has stopped, has perhaps sunk back into its darkness, from which who can say whether it will ever rise again? Ten times over I must essay the task, must lean down over the abyss. And each time the cowardice that deters us from every difficult task, every important enterprise, has urged me to leave the thing alone, to drink my tea and to think merely of the worries of today and my hopes for tomorrow, which can be brooded over painlessly.

And then suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before mass), when I went to say good morning to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup or tisane. The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because I had so often seen such things in the meantime, without tasting them, on the tray in pastry-cooks’ windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days to take its place among others more recent; perhaps because, of those memories so long abandoned and put out of mind, nothing now survived, everything was scattered; the shapes of things, including that of the little scallop-shell of pastry, so richly sensual under its severe, religious folds, were either obliterated or had been so long dormant
as to have lost the power of expansion which would have allowed them to resume their place in my consciousness. But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

And as soon as I had recognised the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set to attach itself to the little pavilion opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated segment which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I used to be sent before lunch, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. And as in the game wherein the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little pieces of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch and twist and take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, solid and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann’s park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.
Appendix 2.


Extract: ‘The Madeleine Moment’, Combray

So it was that, for a long time, when, awakened at night, I remembered Combray again, I saw nothing of it but this sort of luminous panel, cut out from among indistinct shadows, like those panels which the glow of a Bengal light or some electric projection will cut out and illuminate in a building whose other parts remain plunged in darkness: at the rather broad base, the small parlour, the dining-room, the top of the dark path by which M. Swann, the unconscious author of my sufferings, would arrive, the front hall where I would head towards the first step of the staircase, so painful to climb, that formed, by itself, the very narrow trunk of this irregular pyramid; and, at the top, my bedroom with the little hallway and its glass-paned door for Mama’s entrance; in a word, always seen at the same hour, isolated from everything that might surround it, standing out alone against the darkness, the bare minimum of scenery (like that which one sees prescribed at the beginnings of the old plays for performances in the provinces) needed for the drama of my undressing; as though Combray had consisted only of two floors connected by a slender staircase and as though it had always been seven o’clock in the evening there. The fact is, I could have answered anyone who asked me that Combray also included other things and existed at other hours. But since what I recalled would have been supplied to me only by my voluntary memory, the memory of intelligence, and since the information it gives about the past preserves nothing of it, I would never have had any desire to think about the rest of Combray. It was all really quite dead for me.

Dead for ever? Possibly.

There is a great deal of change in all this, and a second sort of chance, that of our death, often does not let us wait very long for the favours of the first.
I find the Celtic belief very reasonable, that the souls of those we have lost are help captive in some inferior creature, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate thing, effectively lost to us until the day, which for many never comes, when we happen to pass close to the tree, to come into possession of the object that is their prison. Then they quiver, they call out to us, and as soon as we have recognized them, the spell is broken. Delivered by us, they have overcome death and they return to live with us.

It is the same with our past. It is a waste of effort for us to try to summon it, all the exertions of our intelligence are useless. The past is hidden outside the realm of our intelligence and beyond its reach, in some material object (in the sensation that this material object would give us) which we do not suspect. It depends on chance whether we encounter this object before we die, or do not encounter it.

For many years already, everything about Combray that was not the theatre and drama of my bedtime had ceased to exist for me, when one day in winter, as I came home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, suggested that, contrary to my habit, I have a little tea. I refused at first and then, I do not know why, changed my mind. She sent for one of those squat, plump cakes called petites madeleines that look as though they have been moulded in the grooved valve of a scallop-shell. And soon, mechanically, oppressed by the gloomy day and the prospect of a sad future, I carried to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had let soften a piece of madeleine. But at the very instant when the mouthful of tea mixed with cake-crumbs touched my palate, I quivered, attentive to the extraordinary thing that was happening in me. A delicious pleasure had invaded me, isolated me, without my having any notion as to its cause. It had immediately made the vicissitudes of life unimportant to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory, acting in the same way that love acts, by filling me with a precious essence: or rather this essence was not in me, it was me. I had ceased to feel I was mediocre, contingent, mortal. Where could it have come to me from—this powerful joy? I sense that it was connected to the taste of the tea and the cake, but that it went infinitely far beyond it, could not be of the same nature. Where did it come from? What did it mean? How could I grasp it? I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the
first, a third that gives me a little less than the second. It is time for me to stop, the virtue of the drink seems to be diminishing. It is clear that the truth I am seeking is not in the drink, but in me. The drink has awoken it in me, but does not know that truth, and cannot do more than repeat indefinitely, with less and less force, this same testimony which I do not know how to interpret and which I want at least to be able to ask of it again and find again, intact, available to me, soon, for a decisive clarification. I put down the cup and turn to my mind. It is up to my mind to find the truth. But how? What grave uncertainty, whenever the mind feels overtaken by itself; when it, the seeker, is also the obscure country where it must seek and where all its baggage will be nothing to it. Seek? Not only that: create. It is face to face with something that does not yet exist and that only it can accomplish, then bring into its light.

