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Photographic Motifs in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*

Áine Larkin
Ph.D. thesis
Trinity College, Dublin
April 2007
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Summary of Photographic Motifs in Proust’s ‘À la recherche du temps perdu’

This thesis addresses the question of the assimilation of photography into French literary culture in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, specifically in relation to Marcel’s Proust’s ‘À la recherche du temps perdu.’

The introduction outlines my understanding of the distinctive characteristics of the photographic system of image production. It briefly outlines the response of French literary writers from 1839 onwards to the appearance and dissemination of photographic practice and the photographic image, and then suggests that Proust’s appropriation of photography demonstrates a more profound engagement with this medium than that of writers who preceded him.

The four chapters of the thesis discuss in turn thematic and stylistic appropriations of photography in the Proustian narrative. Each chapter deals with two aspects of the Proustian narrative within the context of specific elements of the photographic system of image production.

In the first chapter, entitled ‘Thematic Appropriations of Photography in Proust’s ‘À la recherche du temps perdu’, the figure of Swann as amateur of pictorial art is explored. Swann as prototype of lover and sterile artist functions as a counter-model of the identity ultimately assumed by Marcel. The thesis argues that Swann’s relationship to works of art is characterised by a dangerous idolatry which is communicated to the child Marcel through Swann’s gifts of photographic reproductions of Italian art works. The semiotic and pragmatic ambiguity of the photographic image (as defined in the work of Jean-Marie Schaeffer) means that it serves both to educate Marcel in Swann’s way of looking at art, and also to represent the differences between the two men which ultimately determine the creative success of the former. Saint-Loup’s role as photographer conveys to Marcel significant information regarding the nature of perception, love and death, and the transformative effects of the passage of time.

The second chapter, ‘Stylistic Appropriations of Photography in Proust’s ‘À la recherche du temps perdu’, begins by tracing the use of the lexicon of photography in the representation of Marcel’s process of perception, and the motif of the photographic image for the representation of the denigrated process of voluntary memory. The thesis goes on to argue that the evocation of elements of the photographic system of image development in the representation of the process of involuntary memory serves to unify the two ostensibly disparate memory processes which are presented in the Proustian narrative. Engagement with his creative literary vocation will involve reliance upon both kinds of memory: thus is voluntary memory rehabilitated as a means to realise a literary work of art.
In ‘Narrative Focalisation in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*: Image Juxtaposition’, the use of photographic motifs in relation to the dual narratological structure of the Proustian narrative is analysed. The thesis argues that the spatio-temporal dislocation of the narrating voices results in the juxtaposition of multiple aspects of a particular event, which undermine any potential certainty which might otherwise characterise the apprehension of the world and of experience by Marcel. References to photography in several episodes in Marcel’s young life, which are important within the context of the conception and realisation of his creative vocation, simultaneously point up and destabilise the notion of the ephemeral nature of time and the irrevocability of death. The disparate points-of-view of the immobile Marcel and later narrator contribute to the representation of a profoundly unstable reality, which is further underlined in several key scenes where Marcel is in motion. Marcel as he moves is represented as the still point around which the world turns; the interjections of the later narrator reinforce the stasis and plot suspension which repeatedly characterise the Proustian narrative. In underlining the discontinuous nature of Marcel’s visual perception of the world, references to photography in scenes where he is in motion create a simultaneous awareness of the relentless flow of time and thus of Marcel’s unsuspected and ineluctable position within both time and space.

‘Striving for Synthesis’ begins by discussing the superimposition of images in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, specifically through the motifs of composite photography and radiographic images. The stratification of images creates an effect of spatio-temporal depth which points up the tangible effects of time on the individual and the essential truth of the spatio-temporal finitude of individual corporeal existence. The relationship between the motifs of composite photography and radiography and the figure of metaphor in the Proustian narrative is explored in order to point up the significance of image superimposition and thus of the photographic system of image production through which it is evoked. The malleability of both the photographic image and language are analysed in relation to the representation of homosexuality.

In the conclusion, this thesis argues that the thematic and stylistic appropriation of photography serves to draw together elements of the Proustian narrative which on a superficial reading remain discrete.
Acknowledgements

My warmest thanks go to Professor David Scott for his great patience, his astute encouragement and steady guidance throughout this project.

Thank you to Professor Barbara Wright and Professor Johnnie Gratton for their interest and support; to Claude (R.I.P.) and Vincenette Pichois for their kindness and generosity; and to Jérôme Thélot for the time he gave to my queries.

To my fellow postgraduate students, past and present, my deepest gratitude for the many ways in which they have enriched my experience as a postgraduate and informed my research, especially Julie Rodgers, Zach Lyons, Sinéad Furlong, Maria Parsons, Greg Kerr, Gillian Jein and Daisy Connon.

Thanks also to the Graduate Studies Office and to the Library, particularly Donncha, for their help and good cheer; to the Department of French for granting me the Claude Pichois Studentship 2001-2004; and to the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures for the A.J. Leventhal Award in summer 2002.

To my friends, the Gavins, and to my uncle, Jim McHugh, I wish to express my profound appreciation and reciprocation of their warmth and love during my time in ‘Maryville’.

Final thanks and deepest love go to my sisters, Ailish, Fionnuala and Maeve, and to my parents, Claire and Padraic, my first and finest teachers.
For Claire, Padraic, Ailish, Fionnuala and Maeve

‘L’amour, c’est l’espace et le temps rendus sensibles au coeur.’
(Proust: V, 371)
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INTRODUCTION

Outline of problematic

This thesis addresses the question of the assimilation of photography into late nineteenth and early twentieth-century French literary culture. From 1839 onwards, the photographic medium generated written debate about its nature and status. The new representation of the world through photography influenced profoundly the representation of the world by writers. This thesis will first explore the aesthetic significance of photographic representation and then examine the pertinence of photography’s aesthetic significance in relation to Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The aim is systematically to explore the formal and stylistic use of photographic motifs in the novel, and to assess their significance in the representation in the novel of the processes of perception and memory.

Rationale of the Thesis

Several features of the photographic system of image production distinguish it from other pictorial media. Firstly, its mechanical mode of production separates it from what have been called the ‘manographic’ pictorial media. The photographic act comprises a fixed series of decisions, mechanical actions and distinctive chemical processes which result in an image.

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1 Aaron Scharf’s *Photography and Art* is a detailed study of the reactions of artists to the invention and dissemination of photography from 1839 to the early twentieth century. Scharf also notes the interest taken by writers, philosophers and scientists in the new system of representation.

2 Philippe Ortel’s *La Littérature à l’ère de la photographie: enquête sur une révolution invisible* and Jérôme Thélot’s *Les Inventions littéraires de la photographie* both affirm the influence of photography on important nineteenth-century poets and novelists. Daniel Grojnowski’s *Photographie et langage* also explores the composition of the “imaginaire photographique” (Grojnowski, 2002: 398) through the writings of novelists, journalists, photography theorists and critics.

3 In *Aesthetics and Photography*, Jonathan Friday uses this term to denote painting, drawing, engraving and collage, all of which require the intentional application (or removal) of material to (and from) a surface (Friday, 2002: 38). He refers to artists working with these pictorial media as ‘manographers’. Photography, on the other hand, is in large part a causally-governed photochemical process.

4 Philippe Dubois’s *L’Acte photographique et autres essais* provides a framework for the understanding of the photographic process which will, in large part, guide this study.
Secondly, the photochemical process establishes a particular relation between a photograph and its subject matter. Photographs are causally dependent on the world as it is before the camera. They represent real and existing objects at a particular moment in time.⁵ Due to their intentional relation to the world, manugraphic pictorial media do not have the same power of evidence. They are evidence of the artist’s apprehension of the world, or of the world as the artist wishes it to be considered. This distinction between photography and other pictorial media manifests the opposition between intentional and causal modes of depiction. Regardless of the context in which a photograph is made, or the purpose for which it is intended, it retains this quality of being a causal mode of depiction.⁶

Thirdly, the very nature of the photographic medium is predicated on the projection of three-dimensional space onto a flat two-dimensional surface.⁷ This system of projection maps points of light in a determinate, uniform way, which manugraphers may mimic by the use of artificial perspective. While for the latter this is a choice, it is a fundamental characteristic of photography and is closely related to, if not identical with, the mapping of the world which occurs in normal perceptual experience.⁸

It is essential to clarify the distinctive characteristics of the photographic medium in order to be able accurately to assess the significance of photographic motifs in Proust’s À la

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⁵ Charles Sanders Peirce’s theory of the sign, as discussed in Francois Brunet’s La Naissance de l’idée de photographie, provides the vocabulary which distinguishes the photograph’s unique semiotic status as indexical icon. This dual status constitutes what Jean-Marie Schaeffer refers to as the ‘precariousness’ of the photographic image, in L’Image précaire: du dispositif photographique. My interest in and wish to explore the exploitation of this feature of photography by Marcel Proust will underpin this thesis.

⁶ Susan Sontag’s On Photography, Roland Barthes’ La Chambre claire and Jean-Marie Schaeffer’s L’Image précaire: du dispositif photographique all confirm the causal mode of depiction which is peculiar to photography. Their varying descriptions of the nature of the photograph show a common understanding of the uniqueness of its special semiotic status, although differences exist in their interpretations of this uniqueness.

⁷ Frank Wegner’s doctoral thesis entitled ‘Photography in Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu’ contains a chapter entitled ‘Flatness’, in which he takes flatness to be one of the principal photographic figures in Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu, illustrating “the categorical hiatus between visual desire and physical fulfilment” (Wegner, 2004: 2).

⁸ In his above-mentioned work (note 3), Friday devotes a chapter entitled ‘Photographic Representation and Visual Perception’ to the exploration of the relation between ordinary perceptual experience of the world and perceptual experience of the world depicted in photographs. His research will inform this study’s assessment of Proust’s appropriation of features of the photographic medium in the representation of the processes of perception and memory.
The three distinctive features of photography outlined above will provide the framework for the exploration of Proust’s functional appropriation of photographic motifs in his novel. They show how photography is positioned between the realms of art and science.10

Since 1839, writers of fiction have recorded their responses to the photographic medium.11 The assimilation of photography into literary works is most evident initially on a thematic level.12 However, its influence on literary style is also detectable. Description and narration are two aspects of literary works which were notably shaped by photography’s distinctive features.13 Due to its ubiquity and accessibility in nineteenth-century society, photography’s distinctive features meant that it became an important medium for the representation of a changing society. Social, industrial and demographic changes in nineteenth-century French society resulted in an acute awareness of time and its passage, as contemporary developments in the study of history and evolutionary theory reveal. Photography was used as a privileged means of capturing a moment in the ceaseless flow of time. Literary description and narrative structure assimilated features of photography in the representation of modern life.

10 This is necessary in view of the fact that image production and dissemination in the nineteenth century was by no means confined to the media which have so far been mentioned. Photography is but one of the many systems of image production which proliferated in the nineteenth century. In an essay included in Usages de l’image au XIXe siècle, Philippe Hamon affirms that ‘le XIXe siècle doit donc être plutôt considéré comme un champ de bataille perpétuel mettant aux prises des systèmes de représentation à la fois solidaires et concurrents […] que comme le monopole triomphant et progressif d’un seul système’ (Hamon, 1992: 235).

11 The science of optics and the art of painting are the two visual fields which meet in the photographic system of image production. In Proust’s Way: A Field Guide to In Search of Lost Time, Roger Shattuck maintains that it is science and art which Proust invokes most frequently when seeking comparisons in his visual imagery (Shattuck, 2000: 100).

12 Jane M. Rabb edited Literature and Photography: Interactions 1840-1990, an index of thematic references to photography in literary works and art criticism by American and European writers. She notes that initially, the two arts of literature and photography ‘co-existed peaceably in an expanding aesthetic universe’ (Rabb, 1995: xxxv).

13 Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The House of the Seven Gables (1851) is the first novel in which the central character is a photographer. In France, Champfleury’s short story ‘La Légende du daguerréotype’, published in 1863, explores in comic literary form some of the fears (of loss of identity, of death) expressed by early witnesses to and participants in the photographic process of image production.

The result of this assimilation of features of photography is the use of photographic motifs in the thematic, narrative and temporal structuring of literary works. Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* is both a search for lost time and the tracing of a literary vocation. Photography may seem to have little relevance to such concerns. When explicitly referred to in the novel, photography is indeed denigrated and dismissed as a useless aid in the search for lost time. However, the explicitly anti-photographic aesthetics expounded in the novel are subverted by the underlying photographic poetology, which is detectable in the narratological and temporal structure of the novel. Its narratological structure comprises multiple narrative voices. The representation of the spatio-temporal situation of these embodied narrative voices and their perceptual point-of-view in relation to the events they narrate is informed by photographic motifs, particularly the camera itself and the mode of photographic image production. An analysis of the contradictions between literal and metaphorical evocations of the photographic system of image production therefore helps us to make clear Proust's use, in thematic and narratological structure and in description, of the medium he claims to despise.

**Critical Context: Photography in Nineteenth-Century Writing and Culture**

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the response to the photographic medium of art critics and literary writers, including Victor Hugo, Baudelaire, Champfleury, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Rodenbach, reflected their growing awareness of photography's semiotic complexity and its uniqueness as a system of representation.

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14 Marcel observes that 'j'essaiais maintenant de tirer de ma mémoire d'autres "instantanés", notamment des instantanés qu'elle avait pris à Venise, mais rien que ce mot me la rendait ennuyeuse comme une exposition de photographies [...]’ (Proust: VII, 172).

15 Gérard Genette confirms the 'pluralités de focalisation' which result from the multiple voices speaking in the novel (Genette, 1972: 251).

16 Research has begun into the influence of photography on Marcel Proust's work. However, much of this research has so far failed to examine in a systematic way Proust's use of photography. The most notable exception is Frank Wegner, whose doctoral thesis deduces an underlying philosophy of photography in the novel and attempts to reconstruct the aesthetic and scientific discourses on photography to which the novel consistently refers. Certain aspects of Wegner's work, to which the review of literature will refer, will be of use in my thesis.

17 Jérôme Thélot affirms the influence of literature and photography on one another. He states that 'c'est en effet la littérature qui a inventé la photographie. [...] Il y a une période classique de la photographie. [...]
Certain literary writers, confronted by the new medium of image production, responded with new questions concerning literary creativity. They raised the question of photography's influence on literary style and wondered about the effect of photographic records on poetic memory.\(^\text{18}\) They also realised the power of literature to respond to and thereby reinvent itself with regard to this new invention. In nineteenth-century France, literature sought to understand photography and was simultaneously in varying degrees conditioned by it.\(^\text{19}\)

Evidence of photography's influence on certain literary writers is found in Victor Hugo's planned though never published book documenting his exile in Jersey through texts, photographs and drawings;\(^\text{20}\) in Baudelaire's fascination with Felix Nadar's work and his poem 'Le Rêve d'un curieux' which may be read as a response to the experience of being photographed by him;\(^\text{21}\) in Champfleury's comic story detailing the sinister consequences of being photographed.\(^\text{22}\) In their response to the photographic medium, these and other writers engaged with distinctive features of photography, in particular its mechanical mode of production and its special semiotic status and relationship with its object.

\(^\text{18}\) In an article entitled 'De l'influence de l'héliographie sur les Beaux-Arts', in La Lumière, 16 February 1851, Francis Wey wrote that 'la poésie, la littérature même, ces sources vives de l'inspiration pour l'artiste, sent atteintes à leur tour par cette iconographie nouvelle.'

\(^\text{19}\) Thélot affirms the reciprocal nature of the influence of literature and photography. He notes that modern literary criticism which explores text/photographic image relations is conditioned profoundly by its understanding of this reciprocity (Thélot, 2003: 5).

\(^\text{20}\) Approximately 400 photographs taken by Victor Hugo's son Charles make up the photograph collection intended for use in the planned book on Jersey. The book was never published, due to the high cost of production and the consequent difficulty in finding a willing publisher. Thélot explores Victor Hugo's use of photographs as a means of promoting his own image in France. He notes the writer's fascination with four features of photography, each of which contributes to his innovative self-representation: his use of the contrast of black and white, the indexical imprint, the negative and the mechanical nature of the photographic mode of image production (Thélot, 2003: 22).

\(^\text{21}\) Charles Baudelaire's 'Le Rêve d'un curieux' in Les Fleurs du mal (Baudelaire, 1964: 150). This poem, dedicated to F.N. — Félix Nadar — is read by Thélot as an ironic allegory of photography (Thélot, 2003: 39). Philippe Ortel explores in detail Baudelaire's response to photography in both his poetry and his art criticism. He sees evidence in Baudelaire's work of a 'machine-matière' paradigm, something he believes to be an essential feature of the photographic system (Ortel, 2002: 117).

\(^\text{22}\) See note 12 with regard to Champfleury. Philippe Ortel describes this short story as confirming 'la participation du daguerréotype aux différentes mises à mort du réel manifestant la crise de la représentation au XIXe siècle' (Ortel, 2002: 122).
The aesthetic significance of the distinctive features of photographic representation was therefore articulated and expressed in complementary developments in literary representation. Literature's framing and composition of human experience began to exploit photographic motifs derived from the writers' knowledge and understanding of the photographic medium. Thematic evocations of photographic motifs in nineteenth-century literature include cameras, photographers, photographs and the experience of being photographed. The stylistic evocation of elements of the photographic medium is less immediately evident and has begun to attract critical attention only recently. This is primarily due to the fact of what both Philippe Ortel (Ortel, 2002: 8) and Jonathan Friday (Friday, 2002: 50-56) refer to as photography's 'transparency' as a means of communication.

Stylistic evocations of photography in nineteenth-century literary texts are predominantly noticeable in the use of metaphor and analogy. They include the use of photographic language in description and an increasingly keen attention to detail. Photography's mechanical mode of image production provides such motifs as the darkened room or photographic darkroom; the photographic process as a metaphor for visual perception; Philippe Hamon observes that 'le XIXe siècle [...] n'a pas inventé la relation de l'image à la littérature [...] Mais il a modifié profondément et radicalement cette relation en inventant, ou en mettant au point, ou en industrialisant, ou faisant circuler, ou en généralisant dans des proportions radicalement nouvelles une nouvelle imagerie [...] faite de nouveaux objets et de nouvelles pratiques' (Hamon, 2002: 11).

Critical interest in the stylistic evocation of photography in literary works is a late-twentieth-century phenomenon. It is greatly assisted by the work done by photography critics and philosophers whose work founded and developed a philosophy of photography. These writers include Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Philippe Dubois and Susan Sontag, all of whom published important works on photography in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

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24 Literature and Photography: Interactions 1840-1990 edited by Jane M. Rabb is a comprehensive collection of thematic references to photography in American and European literature.

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26 See Paul Valéry's opinion, quoted above (note 13). Rabb also acknowledges what she sees as photography's influence on novelists. She states that 'many novelists, such as Champfleury and Emile Zola, may have tried to emulate the camera, with its impersonal, disciplined, detailed and accurate mirroring of surface reality, in their work. [...] Indeed, photography not only influenced the way many writers now perceived their world but, consequently, their style as well as subject matter. All prized verisimilitude, though what was 'true' and what was merely accurate was hotly debated. Literature, though better able to provide panoramic sweeps or complex analyses or delicate nuance, increasingly if unconsciously followed the camera's lead in focussing on insignificant moments or fragments' (Rabb, 1995: xxxix). While the notion of verisimilitude precedes photography, the latter constituted a new system of visual representation through which to interrogate the former.

27 In his collection of essays entitled Imageries: littérature et image au XIXe siècle, Philippe Hamon devotes a chapter entitled 'L'image fabriquée: chambres noires' to an exploration of the 'imaginaire' of the darkroom or 'chambre noire'. He sees photography's technical structure as the source of this recurring
the negative photographic image;\textsuperscript{29} the window or door as aperture of a photographic camera;\textsuperscript{30} human consciousness or imagination as a sensitive plate or film which records perceived images;\textsuperscript{31} memories as newly-developed photographic images.\textsuperscript{32} This thesis will defend the notion that it is photography’s semiotic status as indexical icon which explains the fascination experienced by nineteenth-century writers and by Marcel Proust in particular, in relation to photography. Their exploitation of photographic motifs, including those outlined above, may be seen as motivated by an awareness of the privileged capacity of photography to provide evidence of the world which they attempted to portray in their literary works (due to its indexical status), as well as a striking resemblance to its object, i.e. the world represented (due to its status as icon).\textsuperscript{33} In representing the world around them, nineteenth-century literary writers assimilated features of the photographic system of image production in order better to rival the visual culture which was becoming increasingly evident throughout the nineteenth century and

\textsuperscript{28} One notable example of this metaphor is found in the literary representation of the \textit{flâneur}, particularly by Baudelaire. In this context, Sontag sees photography as being used as a metaphorical ‘extension of the eye of the middle-class \textit{flâneur}. […] The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno’ (Sontag, 1977: 55).

\textsuperscript{29} August Strindberg’s short story ‘Photography and Philosophy’ uses the principle of the photographic negative as a metaphor for undesirable human characteristics, which at the end of the story are unexpectedly reversed, with the result that a friendship is saved. The story is reproduced in \textit{Literature and Photography: Interactions 1840-1990} (Rabb, 1995: 136). Philippe Hamon also remarks that ‘image muette, la photographie est aussi comme le ‘négatif’ de l’image littéraire parlée ou écrite. Et ce négatif dit peut-être quelque chose, toujours, plus ou moins indirectement, sur la littérature, qui elle-même est, bien souvent, un mode indirect, ou inverse, ou allusif, ou ‘négaïf’, ou ironique […] de refléter le monde’ (Hamon, 2002: 57).

\textsuperscript{30} A premonitory example of this metaphor is found in Victor Hugo’s \textit{Notre-Dame de Paris} 1482, in the dark cell where Frollo carries out his alchemical experiments vol. VII, chp. IV (Hugo, 1975: 321-322). Ortel points out how the ray of light which pierces the gloom, though explicitly associated with the camera obscura, actually anticipates the photographic system of image production where light is transmuted into an image (Ortel, 2002: 196-197). A later example is Flaubert’s \textit{L’Education sentimentale}, where Frédéric gazes through the window of M. Arnoux’s boutique: Vol. I, chp. III (Flaubert, 1985: 38).

\textsuperscript{31} Hamon notes that ‘le corps représenté par la littérature au XIXe siècle […] se définit comme ‘imprégné’ et influencé par le réseau des relations qu’il entretient avec son environnement’ (Hamon, 2002: 184). He traces a nineteenth-century conception of the body as ‘composé de diverses enveloppes emboîtées et solidaires (la peau, le vêtement, la maison, l’espace social des rites et des rituels) et de diverses “boîtes” anatomiques (le cerveau, le ventre), un corps qui émet, produit, supporte, reçoit, inscrit et stocke images, signes, symptômes, indices, insignes et signaux de tout genre’ (Hamon, 2002: 186).

\textsuperscript{32} Léon d’Hervey de Saint-Denys, in \textit{Les Rêves et les moyens de les diriger}, refers to memory as an immense store of ‘clichés-souvenirs’ (Hervey de Saint-Denys, 1867: 72-73), while Ernest Hello, in \textit{L’Homme, la vie, la science, l’art}, refers to the photographic image as ‘un miroir qui se souvient’ (Hello, 1894:167-168). He sees the photograph as the realisation of a law which inscribes all mental activity, particularly memory, within an indefinite duration (Hello, 1894: 170-172).

\textsuperscript{33} The validity of this point is evidently restricted to figurative as opposed to abstract photography.
in which photography played a considerable part. In so doing, however, they implicitly recognised the unique representational power of photography. In its appropriation of photographic motifs, nineteenth-century literature contributed significantly to the articulation of a philosophy of photography, a process which continues to the present day.\(^\text{34}\) It reinvented itself through the exploration of new ‘imaginaires’ inspired by the rise of visual culture in nineteenth-century France.\(^\text{35}\) Proust may be regarded as having inherited nineteenth-century literature’s assimilation of photographic motifs. As this thesis will demonstrate, however, his appropriation of photography reached new levels of complexity and delicacy.

Photography in Proust

Proust’s novel is rich in visual imagery and motifs. The protagonist Marcel’s search for knowledge of the world and of himself is represented in images notable for their visual quality.\(^\text{36}\) Within this framework of visual imagery, photography’s mechanical mode of image production provides a vocabulary which serves as metaphors of Marcel’s visual perception and memory processes.\(^\text{37}\) Bearing in mind the vital importance accorded to metaphor by the hero/narrator of *Le Temps retrouvé*, photographic motifs metaphorically evoked in the novel merit critical attention so as to assess the reasons informing their use by Proust.\(^\text{38}\) Yet there is also a wider context in which to discuss the function of

\(^{34}\) Daniel Grojnowski affirms that ‘dès ses commencements, la photographie est prise en charge par des discours d’accompagnement qui célèbrent sa naissance, qui en interrogent la nature, qui en expliquent le fonctionnement, qui en commentent les usages devenus toujours plus nombreux et plus précieux. [...] Ces commentaires [...] montrent combien la photographie, au XIXe siècle, a stimulé l’imagination d’hommes en prise avec un essor scientifique et technique qui leur est apparu sidérant’ (Grojnowski, 2002: 337).

\(^{35}\) Photography was one among many new means of visual communication in the nineteenth century. In each essay in *Imageries : littérature et image au XIXe siècle*, Philippe Hamon explores a new site of nineteenth-century visual communication and its relationship with literature. Such sites include street images, the museum, the artist’s studio, the frontispiece and the body.

\(^{36}\) In *The Imagery of Proust*, Victor E. Graham concludes his investigation into Proust’s use of auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, synaesthetic, mental, gustatory and olfactory images by saying that ‘in the whole of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, sixty-two per cent of the images are visual’ (Graham, 1966: 8).

\(^{37}\) ‘Impression’, ‘tirer’, ‘révélation’, ‘l’objectif’ and ‘cliché’ are just some of the words which form part of the lexicon of photography and which are used repeatedly in the representation of Marcel’s visual perception and memory processes. Their use in the representation of these important physical and mental processes belies the overt denigration of photography by Marcel, as mentioned above in note 14.

\(^{38}\) The status of the hero/narrator is a question to be explored in the third chapter of this thesis and is mentioned later in this introduction. In *Le Temps retrouvé* it is noted that ‘la vérité ne commencera qu’au moment où l’écrivain prendra deux objets différents, posera leur rapport, analogue dans le monde de l’art à
photography. As a plot device, photographs reveal to Marcel unsuspected facts concerning both the intimate lives of those closest to him and the nature of human perception and memory. Tracing Marcel’s response (and that of other characters focalised by Marcel or by the later narrator) to the indexical and iconic qualities of photographic images draws attention to Proust’s understanding and exploitation of the complex status of the photographic image as visual representation of the object.

On the level of its narratological structure, Proust’s novel is predicated on multiple voices speaking in the first person. Each speaks from a point in space and time which distinguishes it from the other. The point-of-view of the narrative voices in Proust’s novel is a question to be explored in the analysis of photographic motifs in the novel, as it is possible to deduce recurrent metaphorical uses of such motifs at moments where the ambiguity of the Proustian narrator is most evident. Photographic motifs such as those outlined in the previous section of this introduction are discernible where there is a multiplicity of narratorial points-of-view on an event seen from different spatio-temporal positions. The result is a proliferation of aspects of the real world, consistent with Marcel’s attempts to control and appropriate the world through visual perception. The representation of Marcel’s spatial position in several important scenes draws upon the...
vocabulary of photography’s mechanical mode of image production. This is particularly the case in relation to his voyeuristic tendencies, where the photographic darkroom is frequently evoked metaphorically as a space of isolation and reflection upon witnessed events.

Another photographic motif which can be read into Proust’s novel relates to the spatialisation of time. Marcel’s appropriation of the world around him is closely connected to a series of particular and distinctly separate places or spaces. As outlined above, photographs not only represent real objects at a specific moment in time, but also by their very nature require the projection of three-dimensional space onto a flat two-dimensional surface through the mechanical and chemical transposition of light rays. These features of photography may be taken to mean that the spatio-temporal status of photographic images is characterised by suspension or latency. An instant of time is suspended in the photographic image. The object, whether still or moving, is recorded statically on the sensitive film in the camera. Until it undergoes the process of development in the photographic darkroom, the image is a latent one. Its communicational potential is therefore arrested. My thesis will argue that this feature of temporal latency which characterises the photographic system of image production is discernible in the novel as a metaphor of both Marcel’s way of apprehending the world visually and of his repeatedly frustrated though ultimately resolved desire to write.

Examples include his presence at the Montjouvain scene (Proust: I, 157-159) and at the theatre for a performance by la Berma (Proust: II, 21). Marcel’s consistent stasis while a witness to significant events and his lack of active participation in them has been noted by B.G. Rogers, who observes that ‘Marcel’s function is that of the static, passive observer who plays no personal part in the scene, where his role is that of a camera, not an actor’ (Rogers, 1965: 137 - my italics). Rogers also notes that, due to his inactivity as fictional hero, Marcel’s ‘presence in many of the scenes he has to describe is purely negative’ (Rogers, 1965: 139 - my italics). Although Rogers is in no way concerned with photography as a motif in A la recherche du temps perdu, his use of photographic language when discussing the novel’s narratological structure is unsurprising, given the proliferation of photographic motifs in many important scenes.

An example is Marcel’s witnessing of the whipping of the baron de Charlus in Jupien’s male brothel during a wartime air raid (Proust: VII, 122). In the context of Marcel’s voyeurism, the window is another recurrent motif which is repeatedly evoked as metaphorical photographic lens.

I am indebted to the ideas elaborated in Georges Poulet’s above-mentioned work for the development of this point. Frank Wegner’s thesis explores Proust’s adaptation of what Wegner calls the ‘chronophotographic paradigm’ (Wegner, 2004: 3) for the representation of spatialised time. My thesis will stress the prevalence of stasis over movement as a feature of the Proustian spatialisation of time through photographic motifs.

The metaphor of the latent photographic image is evident in Marcel’s relationships with Gilberte and Albertine. In Du côté de chez Swann, he attempts visually to record her image so as to be assured of its
essential link which enables Marcel to devote himself to a creative literary career is his experience of involuntary memory. A reliving of past time in the present moment, involuntary memory brings to an end Marcel's discontinuous and erroneous perception of the world by revealing the connections which exist between his present and every moment of his forgotten past. The latent potential of Marcel's life as material for creative transposition is thereby released and understood by him.\(^{46}\)

The dual narratological viewpoint of the novel is a key factor in the interpretation of this photographic motif of the latent image. The voice of the later narrator, who retrospectively appraises his life, structures and controls the whole of the Proustian narrative.\(^{47}\) The later narrator's voice dominates in *Le Temps retrouvé* when he sets out his theories on time, art and memory (Proust: VII, 177-223). However, Marcel's voice is rarely obscured through almost three thousand pages. This fact implies the validity of Marcel's voice, his perception and memory processes and their representation through optical motifs including those derived from photography. The later narrator retrospectively validates the special spatio-temporal nature of Marcel's visual perception and memory processes by granting their description a privileged place in the narrative.\(^{48}\)

In focussing exclusively on photographic motifs in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, this thesis may, at certain points, make inflated claims about the importance or pervasiveness of photography in the Proustian narrative; where possible, potential alternative sources of visual representation are suggested. While efforts have been made to posit convincing arguments for the significance of thematic and figurative

\[^{46}\] Shattuck points out the significance of Marcel's experience of involuntary memory throughout the novel. The final revelations of the Guermantes matinee are only the last in a series of experiences of involuntary memory experienced by Marcel throughout his adult life. However, as Shattuck notes, Marcel failed to respond to these experiences until that morning (Shattuck, 2000: 110). The temporal hiatus between perception and assimilation, followed by active response, parallels the repeated temporal suspension which characterises each stage of the production of a single photographic image.

\[^{47}\] Paul Ricoeur affirms that the voice of the narrator 'est en avance sur la progression du héros parce qu'il la survole' (Ricoeur, 1984: 134).

\[^{48}\] Shattuck argues that Proust's novel 'creates a predominantly temporal perspective, scored through deeply at crucial moments by arresting spatial insights. The only synthesis resides in the full dimensions of the work itself' (Shattuck, 2000: 210).
appropriations of the photographic system of image production in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, enthusiasm carries an occasional risk of insufficiently circumspect assertions.

**Review of Literature**

*À la recherche du temps perdu* has received a great deal of critical attention in relation to vision and related features such as voyeurism, optics (Shattuck, 2000), the magic lantern (Moss, 1963), imagery (Graham, 1966) and cinema. Most research on the novel’s visual features focuses on Proust’s preoccupation with painting. The reason for this situation may be traced to the importance accorded to painting in Marcel’s artistic education. The painter Elstir is a significant character in Proust’s novel and his work has a profound influence on Marcel. Swann’s incomplete study of Vermeer is a recurring theme. By contrast, very few critics have so far dealt with the subject of photography in the novel.

Several articles which focus on different aspects of photography in Proust provide an introduction to critical analysis in this field. Anna Giubertoni’s ‘Fotografia e aura nella narrativa di Marcel Proust’ raises the question of Marcel’s aesthetic education. Giubertoni sees Marcel as influenced by Kant’s philosophy of art which rejects usefulness and values the unique work of art. Photography is a threat to this aesthetic vision. However, Guibertoni maintains photography’s metaphoric value on account of its disruption of the habitual relations which connect objects in the world. Thus she sees photography as a means of capturing truth in a way that is analogous to the metaphor in Proustian narrative. The article briefly refers to the latent photographic image and its

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51 Two recent articles in this field are published *Proust et les images: peinture, photographie, cinéma, vidéo*, edited by Jean Cléder and Jean-Pierre Montier. These articles discuss Proust’s work in the contexts of Impressionist and Symbolist painting respectively.
53 See note 38 above with regard to metaphor in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. 
power as a metaphor for what Giubertoni calls Marcel’s mental reserve of unmanipulated reality (Giubertoni, 1975: 20). Overall, Giubertoni concludes that photography plays the role of negative point of reference in the formation of Marcel’s creative vision. The article is useful in that it explores photography’s possible artistic significance. My thesis will show that photography has a wider role to play than that which Giubertoni suggests.

Roxanne Hanney’s ‘Proust and Negative Plates: Photography and the Photographic Process in *À la recherche du temps perdu*’ and her book *The Invisible Middle Term in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*’ are important points of reference for my thesis. Hanney believes Proust functions photographically: that is, he uses photography as an actual process in the text that he writes. It is an image system Proust uses in his attempts to arrest action and capture and preserve moments in time. In the article mentioned above and in one chapter of her book, Hanney concentrates on motifs derived from the photographic process, such as negative plates; development in the darkroom; X-rays; snapshots and moving pictures; prints. All of these motifs are of interest to me as their use confirms the complexity of Proust’s use of photography and his engagement with the specific temporality of the photographic system of image production.

Brassai’s *Marcel Proust sous l’emprise de la photographie* discusses photography’s impact on imagination and the process of vision. Proust’s use of photography in the representation of the relativity of perception is explored in an essay which concludes that photography enriches Proust’s understanding of the multiple realities of the world, which he then tries to represent in his novel. Involuntary memory and the development of the latent photographic image are both briefly referred to in separate essays. Although unsystematic in its analysis of photography’s role in Proust’s novel, Brassai’s work draws attention to many photographic motifs which will be explored in greater depth in my thesis.

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In *Proust et la photographie* Jean-François Chevrier, like Brassai, explores photography’s role in the representation of Marcel’s vision, particularly of his experience of the reciprocal gaze and his looking at women. Chevrier sees Proust as introducing a temporal dimension to photography through his understanding of the camera as a means of recording images, as opposed to reproducing them (which was Baudelaire’s criticism). Chevrier sees the camera as an important metaphor of memory and attributes Proust’s attention to detail to the influence of photography. The writing process as represented in the episode concerning the church steeples at Martinville is interpreted by Chevrier as an experience which echoes that of the photographer: Marcel’s early writing is a work of immediate inscription intended for a future retrospective gaze. Chevrier posits two temporal units of photographic experience. The first belongs to the moment of recording an image; the second to its revelation through development in the darkroom. He finds evidence of these two temporal units in the representation of Marcel’s vision, and of their concentration into one in Marcel’s rare experiences of instantaneous perception in his grandmother’s presence (Proust: III, 132-134). Like Brassai, Chevrier touches upon photographic motifs which merit a more systematic exploration.

Stephen C. Infantino’s *Photographic Vision in Proust* (1992) confirms the integral role played by photographically oriented vision and language in the production of Proustian discourse. Infantino explores the corpus of images (drawn from the contexts of personal obsession, love, sexuality and death) which he sees as providing evidence of the photographic process and which are characterised by interchangeability, substitution, mechanical reproduction and visual/narrative discontinuity. His discussion of the relations between time, space and photography will be reassessed in my thesis.

*The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually* by Mieke Bal contains a chapter entitled ‘The Flatness of Photography’ in which Bal sees photographic ‘devices’ (Bal, 1996: 201) as unifying Proust’s work under the auspices of flatness. Different aspects of flatness are explored and the nature of the photographic image as paradoxically fixed but fleeting is understood as an analogy for Proust’s poetology. Bal sees evidence of the photographic

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system of image production in Proust’s attention to detail; in the conflictual dialectic between the near and the far; in ‘zoom’ effects; contrast effects; in the narrator’s focusing on clear or indistinct images; and in the rapid succession of different images of a single object. While her treatment of these photographic effects in Proust’s novel is terse, Bal’s work is influential in my development of an understanding of photography’s role in Proust’s work. While Bal concentrates on the chronophotographic effect of the serialisation of images which occurs in the Proustian narrative, my thesis will look at the effect of the juxtaposition and superimposition of fixed images.

Jérôme Thélot’s _Les Inventions littéraires de la photographie_ contains a chapter entitled ‘La cham.bre obscure de la littérature: Proust,’ in which several ideas key to my thesis are explored. The most important of these is the affirmation of photography as a valuable element in the representation of Marcel’s self-knowledge. Thélot notes the ambivalence of Proust’s adoption of the objective image as both model and counter-model for his creative work. This ambivalence results in the distinction drawn between perception and reflection, i.e. the image retained by perception and memory and the subsequent development of that image by the mind. Thélot sees Proust as following two aesthetic lines, the one concerned with a search for essences which disregards surface realities; the other concerned almost exclusively with observation of and reflection upon those same surface realities. Thélot argues that photography is used in the representation of both these aesthetic lines. The photographic process is invoked in Marcel’s search for essences, while the photographic image plays a role in his apprehension of surface realities. Thélot concludes that photography comprises an intricate web of associations with both subjectivity and objectivity. His work shows the occasionally contradictory aspects of the role and relevance of photography in _À la recherche du temps perdu_.

Frank Wegner’s doctoral thesis ‘Photography in Proust’s _À la recherche du temps perdu_’ explores in greater detail different, recurrent and sometimes contradictory aspects of photography’s role in Proust’s novel. Wegner deals with what he terms

57 Frank Wegner’s ‘Photography in Proust’s _À la recherche du temps perdu_’ was submitted to Cambridge University in April 2003.
Proust’s ‘anti-realistic aesthetic’ (Wegner, 2003: 189). He maintains that Proust’s work is underpinned by an alternative photographic poetology which he explores in Proust’s framing of events and scenes, his recourse to motifs derived from the flatness of photography and his representation of spatio-temporal relations through what he describes as ‘chronophotographic paradigms’ (Wegner, 2003: 3). Together the anti-realist aesthetic and the photographic poetology form the whole of the novel, which Wegner argues must be understood to be constructed from these mutually exclusive theories of knowledge of the world. While acknowledging the influence of Wegner’s research, my thesis will suggest an alternative to his chronophotographic paradigms. Two of the main photographic motifs which will be put forward are based on my reading of the structure of Proust’s narrative as a juxtaposition and a superimposition of images, instead of as a serialisation of them. Image juxtaposition and superimposition allow the simultaneous existence of multiple images of the world as appropriated by Marcel and the later narrator. The dual narratological viewpoint in the novel will be evoked in support of these notions, since the retrospective gaze of the later narrator obviates the need for a strictly chronological presentation of images as perceived by Marcel. Although serialisation and chronophotography are discernible features of the photographic system of image production in Proust’s work, they co-exist with a juxtaposition and a superimposition of images which my thesis will read as equally if not more important photographic motifs.

Wegner cites Mieke Bal’s work as having significant influence on his research (Wegner, 2003: 5).
I. Thematic Appropriations of Photography in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*

Swann: Through Love of Art to Love of Odette

This chapter’s exploration of functional appropriations of photography in Proust’s novel will be informed by their germaneness to the conception and realisation of Marcel’s creative literary vocation. In order to clearly define the limits within which this thesis explores the role of photography in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, the work of this chapter will be placed within the context of what Shattuck refers to as ‘the overarching question of literary vocation’ (Shattuck, 2000: 3) in Proust’s novel. *À la recherche du temps perdu* contains many references to photography and metaphorical evocations of photographic motifs. This chapter will firstly consider thematic appropriations of photography which contribute significantly to the conception and realisation of Marcel’s creative vocation. In this way, Proust’s understanding and exploitation of the distinctive features of the photographic system of image production within the context of the novel’s central theme can be accurately ascertained.

In order precisely to determine the degree to which photography is used to represent Marcel’s evolving awareness of the nature of his literary vocation, this chapter will examine the use made of and the response to photography of Marcel and of other important characters in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Marcel’s ideas regarding the world of art and his own creative endeavours grow and change throughout his life. They are shaped by his observation and assimilation of people’s lives and of the creative works that he encounters. It is therefore expedient to consider the use made of photography by the people closest to and wielding the greatest creative influence over Marcel. The first and perhaps the most important of these people is Charles Swann.¹

¹ In *Le Temps retrouvé*, Swann’s importance in his life is explicitly acknowledged by Marcel, when he states that ‘en somme, si j’y réfléchissais, la matière de mon expérience, laquelle serait la matière de mon livre, me venait de Swann […] cet auteur des aspects de notre vie’ (Proust: VII, 221-222).
The importance of Charles Swann to Marcel is made clear in the structure of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The title of the first volume of the novel, *Du côté de chez Swann*, suggests a special world which Marcel associates with the man. The idea of a unique world inhabited by Swann is reinforced by the juxtaposition of Swann’s Way and the Guermantes Way in the third volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. This geographical and ideological duality structures the novel as a whole until its resolution in the figure of Mlle de Saint-Loup (Swann’s grand-daughter) in *Le Temps retrouvé*.*^2^

Swann’s love affair with Odette de Crécy, recounted through third-person narration in ‘Un amour de Swann’, makes up one third of the first volume of the novel.*^3^ Emotional connections or parallels between Swann’s life and that of Marcel are established by the later narrator from the earliest scenes of the first volume, when Marcel’s anguish on being deprived of his mother’s kiss on the evenings when Swann dines with or visits his family, is explicitly equated with Swann’s suffering with regard to Odette.*^4^ Thus similarities between Swann and Marcel as regards their understanding of love are implied from the beginning of the novel. Aside from his position as role model for Marcel’s understanding of love, Swann, as a devoted amateur of art, also shapes Marcel’s

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*^2^ This dichotomy is introduced in *Du côté de chez Swann* when Marcel observes that ‘je mettais entre eux, bien plus que leurs distances kilométriques la distance qu’il y avait entre les deux parties de mon cerveau où je pensais à eux, une de ces distances dans l’esprit qui ne font pas qu’éloigner, qui séparent et mettent dans un autre plan’ (Proust: I, 133). The next chapter of my thesis will argue that the representation in the novel of the spatial and mental distinction between Swann’s way and the Guermantes way is informed by photographic motifs.

*^3^ Narrative focalisation and the use of distinctive features of photography in its representation in the novel will be explored in detail in another chapter of this thesis. However, one point can be made here so as to clarify the provenance of the third-person narrative voice in ‘Un amour de Swann’. This voice is that of Marcel, recounting the story of a love affair which occurred many years before his birth. B.G. Rogers states that, in ‘Un amour de Swann’, ‘unity is maintained since the same voice narrating *À la recherche* is relating ‘Un amour de Swann’. So cleverly is the time manipulated that the physical character present in the narrative is absent from this particular episode, and hero and narrator coexist peacefully. Aesthetic unity, too, is preserved because the lessons drawn from Swann’s affair could be drawn only by the narrator, Marcel, and could only apply later to the hero, Marcel again’ (Rogers, 1965: 101-102). The lessons that Marcel draws from Swann’s experience relate to art and society as well as love.

*^4^ ‘L’angoisse que je venais d’éprouver, je pensais que Swann s’en serait bien moqué […]; or, au contraire, comme je l’ai appris plus tard, une angoisse semblable fut le tourment de longues années de sa vie et personne, aussi bien que lui peut-être, n’aurait pu me comprendre’ (Proust: I, 30). The relationship between the representation of the Swann/Odette love affair and that of Marcel and Albertine will be considered later in this chapter. In this section, an exploration of the role played by photography in the Swann/Odette affair will show Proust’s awareness and exploitation of the potentialities offered by the ambiguous semiotic status of the photographic image.
understanding of what Shattuck refers to as ‘the attractions and rewards of art’ (Shattuck, 2000: 75).