And I begin asking myself again what it could be, this unknown state which brought with it no logical proof, but only the evidence of its felicity, its reality, and in whose presence the other states of consciousness faded away. I want to try to make it reappear. I go back in my thoughts to the moment when I took the first spoonful of tea. I find the same state, without any new clarity. I ask my mind to make another effort, to bring back once more the sensation that is slipping away. And, so that nothing may break the thrust with which it will try to grasp it again, I remove every obstacle, every foreign idea, I protect my ears and my attention from the noises in the next room. But feeling my mind grow tired without succeeding, I now force it to accept the very distraction I was denying it, to think of something else, to recuperate before a supreme attempt. Then for a second time I create an empty space before it, I confront it again with the still recent taste of that first mouthful and I feel something quiver in me, shift, try to rise, something that seems to have been unanchored at a great depth; I do not know what it is, but it comes up slowly; I feel the resistance and I hear the murmur of the distances traversed.

Undoubtedly what is fluttering this way deep inside me must be the image, the visual memory which is attached to this taste and is trying to follow it to me. But it is struggling too far away, too confusedly; I can just barely perceive the neutral glimmer in which is blended the elusive eddying of stirred-up colours; but I cannot distinguish the form, cannot ask it, as the one possible
interpreter, to translate for me the evidence of its contemporary, its inseparable companion, the taste, ask it to tell me what particular circumstance it involved, what period of the past.

Will it reach the surface of my limpid consciousness—this memory, this old moment which the attraction of an identical moment has come, so far to summon, to move, to raise up from my very depths? I don’t know. Now I no longer feel anything, it has stopped, gone back down perhaps; who knows if it will ever rise up from its darkness again? Ten times I must begin again, lean down towards it. And each time, the timidity that deters us from every difficult task, from every important piece of work, has counselled me to leave it, to drink my tea and think only about my worries of today, my desires for tomorrow, which may be pondered painlessly.

And suddenly the memory appeared. That taste was the taste of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because that day I did not go out before it was time for Mass), when I went to say good morning to her in her bedroom, my Aunt Léonie would give me after dipping it in her infusion of tea or lime-blossom. The sight of the little madeleine had not recalled anything to me before I tasted it; perhaps because I had often seen them since, without eating them, on the pastry-cooks’ shelves, and their image had therefore left those days of Combray and attached itself to others more recent; perhaps because, of these recollections abandoned so long outside my memory, nothing survived, everything had come apart; the forms—and the form, too, of the little shell made of cake, so fatly sensual within its severe and pious pleating—had been destroyed, or, still half asleep, had lost the force of expansion that would have allowed them to rejoin my consciousness. But, when nothing subsists of an old past, after the death of people, after the destruction of things, alone, frailer but more enduring, more immaterial, more persistent, more faithful, smell and taste still remain for a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, on the ruin of all the rest, bearing without giving way, in their almost impalpable droplet, the immense edifice of memory.

And as soon as I had recognized the taste of the piece of madeleine dipped in lime-blossom tea that my aunt used to give me (though I did not yet know and had to put off to much later discovering why the street, where her
bedroom was, came like a stage-set to attach itself to the little wing opening on to the garden that had been built for my parents behind it (that truncated section which was all I had seen before then); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square, where they sent me before lunch, the streets where I went to do errands, the paths we took if the weather was fine. And as in that game in which the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little pieces of it, stretch and shape themselves, colour and differentiate, become flowers, houses, human figures, firm and recognizable, so now all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann’s park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne, and the good people of the village and their little dwellings and the church and all of Combray and its surroundings, all of this which is assuming form and substance, emerged, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.
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27. Saul Bass, *Vertigo* (1958), Poster Design...............................263
Marker asks Marcel Proust and Alfred Hitchcock ‘What is a Madeleine?’
Madeleine, seen for the first time, at Ernie’s restaurant.
At Scottie’s Apartment, the ‘revived’ Madeleine re-pins her hair.
Opening scene. With the carriage clock ticking on the table beside her, Eva Mattes as Céleste Albaret waits in the kitchen of Proust’s apartment.
Image courtesy of Percy Adlon.
In the final scene, in the immediate moments following his death, Céleste cuts a lock of hair from Proust’s head.

12.

‘[Lock of Hair] Marcel Proust Relic,’ provenance and date unknown. Catalogued under the ‘Evocative Objects’ collections grouping within the University of Manchester’s Special Collections archives. Image courtesy of Heritage Imaging, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester Library. Copyright of the University of Manchester.

In the opening scene, the face of Sylvie Testud as Ariane plays across Super8 footage projection.
Ariane visits the Musée Rodin in Paris.

Ariane contemplates a sculpture at the Musée Rodin.

Ariane is joined by Andrée (Olivia Bonamy) at the Musée Rodin.

Simon (Stanislas Merhar) visits Ariane in her bedroom.

‘The Man’ (Jean Négroni) and ‘The Woman’ (Hélène Chatelain) point to the sequoia trunk cross-section in Le Jardin des Plantes.
The sequoia trunk, labelled with its historical markers, at the entrance to Muir Woods, California.
Saul Bass, poster design for Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (Universal, 1958).