In order accurately to judge the significance of Swann’s influence on the conception and realisation of Marcel’s creative vocation, it is essential to clarify the degree to which Swann is perceived as a model for Marcel. Antoine Compagnon considers Swann to be the ‘alter ego du héros, son modèle dans tout le roman’. His opinion is open to debate. Swann is clearly a significant character in Marcel’s life, profoundly influential in the development of the latter’s ideas about the major themes of love, society and art which structure the novel as a whole (cf. note 1 above). However, it is more accurate ultimately to consider him as Marcel’s alter ego only in so far as he presents a possible alternative to or counter-model of the identity Marcel eventually assumes. For Swann, unlike Marcel, is a failure as a creative artist. His example serves to lead Marcel astray as the latter struggles towards the realisation of his literary vocation. Yet despite this fact, the later narrator is retrospectively aware of the debt which he owes to Swann and of the advantages he has derived from knowing him. Therefore, as a prototype of the life of the sterile artist which Marcel almost resigned himself to living, Swann plays an important augural role in Marcel’s artistic, emotional and social development. Photographs are an element common to several points in À la recherche du temps perdu where Swann and

5 Antoine Compagnon in his preface to Du côté de chez Swann (Proust: I, xxvi).
6 Paul Ricœur sees the construction of ‘Un amour de Swann’ as a ‘modèle pour le récit d’autres amours, principalement celui du héros pour Albertine’ (Ricœur, 1984: 206). However, in ‘Temps et récit: une analyse critique des positions de Ricœur sur Proust,’ Pierre Campion describes ‘Un amour de Swann’ as fulfilling the function of an exact counter-model of Marcel’s love affairs (Cléder, 2003: 29). Campion’s objection to Ricœur’s opposing viewpoint is based on the fact that ‘Un amour de Swann’ is narrated in the third person. While my thesis does to a certain extent support his view of Swann’s function in Proust’s novel, my position will not be based on the same arguments. As stated in note 3, narrative focalisation and its significance will be discussed in detail later in this thesis, which takes into account Swann’s importance throughout À la recherche du temps perdu as an influence on Marcel’s ideas about both love and art throughout the whole of the latter’s life. My thesis will take the later narrator’s recounting of Swann’s affair with Odette as signifying the affair’s importance in Marcel’s emotional development: the emotional parallels between Marcel and Swann are thus reinforced.
7 Swann’s study of Vermeer is never begun: ‘Il avait allégué des travaux en train, une étude — en réalité abandonnée depuis des années — sur Ver Meer de Delft’ (Proust: I, 195). The choice of Vermeer as the painter whose work fascinates both Swann and Bergotte and whose ‘View of Delft’ symbolises for the latter all the effects he was himself unable to capture in writing is an interesting one and will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Swann’s later study of the coins of the Knights of Rhodes proves equally unproductive.
8 Shattuck affirms that ‘Proust teaches by parables and lives gone astray’ (Shattuck, 2000: 159).
Marcel interact. They also recur in Marcel’s recounting of Swann’s love affair with Odette. An exploration of Swann’s understanding and exploitation of photographic images will point up photography’s ambiguity as an influence on the conception and realisation of Marcel’s creative vocation. This ambiguity is unique to the photograph due to its semiotic status as indexical icon. Jean-Marie Schaeffer affirms that:

L’aspect le plus irritant, mais aussi le plus stimulant, du signe photographique réside sans doute dans sa flexibilité pragmatique. Nous savons tous que l’image photographique est mise au service des stratégies de communication les plus diverses. Or, ces stratégies donnent lieu à [...] des normes communicationnelles, et qui sont capables d’infléchir profondément son statut sémiotique. [...] L’image photographique, loin de posséder un statut stable, est fondamentalement changeante et multiple. (Schaeffer, 1987: 10)

This section of my thesis will assess Proust’s exploitation of this flexibility of the photographic image in the conception and realisation of Marcel’s creative vocation. Given Swann’s influence on Marcel’s artistic and emotional education, an exploration of his manner of engaging with photographic images is pertinent. My exploration will demonstrate Proust’s exploitation of photography’s complex semiotic status as indexical icon both in Swann’s communication to Marcel of his attitude towards art, and in the representation of the fundamental differences between the two which ultimately determine the creative sterility of the former and the success of the latter. Photographs serve more than once to reveal these differences.

Swann and Marcel: Interaction with the World through Photographs

Different types of photographic images play a role in Swann and Marcel’s interaction with one another and with the world. The most important is photographic reproductions of art, which figure prominently in Marcel’s artistic education at Swann’s hands and in Swann’s love affair with Odette. An exploration of their influence on Marcel in terms of his conception of Italy demonstrates the ambiguous power of evocation of the photographic image. This ambiguity is pithily underlined through reference to a kind of photograph with which Marcel is unfamiliar: the travel photograph. Another type of photographic image engaged with by Swann is old photographic portraits of Odette. His
use of these images shows photography’s power as a means of representing the past.⁹

Here again, photographs are shown to be ambiguous in that they may represent a past whose existence is confined solely to the realms of the viewer’s imagination. The effect of the photograph’s semiotic ambiguity on Swann and Marcel’s conception and realisation of a creative vocation proves to be significant for each of them. As the following pages show, Marcel’s eventual creative success and Swann’s failure partially are symptoms of significant differences in their manner of engagement with photographic images and the norms of reception governing the photographic system of image production.

Photographic Reproductions of Art: The Giotto Figures

At Combray, Marcel’s artistic education is shaped by Swann’s gifts of photographic reproductions of Italian masterpieces which the latter brings back from his travels.¹⁰

These photographs of works by Giotto and Titian and of masterpieces of Italian architecture make a profound and lasting impression on Marcel. They kindle his fascination with and desire to see Italy. This desire has important consequences for him, as through its lengthy duration and his involuntary memories of Venice, he comes ultimately to understand the necessity of distinguishing between external reality and the inner life of the creative artist.¹¹ His photographs also introduce Marcel to a key aspect of Swann’s way of looking at the world: namely, the tendency to seek out resemblances

⁹ The baron de Charlus affirms that ‘la photographie acquiert un peu de la dignité qui lui manque quand elle cesse d’être une reproduction du réel et nous montre des choses qui n’existent plus’ (Proust: II, 331). What the baron fails to acknowledge but Proust seems to have appreciated is photography’s power to represent people and things as they may never actually have been.

¹⁰ ‘Ma grand-tante [...] trouvait tout naturel [...] que de chacun de ses voyages d’Italie il m’eût rapporté des photographies de chefs-d’œuvre’ (Proust: I, 18). Swann’s photographs, although disdained by Marcel’s grandmother for their vulgarity, are favoured by the later narrator for their accuracy as documentary evidence of the art and architecture they represent. With wry humour, the later narrator remarks on the consequences of his grandmother’s attempts to avoid photographic representations of art, observing that ‘l’idée que je pris de Venise d’après un dessin du Titien qui est censé avoir pour fond la lagune, était certainement beaucoup moins exacte que celle que m’eussent donnée de simples photographies’ (Proust: I, 40). The photographic image is clearly valued by Marcel in his desire for accuracy of representation.

¹¹ ‘Sans doute, au moment où l’inégalité des deux pavés avait prolongé les images desséchées et minces que j’avais de Venise et de Saint-Marc [...] j’avais été tenté [...] d’aller me repromener sur les eaux pour moi toujours printanières de Venise. [...] Mais je ne m’arrêtai pas un instant à cette pensée. [...] J’avais trop expérimenté l’impossibilité d’atteindre dans la réalité ce qui était au fond de moi-même’ (Proust: VII, 183).
between the people with whom he interacts in the world and figures depicted in paintings. Marcel is made aware of this habit at Combray with regard to the family’s pregnant servant girl:

La fille de cuisine [...] commençait à porter difficilement devant elle la mystérieuse corbeille, chaque jour plus remplie, dont on devinait sous ses amples sarraus la forme magnifique. Ceux-ci rappelaient les houppelandes qui revêtaient certaines des figures symboliques de Giotto dont Swann m’avait donné des photographies. C’est lui-même qui nous l’avait fait remarquer et quand il nous demandait des nouvelles de la fille de cuisine il nous disait: “Comment va la Charité de Giotto?” (Proust: I, 79-80)

A devoted amateur of art, Swann cultivates a vision of the world that is informed by his favourite art works. This habit discloses what Shattuck refers to as his idolatrous attitude towards art. It not only guides his responses to the world around him, but actively influences the way in which he chooses to live, as illustrated by the development of his love affair with Odette which will be explored later in this chapter and in which a photographic reproduction of a painting plays a key role. The later narrator suggests several explanations for Swann’s particular manner of engaging with works of art:

Peut-être ayant toujours gardé un remords d’avoir borné sa vie aux relations mondiales, à la conversation, croyait-il trouver une sorte d’indulgent pardon à lui accordé par les grands artistes, dans ce fait qu’ils avaient eux aussi considéré avec plaisir, fait entrer dans leur œuvre, de tels visages qui donnent à celle-ci un singulier certificat de réalité et de vie, une saveur moderne; peut-être aussi s’était-il tellement laissé gagner par la frivolité des gens du monde qu’il éprouvait le besoin de trouver dans une œuvre ancienne ces allusions anticipées et rajeunissantes à des noms propres d’aujourd’hui. Peut-être au contraire avait-il gardé suffisamment une nature d’artiste pour que ces caractéristiques individuelles lui causassent du plaisir en prenant une signification plus générale, dès qu’il les apercevait déracinées, délivrées, dans la ressemblance d’un portrait plus ancien avec un original qu’il ne représentait pas. (Proust: I, 219-220)

The later narrator’s retrospective speculation on Swann’s creative potential, his worldliness and his consequent creative sterility as possible reasons for his way of approaching works of art sets up a conflict between the respective demands of social life and a life devoted to creative activity which is not resolved until the end of Le Temps

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12 ‘Swann avait toujours eu ce goût particulier d’aimer à retrouver dans la peinture des maîtres non pas seulement les caractères généraux de la réalité qui nous entoure, mais ce qui semble au contraire le moins susceptible de généralité, les traits individuels des visages que nous connaissons’ (Proust: I, 219).
13 Shattuck affirms that ‘Swann is […] a victim of “idolatry of forms” (I 852/ ii 589) because he tries to arrange his life — even his love life — according to the narrow beauty he sees in art’ (Shattuck, 2000: 156).

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retrouvé. This passage presages the potentially dubious consequences of the example set by Swann for Marcel and of his influence on the latter’s attitudes to art and to creative endeavour. The suggestion that Swann’s superficial engagement with works of art stems from unresolved regret at his own failure to produce an artistic work is borne out throughout À la recherche du temps perdu by his repeated refusal to pursue any creative line of thought. This refusal is accompanied by the gesture of shutting and rubbing his eyes and polishing his glasses: the better to see the world as other artists have done, instead of cultivating his own vision of the world around him. Instead he restricts himself to the worship of other people’s art, the visual appropriation of which satisfies his aesthetic sensibilities while simultaneously paralysing his creative potential. Photography’s usefulness as a tool for the acquisition of knowledge of a work of art means that it facilitates Swann’s idolatrous appropriation of art, while its pragmatic flexibility passively contributes to his creative sterility. His gifts to Marcel have the potential to impart to the latter the same manner of appreciating art and thus the same creative sterility.

At Combray, Marcel does in effect accept Swann’s appraisal of the servant girl’s physical resemblance to the Giotto figure, remarking that ‘la pauvre fille [...] ressemblait en effet assez à ces vierges […] dans lesquelles les vertus sont personifiées à l’Arena’ (Proust: I, 80). Yet for many years he derives no pleasure from looking at his photographs of the Giotto figures on the wall of his ‘salle d’études’ and cannot share Swann’s admiration for them. It is the later narrator who explains the reasons for this when he reflects upon a less immediately evident but nonetheless significant way in which a resemblance exists between servant girl and painted figure. The key to Marcel’s eventual enjoyment of the painting is his recognition of the role played within it by symbol:

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14 See note 26 of this section for details of such references in the text.
15 See page 20 for Jean-Marie Schaeffer’s description of the photograph’s ambiguous status. Essentially, the uses to which photographs are put depend largely on the attitude adopted towards them by the viewer. Swann restricts his engagement with photography mainly to photographic reproductions of art. His purpose in looking at them seems itself to be restricted to the search for resemblances with living people: hence his interest in the pregnant servant girl and, later, in Odette. Photographs do not serve successfully to stimulate Swann’s own creative endeavours. Rather they passively fuel his veneration of living embodiments of artistically-validated human forms.
16 ‘Et je me rends compte maintenant que ces Vertus et ces Vices de Padoue lui ressemblaient encore d’une autre manière. De meme que l’image de cette fille etait accrue par le symbole ajoute qu’elle portait devant
Mais plus tard j’ai compris que l’étrange saisissante, la beauté spéciale de ces fresques tenait à la grande place que le symbole y occupait, et que le fait qu’il fût représenté non comme un symbole puisque la pensée symbolisée n’était pas exprimée, mais comme réel, comme effectivement subi ou matériellement manié, donnait à la signification de l’œuvre quelque chose de plus littéral et de plus précis, à son enseignement quelque chose de plus concret et de plus frappant. (Proust: I, 81)

This description of Giotto’s representation of the Virtues and Vices expresses Marcel’s enthusiasm for the representation of the symbolic as real in the painting. Marcel defines the real as that which can be actually felt or materially handled. It is therefore rooted in multi-sensory experience. Having grasped Giotto’s representation of the symbolic as real, Marcel sees the painting as having a more precise, literal meaning than it might otherwise have had and the lesson it imparts as being more concrete and striking. At this point the later narrator remarks on the primacy of the concrete over the abstract, both in Giotto’s painting and in everyday life, offering the example of practical charity as he has witnessed it in people who have ‘le visage antipathique et sublime de la vraie bonté’ (Proust: I, 81). This notion of the primacy of concrete over abstract is central to the creative literary project of the later narrator as he retrospectively traces the development of his vocation. While Marcel searches for abstract truths beneath the surface of daily existence, the later narrator has come to understand the importance of ‘le côté effectif, dououreux, obscur, viscéral’ (Proust: I, 81) of life as it is lived physically and emotionally by his body and mind. His delayed appreciation of the figures in the Giotto painting serves to point up the erroneous path which Marcel will take in pursuit of his desire to become a writer and also the valuable knowledge which the later narrator has.

son ventre, sans avoir l’air d’en comprendre le sens, sans que rien dans son visage en traduisit la beauté et l’esprit, comme un simple et pesant fardeau, de meme c’est sans paraître s’en douter que la puissante ménagère qui est représentée à l’Arena au-dessous du nom ‘Caritas’ et dont la reproduction était accrochée au mur de ma salle d’études, à Combray, incarne cette vertu, c’est sans qu’aucune pensée de charité semble avoir jamais pu être exprimée par son visage énergique et vulgaire’ (Proust: I, 80).

17 ‘Aussi le charme apparent, copiable, des êtres m’échappait parce que je n’avais pas la faculté de m’arrêter à lui, comme un chirurgien qui, sous le poli d’un ventre de femme, verrait le mal interne qui le ronge. J’avais beau dîner en ville, je ne voyais pas les convives, parce que, quand je croyais les regarder, je les radiographiais. Il en résultait qu’en réunissant toutes les remarques que j’avais pu faire dans un dîner sur les convives, le dessin des lignes tracées par moi figurait un ensemble de lois psychologiques […]’ (Proust: VII, 24-25). The use of an optical metaphor, in this case radiography, to describe the abstract nature of his engagement with the world around him implies Marcel’s awareness of the existence of new ways of seeing which are linked to new systems of image production such as photography. Radiographic motifs in the Proustian narrative will be discussed in the fourth chapter of my thesis.
ultimately gleaned from Marcel’s experiences. Through its dual narratological structure, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, like the Giotto figures, presents abstract concepts — the search for lost time and for a creative vocation — as inextricably linked to the mundanity of life as it is lived every day.

Unlike Swann, Marcel knows the Giotto painting only through the photographs which Swann has given to him. His eventual appreciation of its special beauty is based solely on his perusal of photographic reproductions. This fact is thrice reiterated in this two-page passage from *Du côté de chez Swann*. Thus it is photography which makes significant developments in Marcel’s artistic education possible. The reading of the photographs by Marcel and the later narrator shows an unconscious recognition of and response to the distinctive semiotic status of the photographic reproduction of a painting. The hybrid semiotic status of the photographic image explains the tension which exists between its causal relation with the part of the world which is represented (its indexical quality), and its resemblance to the world represented (its iconic quality). These two poles of tension are present in every photographic image and are alternately weakened or strengthened by the norms governing the reception of photographic images. Marcel’s photographs are reproductions of already existing images. Schaeffer notes that:

> Bien entendu, la photographie peut aussi être la reproduction de ce qui déjà est une image: ainsi lorsqu’elle reproduit un tableau. [...] Mais nous verrons que dans un tel cas, l’image photographique ne fonctionne pas comme vue analogique. [...] Dans l’usage reproductif de la photographie, l’image n’est pas thématisée comme vue photographique, contrairement à ce qui se passe dans son usage ‘canonique’ comme production de vues analogiques, c’est-à-dire de transpositions bidimensionnelles d’un ‘monde’ tridimensionnel. (Schaeffer, 1987: 26)

Thus a photographic reproduction of a painting is not looked at as an arbitrarily composed, two-dimensional view of the three-dimensional painting situated at a specific point in space. Instead, the photographic reproduction ‘n’est que le tenant-lieu du tableau

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18 Friday affirms that ‘the peculiarities of photographic representation suggest that this is a mode of signification straddling the categories of icon and index. [...] Photographic representation is the *coincidence* of these two modes. Photographs point by picturing — they are iconically indexical’ (Friday, 2002: 49).

19 Schaeffer explores the ambiguity of the photograph’s semiotic status and concludes that it is the function of the norms of reception of the photographic image to attempt to control what he regards as the strange wildness of the photographic sign (Schaeffer, 1987: 103).
réel’ (Schaeffer, 1987: 28). This means that conscious recognition by the viewer of a relation of resemblance between the photographed painting and that painting as it might be viewed by unmediated perceptual contact does not tend to occur. Instead, the photograph is regarded as a transparent carrier or copy of the original painting. Marcel’s discussion of the Giotto figures shows his unconscious adoption of this attitude towards the photographic reproduction of a work of art. Notwithstanding his stated awareness of the photographic nature of the images, his discussion of them suggests that he is in direct perceptual contact with the painting. His close examination of the Vices and Virtues is an engagement with photography ‘as a means to perceptual contact with what it depicts’ (Friday, 2002: 60). The way Marcel and the later narrator look at the photographs is clearly characterised by what Jonathan Friday refers to as an ‘attitude of transparency’ (Friday, 2002: 60). Friday also notes that ‘it is precisely because we describe and treat photographs as if they put us into perceptual contact with what they depict that we can mark out the attitude of transparency. And this suggests that, when looking at a photograph, the viewer’s primary encounter is with the world and not with the photograph for its own sake’ (Friday, 2002: 69). This variable ‘attitude of transparency’ is adopted where the viewer is aware of the photographic nature of the image before him and accepts that it is a transparent representation. The photograph’s transparency is directly related to its distinctive semiotic status as indexical icon, as defined using

20 Frank Wegner notes the importance of the creation versus copy opposition which characterises the aesthetic discourse on photography from the 1840s to 1920s and which is operative in Proust’s novel. Friday’s comprehensive analysis of the transparency of the photograph is fundamental to the work of this section of my thesis. In relation to photographic reproductions of paintings, he affirms that ‘we know that photographic reproductions are distorted versions of original paintings, and yet still we treat them as surrogates for direct perceptual experience of paintings’ (Friday, 2002: 60). It is the strength of the indexical quality of the photographic reproduction which enables the viewer to use photographs in this way. In the introduction to La Littérature à l’ére de la photographie: enquête sur une révolution invisible, Philippe Ortel notes that ‘la transparence de la photographie ne concerne pas seulement l’image isolée mais aussi sa façon d’exister dans le monde. […] Il y a enfin une invisibilité sociale de la photographie, tenant à son absence de reconnaissance esthétique’ (Ortel, 2002: 8). My thesis aims to explore how, through its dual narratological structure, Proust’s novel exploits the transparency of photography while retrospectively recognising its unique value and importance as a means of image production in the conception and realisation of Marcel’s literary vocation.

22 Clearly, as Friday observes, ‘the relation between transparent representation and the attitude of transparency is both contingent and potentially unstable. We look for visual clues as to whether the picture we are looking at is a transparent picture and have an appropriate response on the basis of these clues’ (Friday, 2002: 62). In the case of Marcel’s engagement with photographic reproductions of the Giotto painting, we find a complete coincidence of transparent representation and attitude of transparency which facilitates the development of aesthetic ideas which will retrospectively prove to be significant for Marcel’s literary vocation.
Charles Sanders Peirce’s theory of signs. As the medium which transmits the image of the Giotto painting, photography is uniquely capable of effacing itself so as to allow the successful passage of that image: Ortel observes that ‘une information ne passe bien que si l’on oublie les moyens de sa transmission, qu’il s’agisse de langage ou d’image’ (Ortel, 2002: 8). Friday affirms that:

Our knowledge that we are looking at a necessarily distorting reproduction keeps us from falling under the illusion that we are really seeing the original, but the transparent mode of representation encourages us to treat the reproduction as a reliable vehicle for perceptual study and appreciation of the painting. (Friday, 2002: 60)

Marcel’s confident, close analysis of the Giotto figures leading to his ultimate appreciation of the artist’s ability to represent the abstract through the concrete is successfully facilitated by the transparency of photography as a means of image reproduction.

The transparency of the photographic image implies that the Giotto photographs point persistently to the unique painting located in a chapel in Padua. Hence Marcel’s fascination with Italian art and the dawn of his desire for unmediated perceptual contact with his favourite works of art. The photographic reproduction of a pictorial work of art is not consciously contemplated as an image of an image. It is taken to be a faithful copy of the painting, which itself becomes the object of analysis and which contributes significantly to the development of Marcel’s creative sensibilities.

While Swann contents himself with noting superficial resemblances between people in the world around him and figures in paintings, Marcel succeeds in accessing a more profound creative truth through his perusal of the photographic reproductions of Giotto’s

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23 François Brunet discusses Peirce’s theory of the sign and clarifies his definition of the photograph’s unique semiotic status as indexical icon (Brunet, 2000: 305-329).

24 This desire is satisfied later in life when Marcel travels to Padua in order to visit the Arena chapel containing the Giotto paintings. It is significant, however, that unmediated perceptual contact with the paintings does not yield any new information about Giotto’s genius; rather it confirms the ideas which Marcel had already noted through his perusal of the photographic reproductions of the Virtues and Vices. Marcel’s successful use of photographic reproductions as substitutes for direct perception contact with the paintings, resulting in accurate appreciation and interpretation of the work, is thus underlined (Proust: VI, 227-228).
Vices and Virtues. His recognition of the artist’s power to represent important but intangible concepts through concrete, everyday scenes and events will become an integral part of his own retrospective recounting of the development of his literary vocation. As stated above, the later narrator muses on whether Swann’s way of engaging with people through the resemblance they bear to figures in famous works of art is partially motivated by his creative sterility (Proust: I, 219-220).²⁵ Though Marcel assimilates Swann’s way of looking at the world, he manages eventually to reach beyond mere recognition of other artists’ vision and to resolve to cultivate his own. In so doing he begins to reject the idolatry which characterises Swann’s relationship with art. Shattuck affirms that:

Marcel inherits from Swann and Bergotte a sense of the privileged status and calling of art. Its elevated position has made it impossible for him to believe he could ever become an artist. How could he ever lift his lowly insights and impressions to the exalted regions of literature? Aesthetic snobbery, or idolatry, has kept him from pursuing his own vocation. (Shattuck, 2000: 157-158)²⁶

Thus the photographs whose effect could have been nefarious are ultimately a useful tool in the development of Marcel’s conception of what a creative work can achieve. The value of art reproduction photography as regards the conception and realisation of a creative vocation is ultimately shown to lie in its reception by the viewer. The disparity between Marcel’s and Swann’s engagement with photographic reproductions of art points up the stimulating or inhibiting effects these images and the information they contain have on their respective creative lives. Schaeffer concludes that ‘dans l’écrasante majorité des cas, l’image photographique se borne à “montrer”, et elle ne fait rien d’autre qui soit observable’ (Schaeffer, 1987: 211). It is up to Swann and Marcel to glean what useful information they require from the photographs they look at. Swann’s lack of commitment to the development of his creative potential leads him to engage with photographs on the

²⁵ A further suggestion of Swann’s sense of regret at his creative idleness is expressed in ‘Un amour de Swann’ when the later narrator voices Swann’s thoughts thus: ‘Ce n’est pas pour rien, se disait-il maintenant, que depuis que les hommes jugent leur prochain, c’est sur ses actes. Il n’y a que cela qui signifie quelque chose, et nullement ce que nous disons, ce que nous pensons’ (Proust: I, 351-352). This belated realisation of the need for action is the same thought which strikes Marcel at the Guermantes matinee which closes Le Temps retrouvé.

²⁶ Marcel’s creative paralysis is transformed into a resolve to act once his worship of other artists’ work is subsumed by his realisation of the value of his inner life. Introspection is therefore a key to Marcel’s creative vocation. It is a state of mind and body from which Swann consistently shies away, which mental rejection is repeatedly accompanied by the gesture of wiping his eyes and his spectacles (Proust: I, 34; 264; 291; 312; 341; 351; 371; 406).
superficial level of physiognomic resemblance. His veneration of art blinds him to the
deeper truths which could be accessed through it.

**Marcel’s Italy: Photography-Generated Imagined Cityscapes**

Italy fascinates Marcel. His introduction to Italy through the photographs he receives from Swann kindles a long-held desire to travel in that country, and his conception of Italian cities such as Florence, Venice, Padua and Rome is intimately interwoven with his familiarity with the famous art and architecture which distinguish them. For his knowledge of the Old Masters, Marcel’s debt to Swann and his gifts of photographic reproductions has been repeatedly stated earlier in *Du côté de chez Swann*. As a boy, his joy at the prospect of visiting the north of Italy with his family is enhanced by his evocation of the art and architecture the major cities contain. Florence, for him, is imagined through the work of Fra Angelico and Giotto (Proust: I, 379, 382). Venice is ‘l’école de Giorgione, la demeure du Titien, le plus complet musée de l’architecture domestique au Moyen Age’ (Proust: I, 384).

The Italian cities which fascinate Marcel are evoked predominantly through images embodied in their individual names. Each name has connotations of a strongly visual nature. The process by which Marcel invests the name of each city with its own unique poetry is described in language common to the lexicon of photography:

> [...] Les noms présentent des personnes — et des villes qu’ils nous habituent à croire individuelles, uniques comme des personnes — une image confuse qui tire d’eux, de leur sonorité éclatante ou sombre, la couleur dont elle est peinte uniformément [...]. (Proust: I, 380 - my italics)

Names offer Marcel a confused visual image of individual, unique people and places which draws its colour from the shading of tone that he detects in the name itself. The use

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27 Musing on Venice, Marcel’s happiness at the prospect of an imminent visit to that city increases with the thought that ‘le soleil du printemps teignait déjà les flots du Grand Canal d’un si sombre azur et de si nobles émeraudes qu’en venant se briser aux pieds des peintures du Titien, ils pouvaient rivaliser de riche coloris avec elles’ (Proust: I, 384-385). Throughout the novel Padua is conceived of primarily as the city which houses the Arena chapel containing Giotto’s paintings of the Vices and Virtues (Proust: I, 80). It is interesting to note the predominantly visual nature of the images described.
of the term ‘tirer de’ — used in printing and engraving long before the invention of photography and therefore rich in associations with creative activity — to describe this process of determining a discrete mental image of a city or person from its name draws a parallel between the photographic process of image production in the darkroom and the development of a single, uniform and, to some extent, unifying mental image from multiple spatio-temporal impressions. There is allusion both to the nebulous nature of the individual photographic image during the process of development by the discriminating photographer and to the creative potential which lies in every latent photographic image and individual name. Through the brightness or darkness of their tone or resonance — ‘leur sonorité éclatante ou sombre’: a description of sound in visual terms of light and darkness, suggestive of the black-and-white photograph — unique names might be regarded as being implicitly equated here with the spatio-temporal distinctiveness of a blurred photographic image. A parallel is thus tentatively established between the representational power of words and photographic images. This fact suggests Marcel’s tacit recognition of the importance of photographs as a source of information about Italy.

Visually, Marcel knows Italy only through photographs. His engagement with them influences his attitude to Italy in different ways. The indexical quality of the photographic image and particularly of the photographic reproduction means that it points constantly to the original work of art located in Italy (cf. note 22 above). The fact that Italy is the site of the artworks he admires explains Marcel’s eagerness for unmediated perceptual contact with the cities whose art and architecture he has discovered through photographic images. His enthusiasm at the prospect of visiting Italy is due in large part to his anticipation of actual physical presence in the place occupied by works and buildings he has, up to now, contemplated only in photographs and in his imagination. The latter point is significant because the iconic quality of the paintings represented in his photographic reproductions facilitates the development of Marcel’s personal dreams and visions of Italy. His photographs play a dual role. They represent Venice’s unique art and architecture while also functioning as images of the city which contains this art. They are

28 The composite nature of the mental image of unvisited cities which is suggested in this passage is explored in greater detail in the fourth chapter of my thesis, where the motifs of composite photography and radiography are studied.
seen by Marcel not only as reproductions of individual art works but as representations of the city as a whole. As icons, the paintings picture a part of the world, in this case Renaissance Venice; as indexes, the photographs confirm the existence of the art which they reproduce. Hence Marcel’s repeated references to the great Venetian artists whose works inform his dreams of life in that city.

However, Marcel’s imagined city has no roots in present-day spatio-temporal reality. This situation is a direct consequence of his knowledge of Italy through photographs of Renaissance art, since photographic images represent moments cut out of spatio-temporal continuity which may then circulate freely. Susan Sontag affirms that:

Through photographs, the world becomes a series of unrelated, freestanding particles […] The camera makes reality atomic, manageable, and opaque. It is a view of the world which denies interconnectedness, continuity […]. Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy. (Sontag, 1977: 23)

Thus the joy Marcel feels is derived from his belief that he will find in Italy the cities he has imagined through his contemplation of photographic images. He anticipates the confirmation of his personal visions of Florence, Venice and Pisa. However, in the weeks preceding his journey, the spatio-temporal reality of the existence of the Italian cities is vividly and unexpectedly grasped by Marcel. The climax of anticipation is

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29 This is precisely the way in which Marcel describes his manner of thinking about unknown places and works: ‘Je ne me représentais pas alors les villes, les paysages, les monuments, comme des tableaux plus ou moins agréables, découpés ça et là dans une même matière, mais chacun d’eux comme un inconnu, essentiellement différent des autres, dont mon âme avait soif et qu’elle aurait profit à connaître’ (Proust: I, 380). The discontinuity which characterises the photographic image is also a distinct feature of Marcel’s thinking about Italy. Hence his profound surprise at the realisation, through the practical organisation of the family’s journey, of the spatio-temporal reality of Venice and Florence’s existence.

30 ‘Pendant ce mois — où je rassais comme une mélodie, sans pouvoir m’en rassasier, ces images de Florence, de Venise et de Pise desquelles le désir qu’elles excitaient en moi gardait quelque chose d’aussi profondément individuel que si ç’avait été un amour, un amour pour une personne — je ne cessai pas de croire qu’elles correspondaient à une réalité indépendante de moi, et elles me firent connaître une aussi belle espérance que pouvait en nourrir un Chrétien des premiers âges à la veille d’entrer dans le paradis’ (Proust: I, 383-384).

31 The spatio-temporal reality of Venice and Florence is brought home to Marcel by his father’s practical preparations for the journey: barometer checks, train time-tables consultation and wardrobe advice. All these actions lead Marcel to realise that ‘ainsi elle [Venise] et la Cité des lys n’étaient pas seulement des tableaux fictifs qu’on mettait à volonté devant son imagination, mais existaient à une certaine distance de Paris qu’il fallait absolument franchir si l’on voulait les voir, à une certaine place déterminée de la terre, et à aucune autre, en un mot étaient bien réelles […]’ (Proust: I, 385).
represented through the sudden recognition of this spatio-temporal reality as the site of a potential photo opportunity:

Mais je n'étais encore qu'en chemin vers le dernier degré de l'allégresse; je l'atteignis enfin (ayant seulement alors la révélation que sur les rues clapotantes, rougies du reflet des fresques de Giorgione, ce n'était pas, comme j'avais, malgré tant d'avertissements, continué à l'imager, les hommes "majestueux et terribles comme la mer, portant leur armure aux reflets de bronze sous les plis de leur manteau sanglant" qui se proméneraient dans Venise la semaine prochaine, la veille de Pâques, mais que ce pourrait être moi le personnage minuscule que, dans une grande photographie de Saint-Marc qu'on m'avait prêtée, l'illustrateur avait représenté, en chapeau melon, devant les porches), quand j'entendis mon père me dire: "Il doit faire encore froid sur le Grand Canal, tu ferais bien de mettre à tout hasard dans ta malle ton pardessus d'hiver et ton gros veston." À ces mots je m'élevai à une sorte d'extase [...]. (Proust: I, 385-386)

This passage describes the collision of Marcel’s realisation of the physical reality of modern Venice and his mental image of that city which finds its roots in his imaginative musings on photographic reproductions of art. Marcel’s new awareness of the spatio-temporal reality of the Italian cities he has dreamt of is represented through the sudden projection of himself into the role of tourist in a photograph of Saint Mark’s Cathedral. The clash of reality and dream images which this scene describes has catastrophic consequences. Marcel’s resulting illness forces the cancellation of the family’s journey and the denial of any imminent prospect of another (Proust: I, 386).

The role played by photography in this scene and in the build-up to it merits close attention. Marcel’s sudden recognition of the reality of modern Venice’s existence is represented through his contemplation of (and self-projection into) a kind of photography that is new to him: travel photography. Travel photography is shown here to be a privileged means of prefiguring Marcel’s presence in Venice at a particular moment in time and space.32 This is a new aspect of photography which has not previously been considered by Marcel. Up to this point — aside from his childhood rejection of the ritual of being photographed at Combray (Proust: I, 143)33 — his engagement with

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32 Sontag affirms that ‘the photograph is a thin slice of space as well as time’ (Sontag, 1977: 22).
33 Marcel’s childhood rejection of the ritual of being photographed before leaving Combray stands out in important contrast to his usual enthusiasm for photographic reproductions of art. Jérôme Thelot sees this episode as representing the boy’s rejection of photography as an instrument of parental control and conformity (Thelot, 2003: 196).
photography has been confined to Swann’s gifts of art reproductions and motivated primarily by a desire for knowledge of works of art and architecture whose origins lie in the distant past. Recognition of the imminent possibility of self-representation in a travel photograph has significant psychological consequences for Marcel. He claims to feel great joy at the prospect of occupying the position of the photographed man at Saint Mark’s. In so saying he professes to relish the certainty which is given to him so unexpectedly by his father’s words (‘révélation’: a word evocative of religious conversion — an association underlined by his elevation to a ‘sorte d’extase’, but also drawn from the lexicon of photographic image development in the darkroom) of his own imminent physical presence in Venice. However, his excitement is tempered by the simultaneous realisation that the Venice of his dreams does not in fact exist. His anticipation of the journey, fuelled by his avid attention to photographic reproductions of works of art and architecture produced for the most part during the Renaissance and by the dreams which have been derived from them, has prepared Marcel to visit not the Venice of today, but of the distant past. This he admits to, in spite of the practical arrangements or warnings — ‘avertissements’ — which suggested otherwise. His new awareness of the spatio-temporal reality of the cities of northern Italy as they exist at the present time is brought about by the advice given to him by his father and is represented through the image of the modern photographed man. Marcel realises that Venice is no longer peopled by majestic warriors but by tourists in bowler hats, amongst whom he will be numbered. The present reality of life in Venice, like this capacity of travel photography to represent the spatio-temporal reality of modern life around the world, has not been appreciated by Marcel until now.

The giddy surprise he feels at the certainty of Venice’s spatio-temporal reality brings on the illness which prevents him from experiencing that reality. Marcel’s neurasthenic illness constitutes a subconscious refusal to bring his inner vision of Venice into contact

34 Proust’s use of the verb ‘éléver’ is of interest because of its origin in the Latin e- (variant of ex-) ‘out, away’ + levare ‘lighten’ (from levis ‘light’); Marcel’s sense of being grounded in time and space is challenged or undermined to so great an extent by the significance of his father’s words that he floats away into mentally or emotionally-triggered illness.

35 The modernity of the man in the photograph is underlined by the contrast between his bowler hat and the armoured and cloaked Venetians of Marcel’s imagination, the latter being bathed in the light of Giorgione’s Renaissance frescoes.
with the modern reality. By falling ill, he ensures that Venice remains unvisited and unknown, except through the photographs which serve as stimuli for his imagination’s construction of the city. In a response to the prospect of being photographed which mirrors his childhood refusal to pose for the photographer at Combray, Marcel rejects the possibility of seeing (and being photographed in) modern Venice, the better to preserve his imagined city from the shock — and disappointment — of the real.\(^\text{36}\) Swann’s gifts of photographic reproductions of Italian masterpieces are essential elements in Marcel’s imaginative construction of Venice. Their unique semiotic duality both informs and legitimises his whims. Through them, Marcel constructs an image of Venice whose survival will depend on his continued failure to visit the city. The enforced postponement of the satisfaction of his desire to visit Italy ensures that Venice takes on an increasing allure for Marcel.\(^\text{37}\) For many years, that city haunts him by holding out the tantalising possibility of there finding himself face to face with his own imaginings, thus symbolising all that in creative terms he wishes for but believes he is unable to attain because of the constraints of his love for Albertine.\(^\text{38}\)

The travel photograph into which Marcel projects himself in the passage quoted above introduces him to new norms of image reception required by the photographic system of image production. As documentary proof of physical presence at a specific point in time and space, the travel photograph acts as confirmation of the photographed figure’s contact with the reality of modern Venice. It is therefore seen by Marcel as presaging a threat to his imagined city instead of positively affirming his imminent experience. In an action which mirrors Swann’s consistent rejection of introspection, Marcel falls ill so as

\(^{36}\) The later narrator mournfully affirms the disappointment which characterises many of Marcel’s travels (Proust: I, 380).

\(^{37}\) His journey to Venice takes place only after the city has lost its allure for him (Proust: VI, 203-236). At this point in the narrative, Marcel has lost all hope of becoming a writer. Therefore he no longer cultivates an inner vision of the city and is unconcerned about the dangers of confronting the modern reality.

\(^{38}\) When contemplating leaving Albertine many years later, Marcel expresses the same desire to ‘me trouver face à face avec mes imaginations vé nitienes’ (Proust: V, 397). Neither his personal vision of Venice, nor the goal of a future journey to that city, has altered up to this point. Only at the end of the novel will Marcel come to understand, through the revelations of involuntary memories of Venice and other disparate sensory experiences, the need to look inwards in pursuit of material for creative endeavour. Like the works of art which Swann teaches him to idolise, Marcel’s imagined Venice represents a false scent which attracts him but which ultimately fails to provide any creative inspiration. Marcel finally realises such inspiration must come from himself. Comparisons between Marcel’s love affair with Albertine and Swann’s love affair with Odette will be made in the fourth chapter of my thesis.
to avoid facing the reality of modern Venice. This episode uses a new kind of photograph to point up the dangerous effects of Marcel’s assimilation of Swann’s use of art reproduction photography: Marcel prefers to cultivate his Old-Masters-based vision of Renaissance Venice rather than experience the modern city himself. However, unlike Swann, Marcel’s later experience of involuntary memories of Venice strengthens his resolve to devote himself to the production of a creative work.

Swann and the Photograph of the Knights of Rhodes

Witnessed by Marcel, one of the final acts of Swann’s social life described in *À la recherche du temps perdu* centres round a giant photographic image (Proust: III, 556-578). The extended scene in *Le Côté de Guermantes* manifests the pitiful culmination of Swann’s life of dilettantism and is a chilling portent of the fate which awaits Marcel should he fail in his struggle to assume a creative vocation. At this point in the narrative Swann is terminally ill. In presenting Mme de Guermantes with an enlarged photographic reproduction of coins belonging to the Order of the Knights of Rhodes, he once again displays his enthusiasm for photographs as copies of things which are of aesthetic interest to him. The coins are the object of an essay which Swann has undertaken to write and which supplants his abandoned study of Vermeer. Swann’s interest in the Knights of Rhodes is never again mentioned in the novel and the disproportionate size of the photograph he gives to Oriane suggests his desperation to produce a significant creative work before his death. The indifference of the Guermantes to his photograph (notwithstanding the lip-service which is paid to it) and to the creative endeavour with which it is connected portends their callous response to the disclosure of his imminent death. Their attitude vitiates Swann’s belated attempts to achieve something other than social success and reveals the insignificance of any such accomplishment in their eyes. At

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39 Marcel’s role in this scene is that of passive observer, with only occasional introjections into the dialogue. The rarity of these introjections, one of which will be discussed later, adds to their significance.
40 The duchess affirms Swann’s capacity for inducing an interest in a particular subject and her own eagerness for instruction when she reproaches him by stating: ‘vous savez que vous n’avez pas envoyé la photographie de nos chevaliers de Rhodes, que j’aime par vous et avec qui j’ai si envie de faire connaissance’ (Proust: III, 567). Photography is the means through which Oriane wishes to encounter the Knights of Rhodes, thanks to its transparency as a medium of representation. In fact her statement elides somewhat the Knights and the photographic image.
the same time their actions point up the superficial, self-indulgent codes by which they live and to which Swann has sacrificed his creative potential. The duke and duchess have no time to look at the photograph or to discuss Swann’s serious illness. However, there is ample time for the duchess to change her shoes and so avoid making a sartorial gaffe at a dinner party.

For Brassai, the anecdote of the giant photograph is used to show the frivolous uses to which photography was put in social intercourse in the late nineteenth century. He also notes the significance of this scene as the final action carried out by Swann before his death. More importantly, for Marcel ‘il souligne la déchéance spirituelle d’un homme de grande valeur — Swann — qui avait pu apparaître comme son alter ego’ (Brassai, 1997: 63). Swann’s role as portentous alter ego to Marcel lends this scene its particular significance. Marcel is a passive witness to the profound lack of sympathy or respect betrayed by the behaviour of the duchess and duke towards Swann’s creative endeavour. The contrast between their indifference to the giant photograph and the close attention Marcel paid to the photographic reproductions he received from Swann many years before is underlined pointedly in one of the few explicit introjections of Marcel’s voice in this scene. As the Guermantes repeat a well-worn story relating to their genealogy, Marcel silently recalls his own gifts from Swann:

— Je vous ai répété cent fois comment le titre était entré dans la maison de Hesse, dit le duc (pendant que nous allions voir la photographie et que je pensais à celles que Swann me rapportait à Combray) […]. (Proust: III, 573)

41 Brassai believes that Proust ‘a voulu indiquer aussi comment cet art [la photographie], qu’il appréciait tellement lui-même, pouvait être réduit à un aimable passe-temps par trop de gens, surtout dans l’aristocratie’ (Brassai, 1997: 62). Certainly for Mme de Guermantes, the Rhodes photograph holds no interest beyond the possibility of pleasing her old friend Swann. Yet even this pleasure is denied him, since Oriane, under pressure to leave for a dinner party, does not look at the photograph with him. She does however find the time to arrange to snub Mme Molé using the enormous envelope containing the photograph. Her playing of such petty social games at the expense of Swann’s satisfaction underlines the duchess’s preoccupation with society over creativity. Swann’s creative project, as represented by the photograph, does not merit her attention. In a final display of insensitivity, social engagements take precedence over any attempt at an appropriate response to the news of Swann’s grave state of health and approaching death.

42 Brassai ventures the opinion that ‘Marcel Proust aurait partagé avec Swann ce triste destin d’amateur d’art familial des duchesses s’il n’avait pu franchir la barrière entre dilétantisme et création’ (Brassai, 1997: 63).

43 The contrast between the tediously repetitive nature of the Guermantes’ self-absorbed conversation and Marcel’s thoughtful appreciation of Swann’s old gifts of photographs is emphasised through this
The profound influence of the Combray photographs on Marcel’s knowledge of and attitude towards masterpieces of Italian art is called to mind by this explicit reference to them. The disparity between the importance of those photographs in Marcel’s artistic education and the Guermantes’ lack of engagement with the Knights of Rhodes photograph is thus clearly marked. Marcel’s remark also suggests reflection upon the differences which he detects between his way of engaging with photography and that of Swann. The latter is found to be using photography in the same way he did many years before at Combray: as a means of reproducing and thereby appropriating objects of aesthetic interest to him. The great size of the photograph of the Knights of Rhodes coins may be interpreted as a tragicomic indication of Swann’s frustration with his endless search for creative stimulation through the work of others and with his own creative sterility. Swann’s unsophisticated exploitation of the potential of the photographic system of image production may in itself be suggested here as emblematic of his lack of creative activity. While for Marcel photographic reproductions of art have been the catalyst for profound reflections on art which contribute ultimately to the successful development of his creative literary vocation, Swann fails to attain any such awareness. His use of photography is motivated here by a superficial desire for knowledge of works of art through which he hopes in vain to be inspired to creative activity himself. The belief in the possibility of acquiring true knowledge of any person or thing through visual appropriation of it is later explicitly denied by Marcel when he remarks that ‘je m’étais rendu compte que seule la perception grossière et erronée place tout dans l’objet, quand tout est dans l’esprit’ (Proust: VII, 219). This affirmation occurs after the revelations of involuntary memory in Le Temps retrouvé. Marcel does not possess this knowledge at the earlier stage of his life when he witnesses this scene between Swann and the Guermantes. The implications of Swann’s giant photograph itself and of the response to it by the Guermantes are a warning to Marcel of the creative sterility which results from a life sacrificed to the demands of society and the idolatry of other people’s art.

unexpected reference by Marcel to Combray, which calls to mind the prestige Swann has always enjoyed in Marcel’s eyes and his importance as artistic, amatory and social role model for Marcel.
Odette as Flesh-and-Blood objet d'art

Odette is not Swann's type of woman. It is only after noticing her resemblance to the figure of Zipporah, Jethro's daughter, in a Botticelli painting in the Sistine Chapel, that her particular beauty is validated in Swann's eyes. The development of his love affair with Odette emphasises the fact that Swann moves from an appreciation of art to an appreciation of the world. It is only after discerning qualities of beauty in a work of art that he sees them in the people or objects around him. Swann's experience of love is inextricably linked with his attitude to art. His appreciation of Odette derives from the Botticelli figure:

Il n'estima plus le visage d'Odette selon la plus ou moins bonne qualité de ses joues [...] mais comme un écheveau de lignes subtiles et belles que ses regards dévidèrent [...]. Il la regardait; un fragment de la fresque apparaissait dans son visage et dans son corps, que dès lors il chercha toujours à y retrouver [...] et bien qu'il ne tint sans doute au chef-d'œuvre florentin que parce qu'il le retrouvait en elle, pourtant cette ressemblance lui conférait à elle aussi une beauté, la rendait plus précieuse. Swann se reprocha d'avoir méconnu le prix d'un être qui eût paru adorable au grand Sandro, et il se félicita que le plaisir qu'il avait à voir Odette trouvât une justification dans sa propre culture esthétique. (Proust: I, 220)

Odette's resemblance to the figure in a Botticelli painting allows Swann to create and nurture a mental image of her which is bathed in allusions to artistic creativity. Given that she is not his type, unmediated perceptual contact with her does not inspire Swann's affections. However the fact of her aesthetic validation in a work of art strengthens his feelings. A photographic reproduction of the figure in the Botticelli painting is used by Swann as a means of nurturing this love. His use of this photograph is interesting:

Il plaça sur sa table de travail, comme une photographie d'Odette, une reproduction de la fille de Jéthro. Il admirait les grands yeux, le délicat visage [...] et adaptant ce qu'il trouvait beau

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44 This fact is explored at some length at the beginning of 'Un amour de Swann.' The turning point which marks the moment at which Swann begins to fall in love with Odette is his recognition of her resemblance to the Botticelli figure. Up to this point, his failure to appreciate her kind of beauty had ensured that his visual analysis of her face and body was clear and critical. Once the resemblance is noted, however, his capacity for critical objectivity becomes blurred. It is in fact willingly renounced by Swann in his eagerness to pursue a woman whose chance likeness to a painted figure constitutes the dubious justification for his attraction to her. This situation implies the extreme to which Swann carries what Shattuck refers to as his idolatry of art (Shattuck, 2000: 137-160).

45 '[...] ces doutes furent détruits, cet amour assuré quand il eut à la place [de la vue purement charnelle] pour base les données d'une esthétique certaine' (Proust: I, 221).
This descriptive passage shows Swann’s deliberate elision of Botticelli portrait and flesh-and-blood woman. The semiotic malleability of photography facilitates this process. Thanks to its transparency, Swann may use the photographic reproduction as a substitute for unmediated perceptual contact with the painted woman and by association with Odette. Its iconic weakness implies that he need not consider the photographic reproduction as an image in itself but can instead appreciate directly the painting’s own iconic power. The photograph’s indexical quality, while upholding the illusion of possession, underlines for Swann the privileged position occupied centuries ago by a woman of Odette’s type in the eyes of the great painter, thus simultaneously stimulating and ennobling Swann’s attraction to Odette herself. His conscious elision of woman and painted figure means that in contemplating the photograph, Swann enjoys the illusion of possessing Odette: hence the analogy between visual contact with the photograph and physical contact with Odette.

Swann’s deliberately simplistic engagement with this semiotically complex image satisfies his aim of supporting a nascent love based on a fortuitous physical resemblance between living and painted woman. This passage demonstrates the precarious interpretative potential resulting from the inherently ambiguous semiotic status of the photographic image. Exploitation of the information transmitted in a photographic image depends on the attitude adopted towards it by the viewer. The singular flexibility of the norms of reception governing the viewer’s relation to the photographic image means that, for the purpose of sustaining his love affair with Odette, the photograph passively

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46 A.S. Byatt describes the effect of Swann’s assimilation of Odette into the world of art: ‘Painting-into-woman-into-painting-into-woman, and the final woman as something which can be possessed both sexually and as objet d’art. [...] Swann idealises the woman he loves by conflating her with the great art of the past’ (Byatt, 2001: 8). Photography is the means which enables him visually to possess his imagined Odette.

47 Sontag affirms that ‘the sense of the unattainable that can be evoked by photographs feeds directly into the erotic feelings of those for whom desirability is enhanced by distance. The lover’s photograph […] — all such talismanic uses of photographs express a feeling both sentimental and implicitly magical: they are attempts to contact or lay claim to another reality’ (Sontag, 1977: 16).

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colludes with Swann in the elision of woman and work of art. Swann’s use of this photograph therefore shows how dangerous the semiotic ambiguity of photography may be. Overzealous worship of other artists’ work kindles Swann’s relationship with Odette, a woman with whom he is incompatible. The photographic reproduction allows his illusion-based love to grow. By facilitating the successful projection of Swann’s aesthetic values onto Odette, it allows Swann to deceive himself regarding Odette’s true personality and thus to waste years of his life in an unsatisfactory relationship.

Swann is willingly in thrall to his illusion of Odette. As well as his photographic reproduction of Zipporah, photographic portraits are repeatedly used to sustain this illusion. When after years together he struggles to find charm in Odette’s changed appearance, it is to old photographs of her that he turns for solace:

Il la regardait longuement pour tâcher de ressaisir le charme qu’il lui avait connu, et ne le retrouvait pas. Mais savoir que sous cette chrysalide nouvelle, c’était toujours Odette qui vivait […] suffisait à Swann pour qu’il continuât de mettre la même passion à chercher à la capter. Puis il regardait des photographies d’il y avait deux ans, il se rappelait comme elle avait été délicieuse. Et cela le consolait un peu de se donner tant de mal pour elle. (Proust: I, 287)

Old photographs act as a crutch for Swann’s ailing affections. They revive his desire for an Odette who has altered over time by resuscitating his past images of her. In so doing they prolong the illusion of love from which he eventually emerges as from a long sleep (Proust: I, 374-375). As indexes, they prove irrefutably the former physical reality of the woman he loves. Roland Barthes emphasises this power of the photographic image:

La photo est littéralement une émanation du référent. D’un corps réel, qui était là, sont parties des radiations qui viennent me toucher, moi qui suis ici […]. La photo de l’être disparu vient me toucher comme les rayons différés d’une étoile. Une sorte de lien ombilical relie le corps de la chose photographiée à mon regard: la lumière, quoique impalpable, est bien ici un

48 Regarding Swann’s use of photographs of Odette, Wegner affirms that his ‘love is roused and renewed by continuous bends and ruptures between Odette’s image and her person. […] Photographs do re-present. Although they may not be regarded as suitable to represent the present, they are certainly helpful in resuscitating substantial moments of the past. According to this logic, it is the disappearance of the original which instates the former ersatz as the real thing’ (Wegner, 2003: 31).
49 The importance of sleep and waking in the Proustian narrative has been noted by critics including William Stewart Bell, Roxanne Hanney and Pedro Kadivar. The passage between sleep and wakefulness constitutes a liminal state where time and space are effectively suspended.
milieu charnel, une peau que je partage avec celui ou celle qui a été photographié. (Barthes, 1980: 126-127)

The sensuality of this description partly accounts for Swann’s interest in old photographs of Odette which serve as a means of visual contact with the woman who currently eludes him but who he believes to exist in his memory. His memories are corroborated by these old photographs due to their iconic quality, because as icons, they represent an Odette whom Swann can now retrospectively invest with the delicious, Botticelli-endorsed qualities he has sought to find in her since the beginning of their affair.50

The description of Swann’s realisation of the disparity between his feelings for the Odette of his imagination and his perception of Odette herself underlines his flawed but fruitful engagement with the norms of reception governing the photographic portrait.51 Both the woman and her photographic image point up his love’s basis in self-delusion:

Son amour s’étendait bien au-delà des régions du désir physique. La personne même d’Odette n’y tenait plus grande place. Quand du regard il rencontrait sur sa table la photographie d’Odette, ou quand elle venait le voir, il avait peine à identifier la figure de chair ou de bristol avec le trouble dououreux et constant qui habitait en lui. Il se disait avec étonnement: “C’est elle”, comme si tout d’un coup on nous montrait extériorisée devant nous une de nos maladies et que nous la trouvions pas ressemblante à ce que nous souffrons. “Elle”, il essayait de se demander ce que c’était; car c’est une ressemblance de l’amour et de la mort […] de nous faire interroger plus avant, dans la peur que sa réalité se dérobe, le mystère de la personnalité. (Proust: I, 303)

Through visual scrutiny of Odette in person or in a photograph, Swann repeatedly faces the incongruity of his love and its object. The same shock of recognition — “c’est elle” — results from looking at Odette and at her photograph: no hierarchy is established between the two.52 This is another example of the elision of Odette and her photographic image. In either situation Swann can only scan the surface of her body or of her

50 Charles Sanders Peirce defines the icon as ‘a sign which would possess the character which renders it significant, even though its object had no existence’: quoted in Mieke Bal’s The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually (Bal, 1997: 194). According to this definition, Swann’s old photographs are icons in the negative sense, since the Odette he sees in them is a woman who never existed except in his imagination.

51 Swann’s engagement with the photographic portrait is fruitful in that he succeeds in using it to bolster his love for Odette in the present; flawed in that he takes the photograph to be a copy of Odette instead of a mere representation of her.

52 Wegner confirms that ‘Swann’s use of images suggests that the copy potentially exudes a higher degree of authenticity than an original which is laden with contingency. The difference between copy and original […] may therefore become insubstantial’ (Wegner, 2003: 31).
photographic image and thereby renew the cycle of hopeful fascination and disappointment which constitutes his love for her. The incongruity of his feelings and their object (real or photographed) is represented through a striking image of a disease which suggests a cancerous growth or tumour. The fact that the woman and her photographic image are interchangeable here as objects of Swann’s stunned recognition supports the notion that his love originates in his mentally constructed image of a Botticellian Odette rather than in the reality of her existence. The elision of Odette and her photograph suggests that Swann regards the photographic portrait of Odette as a straightforward copy of her. He approaches it in the same way that he does photographic reproductions of art: as a transparent means of coming into visual contact with the represented object. Given that the roots of his love are to be found in Botticelli’s painting rather than in Odette herself, however, Swann’s perusal of Odette in the flesh or in photographs merely perpetuates the cycle of recognition of the disparity of his feelings and their object. For the fact is that he does not love Odette, but Odette-as-Botticellifigure: hence his hesitant pursuit of Odette’s true nature. His distaste for deliberate introspection — “Elle”, il essayait de se demander ce que c’était (my italics) — contrasts with the abrupt immediacy of his involuntary and astonished initial recognition of her superficial form. The tentative nature of this probing into the depths of Odette’s own personality belies his underlying indifference to her inner reality. His frustrated aim is to find in her appearance Botticellian allusions to prop up his love.

Only with the death of his feelings for Odette comes the realisation of the time and emotion that have been wasted on a woman ‘qui ne me plaisait pas, qui n’était pas mon

53 Wegner regards scanning as one of the principal responses to the flatness of photographic images (Wegner, 2003: 47). In Towards a Philosophy of Photography, Vilem Flusser observes that ‘the significance of images is on the surface. One can take them in at a single glance yet this remains superficial. If one wishes to deepen the significance […] one has to allow one’s gaze to wander over the surface feeling the way as one goes. This wandering over the surface of the image is called ‘scanning’. In so doing, one’s gaze follows a complex path formed, on the one hand, by the structure of the image and, on the other, by the observer’s intentions’ (Flusser, 2000: 8). Swann’s intention in scanning Odette or her photograph is to gain an insight into her true personality: an impossible aim, but one repeatedly renewed by visual contact with the woman and her photograph. Like Odette herself, photographs ‘provide space for interpretation’ (Flusser, 2000: 8).
genre!' (Proust: I, 375). Yet even then, Swann's affection for Odette as Botticellian figure lingers. He favours an old daguerreotype of her which captures her as he saw her at the beginning of their affair:

Swann avait dans sa chambre, au lieu des belles photographies qu'on faisait maintenant de sa femme, [...] un petit daguerreotype ancien tout simple [...] duquel la jeunesse et la beauté d'Odette, non encore trouvées par elle, semblaient absentes. Mais sans doute Swann, fidèle ou revenu à une conception différente, goûtait-il dans la jeune femme grêle aux yeux pensifs, aux traits las, à l'attitude suspendue entre la marche et l'immobilité, une grâce plus botticellienne. Il aimait encore en effet à voir en sa femme un Botticelli. (Proust: II, 186-187)

The Botticelli-like grace of the daguerreotype results from its catching of Odette, a figure in motion, between stillness and movement at a particular moment in the past. Such has been Swann's aim too throughout their affair: to capture and possess Odette as Botticelli figure, i.e. as a model worthy of and aesthetically legitimised by the attentions of a gifted creative artist. The old daguerreotype confirms Swann's elision of Odette and painted figure. It represents and validates perfectly the imaginatively altered inner vision of Odette which Swann created from the beginning of their affair. Its potency exceeds that of the photographic reproduction of the Botticelli figure, by its confirmation of the fact that Odette herself did in fact once have the air which Swann projects onto her: 'ça a été' (Barthes, 1980: 119).

His privileged insight into the dangers of love as experienced by Swann means that the later narrator is forewarned of the threat posed to his own creative potential by love's distractions and props. Photographs are an important prop in Swann's love affair with Odette. My exploration shows that they play a significant role in Swann's self-delusion

54 Swann's awareness of the time he has wasted on Odette points up the threat posed to creative endeavour by love. For years Swann's creative energies were devoted to a love which had no basis in the woman who was its object and which was prolonged by his engagement with photographic images. Once love has turned to indifference, his sense of his own dissipation and of the importance of action rather than thought is acute (see note 25 above). From his viewpoint as narrator, Marcel is retrospectively sensitive to the lessons which the story of Swann's affair can teach him. As protagonist, however, Marcel will go on to replicate Swann's behaviour in relation to Albertine.

55 Wegner notes that 'the image functions as the sphere which to some extent corrects her present visual self. By aid of the daguerreotype Swann may touch up Odette's appearance, in order to bring out and develop the genuine Odette' (Wegner, 2003: 32).

56 Barthes' phrase encapsulates the indexical power of the photograph. He continues by saying that in a photograph 'il y a une double position conjointe: de réalité et de passé' (Barthes, 1980: 120). The past reality of Swann's imagined Odette is thus conclusively confirmed for him by his reading of the old daguerreotype.
regarding Odette, repeatedly making it possible for him to continue to squander his creative potential in veneration of the false god of love. From the point of view of his creative vocation the influence of the photographs appears wholly negative: they do not motivate or enable Swann to take up or complete any tangible creative endeavour. In fact they contribute significantly to his creative sterility by prolonging a doomed love affair. However, it is clear that, throughout his love affair, photographs have to a great extent served the purpose for which Swann intended them. The precarious semiotic status of the photographic image has enabled him to use them successfully in pursuit of his elusive Botticelli-esque Odette. His photographs therefore bow to his interpretative aims. The singular potency of this characteristic of the photographic system of image production is clearly exploited in all of Swann’s uses of photography in À la recherche du temps perdu.

Perhaps most significantly, the love affair of Swann and Odette results in the birth of Gilberte, whose role in the development of Marcel’s emotional life and creative vocation will be an important one. Though rendered creatively sterile by the pursuit of love as opposed to his own artistic identity, Swann’s biological fecundity will therefore have major consequences for the conception and realisation of Marcel’s literary vocation. Thus, against the odds, the painful, creativity-stifling love affair of Swann and Odette is retrospectively found to have a positive outcome.

Swann’s influence on Marcel is felt throughout the latter’s meditations on art and love. Marcel’s conception and realisation of his creative vocation is seriously threatened by the idolatry which characterises Swann’s interaction with art and which is communicated to Marcel through Swann’s use of photographic images. I hope to have shown how Marcel can be seen initially to have assimilated Swann’s creatively-inhibiting attitude to art through his adoption of Swann’s manner of engaging with the photographic images he has received from him. This fact is most evident in his conception of Italy. Perhaps more significantly, his worship of his favourite literary works echoes Swann’s idolatry of

57 Shattuck affirms that love, ‘both as sentimental attachment and as physical desire’ (Shattuck, 2000: 71), is one of the false scents which are followed by Marcel in pursuit of a ‘solution to the puzzle of life’ (Shattuck, 2000: 73).

58 As first object of his love and as mother of Mlle de Saint-Loup, the girl in whom the duality of Swann’s way and the Guermantes way is ultimately resolved in Le Tems retrouvé.
visual art (Proust: I, 94-95). However, Swann’s use of photographs proves ultimately to have been successful from his point of view: they serve the purposes for which he intends them in the spheres of art appreciation and love.

The most significant difference between Swann and Marcel is the renunciation of the creative life by the former. His abandoned essays on Vermeer and the Knights of Rhodes are elements of the life of dilettantism which, aside from brief moments of expressed regret and refusals to pursue the creative line of thought, is assumed by Swann and lived out peacefully. Marcel’s motivations stand in marked contrast to Swann’s dilettantism. Marcel continuously attempts to assume the identity of a creative artist through his interaction with art and with other people. His use of photographs is informed by his desire to realise his creative potential: he is open to new ways of representing the world around him. Hence his success in accessing the profound creative truths contained in his Giotto reproductions and his eventual acceptance of the initially unwelcome truth of Venice’s modern reality. However, the representation of Swann’s use of photographs in his interactions with Marcel and with others demonstrates how the pragmatic flexibility of the photographic image makes it effective in the attainment of either clarity or self-delusion. In its representational passivity, therefore, photography proves to be a double-edged sword. Marcel’s conception and realisation of his creative vocation is in fact both hindered and helped by the lessons imparted to him by Swann’s interaction with photographic images.

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59 Odette’s apparent grief at his death hints at the possibility of her having felt genuine love for Swann, in spite of his doubts in this regard.
The Photographer: Saint-Loup

Robert de Saint-Loup is the only character in *A la recherche du temps perdu* who takes and processes photographic images. An exploration of his role as photographer in Proust’s novel will underline the importance of photography in the development of Marcel’s awareness of the processes of perception and memory. Saint-Loup’s engagement with and responses to the medium of photography throughout the novel are those of an informed and interested practitioner displaying an intuitive appreciation of the distinctive characteristics of the photographic system of image production. His production of and response to photographic images conveys significant and essentially unexpected information to Marcel, who as a result is compelled repeatedly to reassess his conception of people with whom he believes himself to be familiar. Through Saint-Loup’s engagement with photography, Marcel attains valuable knowledge concerning the nature of perception and memory and the changes wrought on these processes by the passage of time. This knowledge will inform Marcel’s understanding of his way of apprehending the world and will contribute significantly to the foundation of his creative literary project.

Saint-Loup is an aristocrat who scorns his advantages and approves of socialism while retaining the charm and manner of a gentleman; an ardent lover of women but also, long unsuspected by Marcel, of men. His kindness and good nature do not preclude his cruelty to Gilberte after their marriage. Marcel’s relationship with Saint-Loup repeatedly points up the potential for change and contradiction which is inherent to each human personality and which their actions in life make manifest. It raises the question of the value of friendship itself in the context of a nascent creative vocation. The question of the

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60 Saint-Loup’s influence on Marcel is of course tangible beyond his role as photographer. As close friend and aristocratic social contemporary, he introduces Marcel into the Guermantes world. This section of my thesis will be confined to an exploration of his role as photographer in order to ascertain accurately the significance of his engagement with the photographic system of image production in relation to Marcel’s creative vocation.

61 Shattuck observes that ‘a succession of contradictory images going under one name and “passing,” by convention, as a single person or sentiment or social entity — this is probably the most striking aspect of Proust’s universe to the unprepared reader. [...] He records discontinuity more insistently than continuity’ (Shattuck, 2000: 127-128).
significance of the friendship between Saint-Loup and Marcel in the context of Marcel’s creative vocation will be explored here solely within the framework of Saint-Loup’s role as photographer. I will argue that Saint-Loup’s engagement with photography is the key to Marcel’s acquisition of information which is of particular value in the conception and realisation of his literary vocation. In considering Saint-Loup’s influence as photographer on the conception and realisation of Marcel’s literary vocation, this section of my thesis will demonstrate Proust’s exploitation of the ambiguous power of the photographic medium as a spur to Marcel’s awareness of the nature of individual perception and memory.

Capturing Rachel: The Photographer Who Will Not Show-and-Tell

The first episode in *À la recherche du temps perdu* which describes Saint-Loup’s habit of taking photographs simultaneously underlines his obstinacy in refusing to display the results. The photographs are of his mistress Rachel. Rachel makes him unhappy, yet he is unable to break off his relationship with her. Believing himself never to have met her, Marcel’s assessment of Rachel’s appeal is based solely on his friend’s behaviour and praise of her. Notwithstanding his love and admiration for Rachel, Saint-Loup is reticent about showing Marcel his photographs. His refusal to adhere to the normal social uses of photography indicates the complexity and sensitivity of Saint-Loup’s engagement with photography. Here he favours what Serge Tisseron refers to in *Le mystère de la chambre claire: photographie et inconscient* as photographic practice, which is ‘la face cachée’ of photography, ‘l’ensemble formé par le photographe et sa machine, liés l’un à l’autre par l’ensemble des opérations nécessaires à la réalisation d’une photographie’ (Tisseron, 1996: 10). The evidence of and reasons for this preference, which will be explored in this section, reveal Proust’s knowledge of each stage of the photographic process of image production and the diverse — even conflicting — motives which may govern each of these different steps. Marcel notes Saint-Loup’s repeated explanation:

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62 In fact he had met her years before in a brothel, where her casual availability extinguished his nascent interest in her. On being introduced to her through Saint-Loup he realises the discrepancy between Saint-Loup’s and his own perception of her.
Saint-Loup’s remark includes four separate justifications for his reluctance to display the photographs. It demonstrates his awareness of several ways in which his casual portrait photographs fail to represent his mistress as he perceives her through direct perceptual contact. Rachel’s lack of both physical beauty and the potential to look attractive in photographs counts against her in Saint-Loup’s attempts to represent her in a way which might be regarded as appealing by a disinterested observer such as Marcel. His Kodak snapshots are the antithesis of the carefully constructed (and often retouched) portrait photographs produced by the famous commercial photographers who operated in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Paris. They are not art photographs. These shortcomings lead to his conviction that they would give Marcel a false impression of the woman he loves.

Saint-Loup’s disparagement of his photographs raises questions concerning his appraisal both of the act of taking photographs and of the value of the resulting images for him. What motivates him to photograph a woman whom he knows not to be photogenic? Why keep, but not look at or display, photographs of her which he has taken? The answers lie in the love he feels for her and the suffering she therefore causes him. The pages which

63 With regard to Rachel’s looks, Saint-Loup’s opening statement — ‘ce n’est pas une beauté’ — is ambiguous, referring as it does either to one of the photographs itself or to the woman represented in it. Rachel’s beauty or lack thereof is thus not explicitly confirmed here by the jealous Saint-Loup, perhaps due to a desire to deter Marcel’s curiosity about her. As a potential observer of the photographs, Marcel is disinterested insofar as his emotions are in no way bound up in his perception of the photographed woman. Saint-Loup’s unconscious awareness of the disparity between his own emotional state and that of his friend, and therefore of the potential for significant differences in their appreciation of her photographic image, may also prompt his reserve.

64 Kodak’s famous advertisement informing potential photographers that ‘you press the button; we do the rest’ shows how such photographs differ from the carefully crafted images produced at considerable expense in commercial studios with the principal object of flattering the vanity of the sitter. Studio photographers such as Nadar produced beautiful images of great subtlety, intimacy and individuality, as shown by works such as Le Monde de Proust vu par Paul Nadar, published by Éditions du Patrimoine, 2003.

65 By the late-nineteenth century, art photography was accepted as the product of an individual photographer’s vision and sensibility, as noted by Abigail Solomon-Godeau, who states that ‘the conviction that the art photograph is the expression of the photographer’s interior, rather than or in addition to the world’s exterior, has been almost from the medium’s inception the doxa of art photography and a staple of photographic criticism since the mid-nineteenth century’ (Solomon-Godeau, 1991: 87).
precede Saint-Loup’s refusal to show Marcel the photographs describe Rachel’s importance to him and her influence on his character. She is the centre of Saint-Loup’s existence at this time and he is wounded by her burgeoning dislike of him. Her distaste for him is openly expressed:

Elle professait volontiers [...] qu’entre elle et Saint-Loup le fossé était infranchissable, parce qu’ils étaient d’une autre race, qu’elle était une intellectuelle et que lui, quoiqu’il prétendit, était, de naissance, un ennemi de l’intelligence. (Proust: II, 349)

Saint-Loup and his mistress are manifestly not now enjoying a harmonious relationship: through Rachel’s words and actions a seemingly unbridgeable gulf has developed between them, resulting in Saint-Loup’s current uncertainty as to her true feelings for him and the continuation of their relationship. Photographing Rachel gives Saint-Loup some measure of control over her because the act itself of taking a photograph places the photographer in a privileged position in relation to the object. Tisseron affirms this fact and emphasises the importance of photographic practice as distinct from its resulting images:

Le preneur de vue développe en effet avec ceux qu’il photographie une relation de pouvoir: pouvoir de leur dire de ne pas bouger, de sourire, ou même de refaire certains gestes plusieurs fois. [...] La signification de la pratique photographique est à chercher en elle-même avant de l’être dans les images qu’elle produit et dans les usages sociaux qu’elle alimente. Et cette signification est d’abord organisée par les opérations successives que la photographie met en jeu: tenir un appareil devant le visage ou sur la poitrine, cadrer, appuyer sur le déclencheur, sont des formes de rencontre avec soit autant qu’avec le monde. Tout comme le sont aussi, d’une autre manière, les choix de développer — ou de faire développer une photo — de la regarder, de la commenter, ou au contraire de la cacher ou même de la détruire. (Tisseron, 1996: 14-16)

Taking snapshots of Rachel allows Saint-Loup visually to dominate his wilful mistress and thus briefly to assuage the unhappiness she has caused through her stated belief in their incompatibility. It is an attempt to bridge the gulf which she insists separates them. For Saint-Loup, the photographic act is a constructive step in his attempt to salvage a

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66 As Marcel is aware, the sincerity of Rachel’s professions of distaste for Saint-Loup and of their disharmony cannot be assumed, since her motives are not disinterested: as Saint-Loup’s mistress, she enjoys his generosity and attentions. Complacency on his part would not best serve Rachel’s material goal of extracting vast sums of money from him. Keeping him in a state of anxious uncertainty is doubtless the best way to guarantee the prolongation of Saint-Loup’s desire for her. His attachment to the power of photographic practice shows Rachel’s successful manipulation of Saint-Loup’s emotional state.
relationship which he values and which is under threat. Unfortunately, however, the power relation of absolute dominance and submission which characterises the act of taking her photograph does not survive beyond the moment of pressing the shutter release. In affirming photography’s distinctive indexical characteristics, Philippe Dubois stresses the need for accurate contextualisation of the significance of this moment when he observes that:

Saint-Loup’s unconscious awareness of the momentary control which he can enjoy through the act of taking a photograph and of the duplicitous potential of the fundamentally indexical photographic image motivates him to photograph and therefore photographically to possess Rachel. However, like Rachel’s distant behaviour towards him, the development and printing of the images is beyond his control. The resulting images do not please him enough to merit their being shown to Marcel. The initial stages of photographic practice in themselves suffice momentarily to calm Saint-Loup’s suffering. His interest lies primarily in the taking of his photographs of Rachel rather than in visual perusal of them. The photographs themselves are simply manifestations of his need to allay the anxiety he endures, through the exercise of some measure of power over her. Sontag affirms that ‘like every mass art form, photography is not practiced by most people as an art. It is mainly a social rite, a defence against anxiety, and a tool of power’ (Sontag, 1977: 8). There is no such comfort to be derived from looking at the resulting images. Nowhere in À la recherche du temps perdu is Saint-Loup described as looking at

67 While the dominance/submission relation does not continue to exist in reality, the indexical quality of the photographic image suggests that it does through its recording and preservation of one such moment: hence Saint-Loup’s attachment to photography as the privileged means to represent Rachel.
or showing anyone his photographs of Rachel. The process of organising and taking them enables him, while spending time with her, actively to resist her withdrawal from him without engaging in overt or verbal attempts to heal the breach which Rachel is determined to open up between them.

Saint-Loup’s rejection of established social uses of photography such as looking at or displaying his photographic images of Rachel is significant because it points up the turmoil of his emotional and mental state with regard to her. Saint-Loup’s love for Rachel and her manifest disdain for him are two irreconcilable aspects of his present life. He cannot accept the inevitability of her leaving him, an event which her words and conduct imply is imminent: hence his attachment to photographic practice, which he can dominate. The resulting images are deemed valuable yet unsatisfactory precisely because they represent the unruly woman in a deceptively docile pose. The power of the unique indexical quality of the photographic image is the source of Saint-Loup’s attraction to this system of image production over any other because it affirms the image which Saint-Loup wishes to sustain and project of his relationship with Rachel. Photographing Rachel has set up an irrefutable connection between them through its creation of a fundamentally indexical image which provides proof of their intimacy and of her acquiescence to him, at least during the ritual of being photographed. The indexical quality of the photographic

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68 After their marriage, Gilberte finds them without Saint-Loup’s knowledge, with the sad result that she attempts to imitate Rachel’s looks so as to rekindle her unfaithful husband’s interest in her. Her efforts are wasted since by this time Saint-Loup is in love with a man, the violinist Morel. Apparently, his liaison with Rachel is by this time a mere screen to conceal his homosexuality (Proust: VII, 8). This unhappy misunderstanding and the role of the photographs in it reveals the need for contextualisation of photographic images. The visual information they transmit must be supplemented if they are to be accurately understood. Sontag states that ‘a photograph is only a fragment, and with the passage of time its moorings come unstuck. It drifts away into a soft abstract pastness, open to any kind of reading [...]’ (Sontag, 1977: 71).

69 Sontag observes that ‘using a camera is still a form of participation. Although the camera is an observation station, the act of photographing is more than passive observing. Like sexual voyeurism, it is a way of at least tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging whatever is going on to keep on happening. To take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged, [...] to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing’ (Sontag, 1977: 12).

70 Also, it must not be forgotten that Saint-Loup was forced to relinquish control of the development and printing processes, due to the conventions of the Kodak Company. As his own comments suggest, his dissatisfaction with the photographs of Rachel derives in part from the unwelcome disparity between his own preferred way of developing and printing photographs of her and the results produced by the standardised methods employed by the anonymous workers in the Kodak factory.
image implies a physical connection between the represented object and the observer through the medium of light. Dubois notes that:

En effet, liée par sa genèse à l’unicité d’une situation référentielle, l’attestant et la désignant, l’image indiciaire aura pour effet général d’impliquer pleinement le sujet lui-même dans l’expérience, dans l’exprouvé du procès photographique. […] Bref, ce n’est pas un des moindres enjeux de cette logique de l’index que de poser radicalement l’image photographique comme impensable en dehors de l’acte même qui la fait être. […] Sorte d’image-acte absolue, inséparable de sa situation référentielle, la photographie affirme par là sa nature fondamentalement pragmatique: elle trouve son sens d’abord dans sa référence. (Dubois, 1990: 76)

Thus for Saint-Loup, at a time when there seems to be little hope for the future of their relationship, his photographs of Rachel are a tantalising representation of their relationship as Saint-Loup would wish it to be, rather than as it currently is. Yet the disparity between the lived reality and the photographically represented illusion is too great for Saint-Loup to contemplate or discuss without pain. His awareness of the illusory nature of the harmonious relations between them which are implied in his photographs lies at the heart of Saint-Loup’s inability to look at or display them. As an indexical icon, the photographic image exacerbates his present suffering by both gratifying his self-delusion and cutting him off, temporally and physically, from the object of his desire. Dubois notes that:


Echoing the effect of Rachel’s claim concerning the ideological gulf between herself and her lover, the indexical quality of Saint-Loup’s photographs reinvigorates his desire for her by simultaneously affirming and eliminating the spatio-temporal distance which separates them. This characteristic of the photographic image explains Saint-Loup’s reluctance to look at images of the woman whose detachment currently torments him by increasing his uncertainty. However, though looking at and displaying the photographs is

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71 Clive Scott observes: “Why else do we show friends and neighbours our snaps if not to become indispensable narrators, to establish and safeguard our autobiography?” (Scott, 1999: 58). To display and discuss the photographs of Rachel would require either lies or the admission of present anguish.
unbearable to Saint-Loup at present, the fact of their creation indicates his need mentally to assimilate the reality of Rachel’s loss of love for him at an indeterminate point in the future. This idea is supported by Tisseron’s description of the photographic camera as ‘l’instrument de familiarisation et d’appropriation du monde le plus efficace que l’homme ait jamais mis à son service parce qu’il est en continuité immédiate avec sa vie psychique’ (Tisseron, 1996: 10). For Tisseron, taking a photograph is a physical action motivated by an unconscious desire for mental assimilation of the world which is first experienced through the senses and the emotions. The mental working-out of physical and emotional experience results from a process of ‘introjection’ (Tisseron, 1996: 21). This process unfolds on the sensory, emotional and physical level and on the levels of representation and of verbal expression. Tisseron explains that:

Saint-Loup feels compelled to photograph Rachel because of an instinctive wish to assimilate through physical action the emotional distress she causes him. At this point in the novel the unconscious assimilation of his unhappy experience is only partial and is confined to the level of the senses, emotions and physical actions. He is not yet fully

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72 Tisseron affirms that ‘l’ensemble des gestes par lesquels le preneur de vue se déplace, se rapproche ou s’éloigne de son objet, tourne autour, cadre dans son viseur, appuie sur le bouton, puis enroule la pellicule pour appuyer éventuellement à nouveau, participent de l’opération de symbolisation de l’événement sur un mode sensori-affectivo-moteur. Le cadrage, notamment, participe à la mise en forme et à l’appropriation symbolique du monde de façon intense’ (Tisseron, 1996: 28). All these mute gestures are rooted in the body and are thus closely connected to sensory and emotional experience which is undergone on a visceral level but not necessarily consciously reflected upon.

73 The later narrator underlines the instinctive nature of Saint-Loup’s reaction to Rachel’s behaviour when he observes that ‘Saint-Loup qui sans bien comprendre ce qui se passait dans la pensée de sa maîtresse, ne la croyait pas complètement sincère, ni dans les reproches injustes ni dans les promesses d’amour éternel, avait pourtant à certains moments le sentiment qu’elle romprait quand elle le pourrait, et à cause de cela, mû sans doute par l’instinct de conservation de son amour plus clairvoyant peut-être que Saint-Loup n’était lui-même, usant d’ailleurs d’une habileté pratique qui se conciliait chez lui avec les plus grands et les plus aveugles élan du cœur, il s’était refusé à lui constituer un capital, avait emprunté un argent énorme pour qu’elle ne manquât de rien, mais ne le lui remettait qu’au jour le jour’ (Proust: II, 350 – my italics). Note Marcel’s insistence upon intuition as the guide for Saint-Loup’s shrewd financial arrangement which
reconciled to the fact of her lack of love for him: hence his inability to look at or display Rachel as she is visually represented in the photographic images which, if looked at or talked about, would contribute to the psychological process of coming to terms with her negative attitude towards him. Tisseron notes the importance of looking at, displaying and talking about photographic images in order to facilitate the mental assimilation of experience through speech:

In order to be able to look at and discuss with Marcel his photographs of Rachel, Saint-Loup must firstly come to terms with the discordant nature of his relationship with his mistress. On a purely intellectual level, he must allow himself to begin to regard her and their relationship clearly and with some emotional detachment.

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tisseron states: ‘Pour “introjecter” — ou, si on préfère, “métaboliser” — un événement, il faut d’abord l’accepter, au moins partiellement; puis nous familiariser avec lui; et enfin lui donner place en nous avec toutes ses conséquences’ (Tisseron, 1996: 21). Saint-Loup never reaches this point with Rachel. Marcel later notes that it took him many years to conquer his love for her (Proust: VI, 259). He also cites Saint-Loup’s remark concerning the physical resemblance between Morel and Rachel as the possible motivation for his love affair with him many years later (Proust: VI, 262). Saint-Loup’s rejection of the photograph’s power as a tool for the mental assimilation of lived experience stands in marked contrast to Marcel’s attachment to the photograph of his grandmother after her death, which episode will be examined next. Thus Saint-Loup’s treatment of his photographs of Rachel points up her long-term significance in his emotional life and his inability to resign himself to their rupture.

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The motif of the dark room is recurrent in A la recherche du temps perdu, and its evocation is frequently characterised by language drawn from the lexicon of photographic practice. This feature of the photographic system of image production will be discussed in the next section of my thesis.
accept psychologically the veracity of her articulated feelings and their inferred consequences, the photographic images will renew his unspoken discomfort and give him no pleasure. This fact explains his constant refusal to show his photographs to Marcel. As a photographer familiar with every aspect of the photographic process, Saint-Loup is implicitly aware of the variations in response of different people to the same photographic image. The ‘fausse idée’ which Marcel might derive from the snapshots and might inadvertently communicate to Saint-Loup through his body language, facial expressions and words, could shatter the vision of Rachel (and of his relationship with her) which Saint-Loup has entertained and which he has attempted photographically to capture once he is faced with the unwelcome prospect of its disappearance. Saint-Loup’s recourse to photography may therefore be regarded as evidence of his unconscious fear of being forced to face up to the current state of affairs — in essence, a daily-repeated standoff — with Rachel. Instead he harks back to their former happiness. Sontag notes that ‘when we are nostalgic, we take pictures. [...] To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt’ (Sontag, 1977: 15). In hiding the photographs, Saint-Loup tries to conceal from himself the knowledge of Rachel’s present detachment from him.

Saint-Loup’s persistence in refusing to show him the photographs enables Marcel to imagine Rachel to be a great beauty; as Saint-Loup later believes Albertine must be. On meeting Rachel, Marcel realises for the first time the power of individual imagination and the illusions it can create:

"Je me rendais compte de tout ce qu’une imagination humaine peut mettre derrière un petit morceau de visage comme était celui de cette femme, si c’est l’imagination qui l’a connue d’abord; et, inversement, en quels misérables éléments matériels et dénus de toute valeur pouvait se décomposer ce qui était le but de tant de rêveries, si, au contraire, cela avait été perçu d’une manière opposée, par la connaissance la plus triviale. [...] Ce n’était pas “Rachel quand du Seigneur” qui me semblait peu de chose, c’était la puissance de l’imagination humaine, l’illusion sur laquelle reposait les douleurs de l’amour que je trouvais grandes. (Proust: III, 151-152 – my italics)

par son image. Ce désir de clarté est une composante psychologique essentielle de l’acte photographique’

(Tisseron, 1996: 15).
Imagination influences perception: an important lesson which Marcel learns from Saint-Loup and which is hinted at by Saint-Loup’s refusal to treat photographic representations of Rachel in the casual manner which already characterised their circulation in society by the late nineteenth century. The lesson carried by this hint is made explicit later in the novel when a photograph of Marcel’s lover Albertine is requested by Saint-Loup. Though the roles of the two men are reversed, the episode very closely echoes that which we have just explored: Saint-Loup’s request to see her photograph, Marcel’s initial refusal, followed by protestations of her lack of physical charm. However, in this case Marcel overcomes his reluctance and eventually allows Saint-Loup to see Albertine’s photographic portrait. Saint-Loup’s reaction is almost comical:

“Elle est sûrement merveilleuse”, continuait à dire Robert, qui n’avait pas vu que je lui tendais la photographie. Soudain il l’aperçut, il la tint un instant dans ses mains. Sa figure exprimait une stupéfaction qui allait jusqu’à la stupidité. “C’est ça, la jeune fille que tu aimes?” finit-il par me dire d’un ton où l’étonnement était maté par la crainte de me fâcher. Il ne fit aucune observation, il avait pris l’air raisonnable, prudent, forcément un peu dédaigneux qu’on a devant un malade […] (Proust: VI, 21 – my italics)

Though Marcel is somewhat taken aback by Saint-Loup’s shock at the sight of Albertine, this episode serves ultimately to confirm the truth concerning individual imagination and perception which Marcel had earlier gleaned from Saint-Loup through his relationship with Rachel and his refusal to display her photographs. Saint-Loup’s manifest surprise does not jeopardise Marcel’s image of Albertine or lead him to question her value for himself. Instead it raises Marcel’s awareness of the significance of the passage of time in

From the time of the commercial success of the carte-de-visite in the 1860s, popular portrait photography was available to every sector of society, from the richest to the poorest. Elizabeth Anne McCauley notes that ‘within the history of the nineteenth century, the carte de visite appears as a fad, a commercial product that was the rage for less than ten years and then disappeared into attics and desk drawers. […] By the late 1860s, a period of social saturation was reached in which most potential buyers had been exploited and bored with the format set in’ (McCauley, 1985: 222).

Once again there is a certain ambiguity concerning the assertion that ‘ce n’est pas une beauté’: Marcel clearly believes Albertine to be beautiful and the later narrator explicitly affirms his expectation that Saint-Loup will at least find her pretty in the photograph. His denigration of her is motivated in part by modesty and in part by jealousy, as he wishes to avoid the possibility of Saint-Loup developing an interest in Albertine. Given the parallels between the two episodes, it is possible retrospectively to attribute to Saint-Loup’s earlier reticence with regard to Rachel’s photographs, the same motivations which govern that of Marcel.

Instead of confusion over Saint-Loup’s response to Albertine’s photograph, there is swift understanding thanks to their previous experiences: ‘Je compris tout de suite l’étonnement de Robert, et que c’était celui où m’avait jeté la vue de sa maîtresse’ (Proust: VI, 21). Marcel accepts that with regard to Albertine, Robert is a ‘spectateur indifférent’.
the development of love and in the perception of one's beloved. Of particular interest in these two analogous episodes is the fact that meeting Rachel in the flesh and seeing Albertine in a photograph produce similar states of incredulity in the two men. In both cases, the disparity between the lover and the indifferent spectator's visually perceived reality is made equally clear. This fact points up the importance of multi-sensory experience over time with regard to the growth of love and the visual perception of the beloved. The flesh-and-blood Rachel for Marcel and the photographed Albertine for Saint-Loup are objects of purely visual perusal. Saint-Loup's refusal to display his photographs of Rachel springs ultimately from his unconscious awareness of the impossibility of any photographic image satisfactorily representing Rachel as he perceives her through all of his senses and over a long period of time. What he fails to appreciate is the fact that introducing Marcel to her is just as inadequate as showing him her photograph. Marcel has not shared Saint-Loup's experience and so cannot perceive Rachel as Saint-Loup does. It is the role played by photographs in the relationships and friendships of the four young people which first conveys this message to Marcel, thereby raising his awareness of the fundamental importance of time as an element of perception.

The difference between the casual Marcel's and the loving Saint-Loup's perception of Rachel's face is shown through the narrator's description of the process of decomposition and fragmentation which characterises the perception of an indifferent acquaintance. For Marcel, when he met her in the brothel years before, Rachel's face was merely a

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80 Marcel observes that 'le temps était loin où j'avais bien petitement commencé à Balbec par ajouter aux sensations visuelles quand je regardais Albertine, des sensations de saveur, d'odeur, de toucher. Depuis, des sensations plus profondes, plus douces, plus indéfinissables s'y étaient ajoutées, puis des sensations douleureuses. Bref Albertine n'était, comme une pierre autour de laquelle il a neigé, que le centre généranteur d'une immense construction qui passait par le plan de mon cœur' (Proust: VI, 22). This phenomenon, which Marcel refers to as the 'stratification de sensations', will be explored later in this thesis in relation to the superimposition of images in the perception and memory processes of Marcel and the later narrator.

81 Saint-Loup's consistent refusal to display his photographs of Rachel means that Marcel eventually makes this discovery in Rachel's presence. Saint-Loup's reaction to Marcel's photograph of Albertine — which mirrors Marcel's response to Rachel — reiterates the disparity between the two men's perception of the women. The role of photographic images in these two episodes, negative in the first (given Saint-Loup's refusal to show his images) and positive in the second (since by showing his photograph, Marcel attains new knowledge regarding the subjectivity of perception) demonstrates Proust's appreciation of the value of photographs as a means of disclosing the nature of human perception.
Looking at her ‘petit morceau de visage’ (Proust: III, 151) now, aware of Saint-Loup’s love for her and his unhappiness, he concludes that:

L’immobilité de ce mince visage, comme celle d’une feuille de papier soumise aux colossales pressions de deux atmosphères, me semblait équilibrée par deux infinis qui venaient aboutir à elle sans se rencontrer, car elle les séparait. Et en effet, la regardant tous les deux, Robert et moi, nous ne la voyions pas du même côté du mystère. (Proust: III, 152)

The description of Rachel in this passage could be drawn from life or from a photographic image printed on paper. Her physical presence is synonymous with a photographic image for Marcel insofar as he is removed from any emotional involvement with her which might colour his current perception of her. The flesh-and-blood woman is frozen for Marcel in his past impression of her as featureless prostitute: hence the emphasis placed on the immobility of her face. The simile drawn between Rachel’s still, thin face and a sheet of paper serving as the fragile meeting point successfully separating two distinct ways of seeing, evokes the photographs taken by Saint-Loup and never seen by Marcel. The description of himself and Saint-Loup as looking at Rachel from two different sides also suggests the transparent photographic negative which, if looked at simultaneously from both sides, would present two images which are the inverse of one another.

The influence of the passage of time on individual perception means that everyone experiences the world visually in a way which differs profoundly from the experience of others. An inescapable disparity exists between different people’s perception of the world and its inhabitants. Nothing can be of fixed and determinate value in such a subjectively apprehended world: hence Marcel’s description of the process of individual perception as illusion or illness.\(^\text{82}\) It is not a coincidence that photography is the visual medium used by

\[^{82}\text{Cf. the last two quotations from} \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} \textit{in the main body of my thesis, where Marcel firstly describes love as being based on an illusion and secondly equates Saint-Loup’s response to the photograph of Albertine with a healthy person’s manner in the presence of a sick one. In a chapter of his doctoral thesis entitled ‘Constructivism’, Wegner notes that ‘hallucination is the form of visual perception which connects Marcel to the chronos apocalypticos of photography. [...] Imagination is [...] an organ which devises, reads, circulates and projects images’ (Wegner, 2003: 105). Through the circulation of photographic images between Saint-Loup and Marcel, the latter attains the knowledge of the complexity}\]
Proust as the means of conveying this information to Marcel. The precariousness of the photographic sign makes it a fitting system of image production with which to point up, for Marcel, the fundamental instability of human perception. Schaeffer regards the pragmatic flexibility of photography as its most distinctive characteristic (Schaeffer, 1987: 10). In the same way that communicational norms modify the semiotic status of the photographic image, individuals perceive the world in unique ways which are dependent on their emotional and intellectual viewpoint. This is the message received by Marcel through Saint-Loup’s engagement with photography. Photographs both underline and contribute to the disorientation which results from Marcel’s realisation of the isolation of individual subjectivity. Flusser observes that:

The technical images currently all around us are in the process of magically restructuring our ‘reality’ and turning it into a ‘global image scenario’. Essentially this is a question of ‘amnesia’. Human beings forget they created the images in order to orientate themselves in the world. Since they are no longer able to decode them, their lives become a function of their images: Imagination has turned into hallucination. (Flusser, 2000: 9-10)

Ultimately, Marcel’s response to his awareness of the isolation of subjective perception will be his determination to produce a creative literary work which will succeed in communicating his vision of the world to others. Marcel makes this decision many years after Saint-Loup’s death. However, Saint-Loup’s central importance in Marcel’s life and therefore as an influence on the conception and realisation of Marcel’s literary vocation is indisputable given the repeated references to him in *La Temps retrouvé* and

of perception and its lack of foundation in a concrete, absolute reality. Wegner affirms that Marcel’s experience of the world ‘implies the rejection of a notion of the world as stable, as independent of observation, and as an entity sui generis’ (Wegner, 2003: 108).

Wegner states that in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, ‘photographs [...] make it possible to understand reality as a construct. This is why photographs do not provide an alternative solution to the human eye: they neither explain anything nor do they enhance the comprehension of the things they show. Accordingly, they assume significance only au deuxième degré — as media which may be used to draw attention to the incessant fabrication underlying human being-in-the-world’ (Wegner, 2003: 108). My thesis will later explore how the dual narratological structure of Proust’s novel demonstrates the later narrator’s retrospective understanding of the importance of photography as a means of conveying information to Marcel which will ultimately contribute to his conception and realisation of his literary vocation.

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84 ‘La vraie vie, la vie enfin découverte et éclaircie, la seule vie par conséquent pleinement vécue, c’est la littérature. Cette vie [...] est la révélation, qui serait impossible par des moyens directs et conscients, de la différence qualitative qu’il y a dans la façon dont nous apparaît le monde, différence qui, s’il n’y avait pas l’art, resterait le secret éternel de chacun. Par l’art seulement nous pouvons sortir de nous, savoir ce que voit un autre de cet univers qui n’est pas le même que le nôtre et dont les paysages nous seraient restés aussi inconnus que ceux qu’il peut y avoir sur la lune. Grâce à l’art, au lieu de voir un seul monde, le nôtre, nous le voyons se multiplier [...]’ (Proust: VII, 202).
the introduction to his daughter which finally strengthens Marcel’s determination to begin writing a literary work which will capture in words the past years of his life. As photographer of his beloved Rachel and commentator on Marcel’s photograph of Albertine, Saint-Loup conveys to Marcel ideas concerning the instability of individual perception which will prove to be central tenets of his literary work.

Darkroom Opportunism: Development and Deviance

The second episode in À la recherche du temps perdu in which Saint-Loup acts as photographer occurs at Balbec. The circumstances and outcome differ from those we have just explored. Saint-Loup does not take the photograph of his own accord but is asked to do so by Marcel’s sick grandmother. The latter conceals from her grandson her grave illness and her request. The photograph of his grandmother taken and developed by Saint-Loup will play a key role in Marcel’s conception of the power of memory over death: Thélot notes that ‘c’est dans Sodome et Gomorrhe, le narrateur souffrant l’épreuve du deuil longtemps après le déces, que cette image de la morte joue un rôle formidable’ (Thélot, 2003: 201). The results of Saint-Loup’s photographic skills are crucial to this process, which will contribute significantly to Marcel’s ultimate determination to realise his literary vocation in a work devoted to lost time.

Marcel’s postponed discovery of the circumstances surrounding the production of his grandmother’s photograph reveals previously unsuspected information concerning both his grandmother and Saint-Loup. The belated knowledge of his grandmother’s good intentions in being photographed and of Saint-Loup’s homosexual violence compels Marcel to reassess firstly his own and his grandmother’s behaviour at Balbec and secondly, the character of the man he believed to be his closest friend. The darkroom at the Grand Hotel serves as a space where photographic negatives are printed as positive images and where Saint-Loup’s status as heterosexual is simultaneously negated. The negative conclusions drawn by Marcel regarding his grandmother’s acquiescence to the
photographic process are ultimately disproved and her positive motivations made known.\(^5\)

At Balbec, as at Combray and in Paris, Marcel’s grandmother devotes herself to his care. For Marcel, she embodies love and is the epitome of feminine goodness and self-sacrifice.\(^6\) The stability of their relationship is only twice called into question: on both occasions, photography is the medium which is used to convey Marcel’s fleeting alienation from her.\(^7\) Ignorant of her poor health at Balbec, the prospect of her taking enthusiastic part in a photography session with Saint-Loup discomfits him. He observes her preparations with disquiet:

...quand je vis qu’elle avait mis pour cela sa plus belle toilette et hésitait entre diverses coiffures, je me sentis un peu irrité de cet enfantillage qui m’étonnait tellement de sa part. J’en arrivais même à me demander si je ne m’étais pas trompé sur ma grand-mère, si je ne la plaçais pas trop haut, si elle était aussi détachée que j’avais toujours cru de ce qui concernait sa personne, si elle n’avait pas ce que je croyais lui être le plus étranger, de la coquetterie.

(Proust: II, 352)

His grandmother’s uncharacteristic behaviour in preparing to pose for Saint-Loup contrasts with her usual self-abnegation in favour of her beloved family. The act of

\(^5\) The juxtaposition of negative/positive images and expectations is a recurrent motif in À la recherche du temps perdu and derives from the photographic system of image production. In a chapter entitled ‘Positive-Negative: The Visual Rhetoric of Capture’, in The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually, Mieke Bal characterises Proust’s poetic practice as ‘being above all else located in the province of negativity’ (Bal, 1996: 183). Bal notes the presence of the photographic mechanism in Proust’s novel ‘in the effects of contrast, which prevent or enable the under- or overexposed image to be seen’ (Bal, 1996: 201). This negative/positive juxtaposition underlines the reversals which characterise Marcel’s apprehension of the world and its inhabitants. Roxanne Hanney notes that ‘in considering the recurring theme of homosexuality, it will be of use to move outside the realm of Proust’s own metaphors, to expand the notion of inversion (Proust’s term for homosexual attraction) and to view homosexual love as a kind of reversed image of heterosexual love. This will show the extent to which homosexuality is a “negative” of heterosexuality […]’ (Hanney, 1990: 75).

\(^6\) Shattuck notes ‘the passionate, enduring and never sullied love between Marcel and his mother and grandmother’ (Shattuck, 2000: 36). However, this love allows Marcel to manipulate those who care for him most. Shattuck affirms that ‘this tender young boy catches on very quickly to what makes the world go round. Not unlike his invalid aunt Léonie, he learns to bend his mother and his grandmother to his will’ (Shattuck, 2000: 49).

\(^7\) Apart from the scene at Balbec which is explored in this section, there is a moment in Paris where Marcel is made unexpectedly and uncomfortably aware of his grandmother’s identity as one wholly separate from himself (Proust: III, 132-134). This significant scene, in which photography is the predominant metaphor for the process of perception, will be explored in the third chapter of my thesis.
posing for the photographic camera is one which Marcel views with suspicion. He is jealous of his grandmother’s self-absorption before submitting to the gaze of the photographic camera and of Saint-Loup. Her actions imply a withdrawal of her attention from him and its transfer to herself and to Saint-Loup. Roland Barthes notes the relationship of dependency which exists between photographer and photographed object:

Posant devant l’objectif [...] c’est métaphoriquement que je tiens mon existence du photographe. Mais cette dépendance a beau être imaginaire (et du plus pur Imaginaire), je la vis dans l’angoisse d’une filiation incertaine: une image — mon image — va naitre: va-t-on m’accoucher d’un individu antipathique ou d’un ‘type bien’? (Barthes, 1980: 25)

Posing for Saint-Loup establishes a relationship between the photographer and Marcel’s grandmother which differs greatly from that which exists between herself and her grandson: hence Marcel’s wary possessiveness. She will be dependent on Saint-Loup throughout the process and will thereby play a role in relation to him which is the very opposite of that which she assumes in relation to Marcel. Her joyful acquiescence to Saint-Loup as photographer implies her unexpected willingness to be represented in purely visual terms which are dictated by Saint-Loup through the photographic process. Marcel is unable to accept willingly a visual representation of his grandmother resulting from the actions of another person, even his friend. Having reluctantly given his blessing to the ‘séance de pose’, he effectively retracts it by saying something cutting so as to prevent her from taking pleasure in the experience. In so doing Marcel protests against

88 His unease at Balbec recalls his childhood refusal at Combray to give in to his mother’s will and pose for the camera in frills and flounces (Proust: I, 143). Thélot affirms that ‘le ressentiment contre la grand-mère [...] relance le refus de la pose tel qu’il s’est exprimé à Combray. [...] À Balbec sur le modèle de Combray, la pose ravive la panique de l’abandon — cette panique dont le traumatisme originaire avait été jadis la privation du baiser maternel — dans la terreur d’un départ. Or cette fois le ressentiment s’exaspère de ce que le départ sera la mort’ (Thélot, 2003: 200).

89 Barthes explores the conflict inherent to the ritual of portrait photography: ‘La Photo-portrait est un champ clos de forces. Quatres imaginaires s’y croisent, s’y affrontent, s’y déforment. Devant l’objectif, je suis à la fois: celui que je me crois, celui que je voudrais qu’on me croie, celui que le photographe me croit, et celui dont il se sert pour exhiber son art’ (Barthes, 1980: 29). As we shall see later in this section, Saint-Loup uses this photographic session for more than simply displaying his mastery of photography.

90 Implicit in the enactment of the delicate power relations established between Marcel’s grandmother and Saint-Loup through photographic practice are a juxtaposition of their two value systems and a correlation of their objectives (namely, the production of a memento mori for Marcel). Later in this section we will explore the ambiguity of Saint-Loup’s response to this situation and the lesson Marcel subsequently learns from his friend’s behaviour.
her detachment from him and underlines his jealousy of Saint-Loup’s temporary proprietary rights over his grandmother’s image.91

Her brief withdrawal from Marcel during her preparations for the camera foreshadows his elderly grandmother’s imminent and immutable absence through death. Death threatens her both in the ritual of being photographed and in reality. The ritual of being photographed may itself be regarded as a kind of death of the photographed object. Barthes describes the experience thus:

Imaginairement, la Photographie (celle dont j’ai l’intention) représente ce moment très subtil où, à vrai dire, je ne suis ni un sujet ni un objet, mais plutôt un sujet qui se sent devenir objet: je vis alors une micro-expérience de la mort (de la parenthèse); je deviens vraiment spectre.

(Barthes, 1980: 30)

By choosing to pose for Saint-Loup, his grandmother becomes strange not only to Marcel but to the world as experienced as a continuous flow of time.92 Her photographic portrait can only represent her visually at one particular moment in time and space. She is thereby irrevocably cut off from Marcel and dead to him insofar as she is no longer alert and responsive to his needs.93 Such a situation is intolerable to Marcel, yet has already begun in his day-to-day life at Balbec. The photography session is the climax of a burgeoning crisis. After ruining his grandmother’s enjoyment of being photographed by Saint-Loup, Marcel admits as much:

Ma mauvaise humeur venait surtout de ce que, cette semaine-là, ma grand-mère avait paru me fuir et que je n’avais pu l’avoir un instant à moi, pas plus le jour que le soir. Quand je rentrais dans l’après-midi pour être un peu seul avec elle, on me disait qu’elle n’était pas là; ou bien elle s’enfermait avec Françoise pour de longues conciliabules qu’il ne m’était pas permis de troubler. Et quand ayant passé la soirée dehors avec Saint-Loup, je songeais pendant le trajet du retour au moment où j’allais pouvoir retrouver et embrasser ma grand-mère, j’avais beau attendre qu’elle frappât contre le cloison ces petits coups qui me diraient d’entrer lui dire bonsoir, je n’entendais rien [...]. (Proust: II, 353)

91 See the Serge Tisseron quotation on page 53, note 13, regarding the power relations between photographer and photographed throughout the process of creating a photographic image.
92 Thélot affirms that ‘la pose est toujours comme la mort, elle donne en lieu et place de l’être cher une relique déshabitee du désir, une absence à soi de l’individu qui s’aliène à son apparence’ (Thélot, 2003: 201).
93 Barthes remarks that ‘au fond, ce que je vise dans la photo qu’on prend de moi (l’ “intention” selon laquelle je la regarde), c’est la Mort: la Mort est l’eidos de cette Photo-là’ (Barthes, 1980: 32).
His grandmother’s behaviour towards him is now becoming characterised by absence and a determined avoidance of intimacy. These undesirable changes come to a head with her positive response to Saint-Loup’s request to photograph her. The lie told by his grandmother concerning the origin of the idea of the photograph is the root of Marcel’s malcontent. Her failure to be honest with him is motivated by the desire to protect him from the knowledge of her serious illness. However, the photography session in itself suffices to warn Marcel of the imminence of his grandmother’s death, through its visual objectification of her at a particular moment in time and space, which representation of her is profoundly unfamiliar and unwelcome to Marcel. Marcel’s ridiculing of her posing for the camera is in fact a much broader reproach for what he regards as her neglectful indifference. The failure of both grandmother and grandson to communicate verbally with honesty is underlined in this episode where the grandmother’s good intentions are entirely misread by Marcel. The lack of understanding between them means that her enthusiastic engagement with photography only exacerbates Marcel’s alienation from her. For him, it is symptomatic of an implicit threat to the status quo of their relationship.

In spite of her deception, the photography session serves subtly to forewarn Marcel of the imminence of his grandmother’s death. His immediate rejection of this unwelcome prospect is directed at the woman herself: the ironic result is that the photograph taken by Saint-Loup serves as a tangible visual record of their unintentional and temporary detachment from one another.

The mutual failure to articulate their true feelings and motivations causes Marcel great pain after his grandmother’s death, when on his second visit to Balbec her incentive in asking Saint-Loup to photograph her is made known to him. The scene which precedes this revelation merits close attention. Marcel contemplates his relationship with his grandmother, oscillating between the belief that their identities were symbiotically affirmed and the notion that they are strangers to one another. Initially the photograph provides proof of this latter idea:

Elle était ma grand-mère et j’étais son petit-fils. [...] Mais non, nos rapports ont été trop fugitifs pour n’avoir pas été accidentels. Elle ne me connait plus, je ne la reverrai jamais. Nous n’avions pas été créés uniquement l’un pour l’autre, c’était une étrangère. Cette étrangère, j’étais en train d’en regarder la photographie par Saint-Loup. (Proust: IV, 172)
The photograph here reinforces Marcel’s present sense of alienation from his dead grandmother: it is a confirmation of her now permanent absence and estrangement from the grandson in whose life she had played such an intimate role. However, while continuing to look at the photograph, its significance changes abruptly:

En attendant l’heure d’aller retrouver Albertine, je tenais mes yeux fixés, comme sur un dessin qu’on finit par ne plus voir à force de l’avoir regardé, sur la photographie que Saint-Loup avait faite, quand tout d’un coup, je pensai de nouveau: “C’est grand-mère, je suis son petit-fils”, comme un amnésiaque retrouve son nom, comme un malade change de personnalité. (Proust: IV, 172 – my italics)

This unexpected reversal in Marcel’s reading of the photographic image demonstrates the ambiguity of photography which Schaeffer defines as one of the most powerful features of this system of image production (Schaeffer, 1987: 10). Prolonged contemplation of the photographic image reawakens Marcel to both his and his grandmother’s identity. The strength of this realisation is made clear in the similes of a recovered amnesiac or a sick man who changes his personality. Looking at his dead grandmother’s photograph enables Marcel to reclaim the past self which had been lost following her death, because as an indexical icon the photographic portrait puts him in direct visual contact with the woman in relation to whom his identity was defined for many years. The simile established between the photograph and a drawing — ‘comme sur un dessin’ — undercuts the stress on indexicality here by pointing up the capacity for imaginative engagement with the iconic qualities of the photograph, at this point in time and, potentially, into the future. Precisely at this point Françoise enters and details his grandmother’s state of mind and body, utterly unsuspected by Marcel, at the time of the photography session (Proust: IV, 172-173). His grandmother’s lack of vanity and

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94 The simile of amnesia and illness recalls Saint-Loup’s response to seeing Albertine in a photograph in Albertine disparue: cf. page 56 and 58 above.
95 Barthes notes the physical nature of the connection between photographed object and viewer: ‘[...] la photo de l’être disparu vient me toucher comme les rayons différés d’une étoile. Une sorte de lien ombilical relie le corps de la chose photographiée à mon regard [...]’ (Barthes, 1980: 126-127).
96 Françoise describes how his grandmother’s awareness of her approaching death prompts her desire that Marcel should have a photograph of her. Only the imminence of death persuades her to engage with photography, which she has consistently denigrated as a means for the reproduction of works of art. Clearly, her negative opinion no longer extends to photographic portraiture by the time she is at Balbec. She has come to appreciate the unique power of the photograph as indexical icon to capture the sitter —
devotion to her grandson are affirmed: her photograph now provides tangible proof of her love.97

Marcel is devastated by guilt at Françoise’s words because of the tardy realisation of his unjustifiable cruelty. His response is to remain focussed on the photograph: ‘[…] je souffris toute la journée en restant devant la photographie de ma grand-mère. Elle me torturait’ (Proust: IV, 174). After a few days, however, he has become reconciled to the truth of his grandmother’s former condition.98 The knowledge he has gained informs in a new way his perception of his grandmother in the photograph and explicitly points up his awareness of the fundamental instability and malleability of the photographic sign. Looking at the photograph, Marcel is now struck by its ambivalence. He notes the discrepancy between its representation of his grandmother — ‘si élégante, si insouciante’ (Proust: IV, 176) — and his new awareness of her suffering at that time. His response is one of admiration for photography’s capacity for deceitful collusion with one determined to exploit the power of the photographic system of image production so as to be represented in a way which deviates utterly from the lived reality. Despite his new awareness of the truth of his grandmother’s condition at the time of the photography session, the photograph continues to lie to him convincingly.99 However, the same is not true for his mother:

hence her words to her servant: ‘Si jamais il m’arrivait quelque chose, il faudrait qu’il ait un portrait de moi. Je n’en ai jamais fait faire un seul’ (Proust: IV, 173).

Françoise imparts this information to Marcel because she finds him looking at the photograph of his grandmother. In so doing she verbalises her own experience of her mistress’s decline and death (cf. Tisseron quotation on page 54 above). The photograph is the impetus for her communication to Marcel of facts which differ greatly from his own understanding of past events. Her assimilation of her lived experience through looking at and discussing the photograph compels Marcel to re-evaluate and assimilate anew the fact of his grandmother’s love for him, as evinced by her engagement with photography.

‘Quelques jours plus tard la photographie qu’avait faite Saint-Loup m’était douce à regarder; elle ne réveillait pas le souvenir de ce que m’avait dit Françoise parce qu’il ne m’avait plus quitté et je m’habituais à lui’ (Proust: IV, 176). The passage of time is essential to Marcel’s assimilation of the unpalatable fact of his grandmother’s illness and his own spite.

‘Mais en regard de l’idée que je me faisais de son état si grave, si dououreux ce jour-là, la photographie, profitant encore des ruses qu’avait eues ma grand-mère et qui réussissaient à me tromper même depuis qu’elles m’avaient été dévoilées, me la montrait si élégante, si insouciante, sous le chapeau qui cachait un peu son visage, que je la voyais moins malheureuse et mieux portante que je l’avais imaginée’ (Proust: IV, 176). It is the fact of his grandmother’s face being partially hidden which enables Marcel to perceive her as carefree and well in the photograph. The iconic quality of the photographic image facilitates this process. Friday notes that ‘a final, but crucial, feature of Peirce’s account of iconic representation is his claim that icons may represent fictional objects or states of affairs’ (Friday, 2002: 48).
Et pourtant, ses joues ayant à son insu une expressions à elles, quelque chose de plombé, de hagard, comme le regard d’une bête qui se sentirait déjà choisie et désignée, ma grand-mère avait un air de condamnée à mort, un air involontairement sombre, inconsciemment tragique qui m’échappait mais qui empêchait maman de regarder jamais cette photographie, cette photographie qui lui paraissait moins une photographie de sa mère que de la maladie de celle-ci, d’une insulte que cette maladie faisait au visage brutalement souffleté de grand-mère. (Proust: IV, 176)

The dual narratological viewpoint which characterises À la recherche du temps perdu means that his mother’s rejection of the photograph’s representation of the grandmother is affirmed as permanent, while Marcel’s failure to see the image as his mother does, is equally lasting. It is not clear from this passage whether Marcel and his mother ever communicated to one another their different responses to the photograph. However it is evident that the later narrator accepts the legitimacy of the diversity and strength of reaction to photographic images which is here exemplified by the contrasting feelings of Marcel and his mother towards the photograph of his grandmother.

Saint-Loup develops and prints the photograph of Marcel’s grandmother in the darkroom at the Grand Hotel at Balbec. His actions in the darkroom underline disparate aspects of his character. In developing and printing the photograph of Marcel’s grandmother, Saint-Loup behaves as a fond friend and a discerning and discriminating practitioner of photography. He colludes willingly with Marcel’s grandmother in the production of the only photograph of her which will exist and whose function as memento mori will be extremely important. The developing and printing of photographic images are stages of equal importance to the ‘séance de pose’. Tisseron affirms that:

Ce premier travail de symbolisation se prolonge ensuite dans chacune des opérations de développement et de tirage des images. Chacune de ces opérations confronte en effet le ‘tireur’ à une fabrication de la représentation du monde qu’il a choisi de privilégier. C’est une mystification de parler si souvent de la photographie en faisant semblant de croire qu’elle se fabrique au moment de la prise de vue. (Tisseron, 1996: 28)

Aimé points out that Saint-Loup developed and printed multiple photographs of Marcel’s grandmother, yet Marcel possesses only one of them (Proust: VI, 260-261). In discriminating between the various photographs he had produced, Saint-Loup succeeds in choosing an image which represents Marcel’s grandmother as she wishes her grandson to see her.
The power relation of dominance and submission which characterises the session where the grandmother poses for the photographer continues throughout the developing and printing stages of photographic practice. Saint-Loup is thus in complete control of the image of Marcel’s grandmother while in the darkroom: he possesses it.  

Years later, the headwaiter at the hotel, Aimé, tells Marcel that, while in the darkroom, Saint-Loup sexually assaulted the lift-boy who was assisting him. Thus as well as providing an opportunity for him to convey his attachment to Marcel and his family, Saint-Loup’s role as photographer at Balbec also served as an occasion for the exercising of his violent homosexual tendencies. In an attack which recalls the Montjouvain scene witnessed earlier by Marcel, Saint-Loup profanes the photographic image of Marcel’s grandmother, who epitomises every positive virtue in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Marcel’s friendship with Saint-Loup must be retrospectively reassessed in the light of this knowledge. He can no longer presume to understand the motivation which lies behind any of the actions of Saint-Loup — and by extension, those of any other person with whom he comes into contact.

The difference between Saint-Loup’s and Marcel’s response to photographic images points up their respective emotional development in relation to Rachel and Marcel’s grandmother. Saint-Loup’s inability to look at, display or discuss his photographs of Rachel suggests his lack of resignation to the end of their affair. By contrast, Marcel uses

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101 The significance of his temporary mastery of her image is heightened by the fact that no other photographic images of her exist and no others will be made.

102 When asked by Marcel about the possibility of Saint-Loup being homosexual, Aimé responds “‘Mais oui, monsieur, me dit-il, c’est archiconnu, il y a bien longtemps que je le sais. La première année que Monsieur était à Balbec, M. le marquis s’enferma avec mon liftier, sous prétexte de développer des photographies de Madame la grand-mère de Monsieur. Le petit voulait se plaindre, nous avons eu toutes les peines du monde à étouffer la chose’” (Proust: VI, 260-261).

103 Thélot points out the importance of photographic practice in the darkroom as a means to disclose information which has the potential to surprise and shock Marcel: ‘Mais donc c’est le développement de ce cliché-ci de la grand-mère, dans une chambre obscure, qui lui aura été l’occasion d’un viol, et qui le fit connaître comme homosexuel d’abord au monde de l’hôtel de Balbec, puis tardivement au narrateur’ (Thélot, 2003: 186).

104 Thélot affirms that ‘de fait deux développements de cette pose s’accomplissent dans le récit, aussi profanateurs l’un que l’autre. D’abord, on l’a vu, Saint-Loup dans une chambre noire révélant ce cliché s’avétera comme homosexuel dissimulé, ignoré même de son ami — comme si reproduisant la grand-mère il ne pouvait qu’en violer la pudeur, en blasphémé la confiance, et parce que cette photographie comme telle avait été un parjure de ce que la grand-mère était en vérité, toute ingénuité sans mensonge et sincérité sans retenue. Ensuite ce tirage lui-même apparaîtra au petit-fils comme la preuve de l’offense et le signe de la vraie mort’ (Thélot, 2003: 201).
his photograph of his grandmother as a tool to help him to come to terms with the unwelcome knowledge of her illness and death and his own past insensitivity. In so doing, Marcel embraces the uncomfortable communicational potential of the photographic image and endeavours to assimilate his past experience in a way which Saint-Loup cannot. Yet it is Saint-Loup as photographer who facilitates Marcel’s dawning consciousness of the subjective nature of perception and memory. Marcel’s awareness of the complexity of the processes of perception and memory as communicated to him through Saint-Loup’s engagement with the photographic system of image production will profoundly inform his ultimate decision to create a literary work devoted to the search for lost time.

Saint-Loup as photographer makes Marcel aware for the first time of the difficulty — even impossibility — of truly knowing and understanding another person. Photographs taken but not shown; taken, developed and printed (but for whose benefit?), serve passively to convey to the youthful Marcel the instability of the world and of his perception of it. The somewhat fragmented nature of Saint-Loup’s engagement with the photographic process, for instance his refusal to look at and discuss his photographs of Rachel and his assault on the liftboy in the darkroom, is in itself an indicator of the instability of the world as perceived by Marcel. The use of amnesia and illness as similes for his subjective, time-specific perception of the world and of those he loves conveys the distress, isolation and disorientation caused by this new knowledge. Amnesia implies temporal ellipsis, suggesting Marcel’s dawning awareness both of the major significance of time as an element in perception and memory and of time’s inherent fragility and mutability within the context of individual experience. His urgent reawakening to the truth of this idea will later prompt him to record his individual

105 Wegner notes that, in Proust’s novel, ‘photography exposes — in a sense, makes visible — that there can be no reliable experience of reality. It shows that there is nothing permanent and stable to be seen’ (Wegner, 2003: 110). Shattuck affirms that ‘the action of the first twenty-eight hundred pages out of three thousand can be seen as consisting in Marcel’s gradual discovery and acceptance of the truth that no person, no action, no sentiment, no social phenomenon is ever simple or consistent’ (Shattuck, 2000: 128-129). Saint-Loup’s role as photographer contributes significantly to Marcel’s discovery and acceptance of the inherent lack of consistency in all aspects of life which is engendered by the passage of time.

106 Hanney notes that ‘what is most intriguing in Proust’s fascination with photography is that the photographic process is most often halted mid-way, interrupted. [...] In a sense, then, the image is fixed in its own incoherence or contradiction’ (Hanney, 1990: 74).
experience in a creative literary work. Thus photography as practised by Saint-Loup in Paris and at Balbec yields knowledge which will prove fundamental to the conception and realisation of Marcel's literary vocation many years later.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ My thesis will attempt to show how, in spite of the doubt expressed by Marcel regarding the value of friendship in relation to his creative ambitions, Saint-Loup's influence as photographer ultimately affirms his importance in the successful conception and realisation of Marcel's literary vocation. The dual narratological structure of the novel will be central to my exploration in the third chapter of my thesis of this aspect of Proust's functional appropriation of photography in A la recherche du temps perdu.
II. Figurative Appropriations of Photography in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*

**Marcel’s Processes of Perception and Memory**

This section of my thesis will explore the extent to which Proust appropriated aspects of photographic practice and photographic images for the stylistic representation of his protagonist’s perception and memory processes. Together with other systems of visual representation, Proust drew on photography as an element of literary style for the portrayal of the processes of perception and memory which are central to the conception and realisation of Marcel’s creative vocation.1 An exploration of the recurrent use made in *À la recherche du temps perdu* of the lexicon of photography, in metaphor, metonymy and simile, for the representation of Marcel’s perception and memory processes will help us to ascertain the significance of such references to photography within the context of Marcel’s developing determination to become a writer.2 Concerning Proust’s novel, Ortel notes that:

> Bien des éléments, dans le style, sont effectivement indiciels: rythme, longueur des phrases, tournures récurrentes, tonalité "montrent" quelque chose de l’écrivain, sans rien ajouter à ce qu’il dit sur un plan sémantique. La métaphore photographique a donc une valeur heuristique bien réelle, qu’une étude stylistique de la phrase proustienne menée en termes d’indicialité manifesterait certainement. (Ortel, 2002: 311)

The ways in which Proust makes stylistic use of photography in *À la recherche du temps perdu* are important because of their expression of the attitudes of both the later narrator and the youthful Marcel towards the photographic system of image production and

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1 Other systems of visual representation which function as significant sources of metaphor in Proust’s novel include painting, sculpture, architecture, theatre and ballet. Graham’s *The Imagery of Proust* is a comprehensive exploration of the sources of Proustian imagery and the relationship between particular images and themes of *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

towards both the process and products of literary creativity. The dual narratological structure of Proust's novel will be studied in the third chapter of my thesis with regard to the author's stylistic appropriation of photography. The work of this section is dependent on an understanding of Proust's novel as being founded on two major, disparate, narrating voices, one looking ahead to his future life and the other retrospectively evaluating his experience. In *Le Temps retrouvé*, the later narrator uses the metaphor of photographic image development to describe an individual writer's literary style. He observes that 'le style pour l'écritain [...] est la révélation, qui serait impossible par les moyens directs et conscients, de la différence qualitative qu'il y a dans la façon dont nous apparaît le monde [...]’ (Proust: VII, 202). The word ‘révélation’ has been part of the lexicon of photography since the mid-nineteenth century. While taken on its own, this quotation from *Le Temps retrouvé* does not prove the point being made here — the optical or photographic sense of the verb 'révéler' is the last entry in the *Trésor de la langue française* — the evocation in this important passage in *Le Temps retrouvé* of the process of photographic image development, which necessitates isolation in the darkroom and which is the part of the photographic system of image production dealing with the fixing and manipulation of the latent, negative or indirect image, might be regarded as establishing a tentative connection between style — the most idiosyncratic aspect of literary creativity — and photography. This possibility is pointed up by Ortel, who observes with regard to the passage quoted above that:

 jamais la conception de l'œuvre n'a été aussi éloignée d'un simple cliché, et pourtant, jamais le processus photographique n'aura été aussi étroitement associé à l'écriture, puisqu'il décrit ici la part la plus personnelle de la création: le style. (Ortel, 2002: 310)

3 In fact, narratorial point-of-view in *Le Temps retrouvé* involves a dovetailing of the two main voices which alternate throughout the novel: those of Marcel and the later narrator. Shattuck affirms that 'a nascent writer [...] matures in the final pages into the Narrator, whom Marcel at last recognises as himself — himself transformed, his alter ego, the other I in the double I' (Shattuck, 2000: 136).

4 A comprehensive study of the lexicon of photography, its origins, development and assimilation into social usage would be a valuable research tool for students of textual and visual studies with an interest in the connections between photography and literature.

5 A parallel is repeatedly drawn between the work of the photographer in the darkroom and that of the creative literary writer who withdraws from society the better to effect its transformation into a work of art: this point will be developed later in this chapter. The passage from *Le Temps retrouvé* quoted above is important because of its statement of the later narrator's approach to literary creativity. It underlines the stylistic conventions which the later narrator sees as governing the literary project which he now intends to undertake and which, owing to the dual narratological structure of the novel, the reader can understand to be *À la recherche du temps perdu* itself.
The progression of stylistic appropriations of photography throughout *À la recherche du temps perdu* which culminate in the later narrator’s assertion of an extended metaphorical equivalence between literary creativity and photographic practice requires close examination in order accurately to contextualise and appreciate the metaphoric significance accorded to photography in *Le Temps retrouvé*. The privileged position occupied by metaphor in the later narrator’s assessment of the tools of original literary creation retrospectively implies the worth of metaphorical representation throughout *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The later narrator affirms that:

La vérité ne commencera qu’au moment où l’écrivain prendra deux objets différents, posera leur rapport, analogue dans le monde de l’art à celui qui est le rapport unique de la loi causale dans le monde de la science, et les enfermera dans les anneaux nécessaires d’un beau style. Même, ainsi que la vie, quand en rapprochant une qualité commune à deux sensations, il dégagera leur essence commune en les réunissant l’une et l’autre pour les soustraire aux contingences du temps, dans une métaphore. (Proust: VII, 196)

Thus metaphor has an important role to play in the representation of the individual literary artist’s experience, which is rescued from oblivion by the creation of a literary work. Once the stylistic appropriation of photography for the representation of Marcel’s perception and memory processes has been studied, the next chapter of my thesis will consider the role played by the stylistic appropriation of photography in the representation of both narratorial point-of-view and time. The temporal structure of *À la recherche du temps perdu* is dependent upon the novel’s dual narratological viewpoint. The latter implies that the temporal structure of the novel is not strictly chronological. It

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6 Photographic practice, as distinct from the photographic image, is defined in the first chapter of my thesis in accordance with Serge Tisseron’s description of it as photography’s ‘face cachée’ (Tisseron, 1996: 14). It includes all of the individual actions required for the successful production of a photographic image and for looking at, displaying, talking about, hiding or destroying it.

7 The references to and parallels drawn between science and art in this passage evoke what Shattuck refers to as ‘optical images’ (Shattuck, 2000: 100).

8 Many critics have concluded that the structure of *À la recherche du temps perdu* is circular, with the ending leading the reader back to its opening page once more. In the introduction to *Philosophy as Fiction: Self, Deception, and Knowledge in Proust*, Joshua Landy provides a summary of the position of some Proust critics in relation to this question (Landy, 2004: 37).
is instead composed of both a juxtaposition of temporal projection and retrospection and a superimposition of different moments of time and space.\(^9\)

The lexicon of photography is consistently and systematically employed for the representation of Marcel’s intensely visual way of apprehending experience. Bal affirms that ‘photography has to be taken as a figure, as a repeated theoretical metaphor that helps to describe an aspect of this work that is more specific than the more general word “visual” would suggest’ (Bal, 1996: 201). It is also to be found in the representation of the very different perspective of the later narrator. As a rich source of stylistic motifs, photography serves ultimately to unify the disparate viewpoints of Marcel and the later narrator with regard to the worth of Marcel’s modes of perception and memory.\(^10\)

The intricate temporal relations inherent in photographic practice are made manifest in *À la recherche du temps perdu* in the stylistic representation of Marcel’s way of perceiving and remembering his experience. His conception and representation of his own processes of perception and memory are profoundly informed by photographic practice which is itself distinguished by a complex array of relations with time. The photographic process requires extended periods of time for the preparation, development and printing of the photographic image. A photographic image is a visual spatialisation of a usually, though not always, brief fragment of time, the prolonged perusal of which sets up internal temporal relationships between elements of the image for the viewer.\(^11\) The negative impression captured on the sensitive film in the camera is a latent image, invisible and vulnerable to contamination or destruction by light. It remains so until the film is

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9 Note Julia Kristeva’s use of the word ‘Surimpressions’ as the title of a section of her work *Le Temps sensible: Proust et l’expérience littéraire*. In *L’Espace proustien*, Georges Poulet explores the juxtaposition of moments of time and space in Proust’s novel. Both of these critical works will inform this chapter of my thesis. The spatio-temporal relations they explore will be studied within the context of Proust’s stylistic appropriation of photography.

10 Bal sees photographic effects of language in Proust’s novel as serving to ‘unify the work under the auspices of “flatness”’ (Bal, 1996: 201). My thesis is based on a broader understanding of the distinctive features of photography and of Proust’s appropriations of them. Flatness is only one of several stylistic features of Proust’s writing which derive from the lexicon of photography.

11 Wegner affirms that ‘what enters a photograph by burning itself into the photographic plate is time itself *qua* time of exposure’ (Wegner, 2003: 80). Flusser notes that ‘while wandering over the surface of the image, one’s gaze takes in one element after another and produces temporal relationships between them’ (Flusser, 2000: 8).
chemically treated in the darkroom. At this point the negative image emerges from obscurity and must be fixed at a point determined by the photographer.\textsuperscript{12} The photographer retains total control over the image development process through his manipulation of the negative image. The fixing and development of a photographic negative is therefore a profoundly subjective, creative process which necessitates solitude and prolonged temporal investment from the dedicated practitioner. In \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu}, Marcel repeatedly expresses the conviction that literary art requires conditions of production which mirror those of photographic images. The conditions shared by photography and literary creativity, according to Marcel, include solitude, retreat from society to a darkened room and the devotion of extended periods of time to the creation of a photographic image or a literary work. The photographer’s darkroom and the darkened bedroom are recurrent motifs in \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} within the context of Marcel’s wavering resolve to undertake a creative literary endeavour. Notably, these conditions are deemed necessary by Marcel for the smooth working of both his voluntary and involuntary memory processes.

Photographic impressions are caught on film by the photographer in response to a desire to record particular incidents or moments. While in the photographic camera these impressions are preserved in a state of temporal suspension or latency.\textsuperscript{13} Each is the repository of a potential work of creative art. However, withdrawal to and hard work in the darkroom are essential elements in the process of creation of these possible works of art. The act of taking the photograph is only one of a fixed series of actions which must be completed if the accumulated promise of the latent impressions is to be realised. Marcel mistakenly understands his perceptual experience, particularly visual, to be inherently sufficient for the appreciation of essential qualities of beauty, truth and value in the world around him. Hence his extraordinary awareness of the physical appearance

\textsuperscript{12} Hanney notes the need to arrest the development of the negative image at the optimum point, beyond which it would be lost through over-development. She sees a parallel between this process and those of sleep and forgetfulness in Proust’s novel (Hanney, 1990: 73).

\textsuperscript{13} An understanding of temporal latency as a feature of the photographic system is central to my exploration of Proust’s stylistic appropriation of photography in this section of my thesis. Wegner acknowledges the fact of temporal latency in relation to Marcel’s experience of involuntary memory (Wegner, 2003: 80). I will argue that temporal latency characterises Marcel’s processes of perception and of voluntary and involuntary memory.
of people and places to which he attributes some particular significance. The use of photography for the stylistic representation of the prolific gathering of visual impressions which characterises Marcel's perceptual contact with the world shows Proust's establishment of an analogy between the photographic camera and the human eye. The impressions gleaned by the young Marcel in pursuit of the essences of beauty and truth remain suspended in the storehouse of his memory until such time as he comes to appreciate their subjective value, to assume his identity as creative artist and to resolve to resurrect them. Involuntary memory acts as a catalyst for Marcel's resolution to withdraw from society to a state of solitude and silence where voluntary memory will furnish the material for his literary work of art. Thus voluntary memory, which was denigrated throughout his life and which is repeatedly stylistically represented through the photographic image, will ultimately prove essential to the creation of Marcel's novel.

Uses of the Lexicon of Photography in the Stylistic Representation of Marcel's Process of Perception

Throughout his life, when attempting visually to apprehend things which are of value to him, Marcel's perceptual process is described through language drawn from the lexicon of photography: Shattuck affirms that 'Proust drew on an incredibly rich repertory of metaphors. But it is principally through the science and the art of optics that he beholds and depicts the world' (Shattuck, 2000: 100). This stylistic feature of Proust's writing is particularly prevalent in situations where Marcel's emotional state is unsettled, usually by feelings of love or desire. The elliptical connection between perception and memory which characterises Marcel's way of experiencing the world shows the complexity of his relationship with time. An essential feature of his perception and memory processes is his wish, when in the presence of a desired object of perception, to suspend or arrest the passage of time, in order to enable him to savour the resulting memory image for

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14 Photography is a product of the conjunction of optical science and artistic tools. The lexicon of photography grew out of the lexicons of printing, painting and chemistry, with which it shares such terms as 'impression', 'cliché', 'tirer', 'épreuve', 'en)cadre'. As stated above in note 4, a comprehensive study of the lexicon of photography would be helpful in ascertaining the precise points in the nineteenth century when these and other terms became part of the lexicon of the new system of image production that was photography.
extended periods of time in the future. A fundamental conflict is thereby established between Marcel’s perceptual aims and the time-bound nature of human existence: in seeking to capture the essence of a particular person through his vision, he desires the impossible. However, in order to function satisfactorily, his voluntary memory process requires the passage of time which is so anathema to him during the process of perception. The elaborate nature of the relationship between time and the photographic system of image production means that photography is a fitting source of metaphor for the representation of Marcel’s problematic way of visually engaging with and remembering the world. Wegner notes the ‘peculiar temporality — the time of production and development — of photography’ (Wegner, 2003: 80).

Marcel’s anxious gaze at Gilberte in *Du côté de chez Swann* and at La Berma in *À l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* is metaphorically equated with the functioning of the photographic camera. The problematic nature of Marcel’s subjective visual perception is thereby underlined. Other instances of more explicit uses of photography as simile, metonym or metaphor for perception include Marcel’s reflections on his perception of beloved women (Proust: II, 61, 435, 456); of the liftboy at the Grand Hotel at Balbec (Proust: II, 233); of domestic servants (Proust: III, 58); of his contemporary Bloch (Proust: III, 183); of the self in society (Proust: III, 262); of kissing Albertine (Proust: III, 353); of the process of remembering friends (Proust: IV, 193, 409); of society friends over the years, particularly in relation to the Verdurins (Proust: V, 314) and of his grandmother (Proust: III, 132). An exploration in this chapter of some of these episodes will confirm the importance of photography as a source of stylistic motifs and will consider the significance of Proust’s appropriation of this system of image production within the context of Marcel’s conception and realisation of his literary vocation.

15 Shattuck affirms that ‘the science of optics forever shows the errors of our vision, the distortions from accuracy, deviations from the straight line, reductions on point of view and perspective. Error establishes itself as one persistent principle of Proust’s universe [...]’ (Shattuck, 2000: 107).

16 Going to meet Gilberte, the later narrator observes: ‘Mais quand j’arrivais aux Champs-Élysées [...] dès que j’étais en présence de cette Gilberte Swann sur la vue de laquelle j’avais compté pour rafraîchir les images que ma mémoire fatiguée ne retrouvait plus [...] aussitôt tout se passait comme si elle et la fillette qui était l’objet de mes rêves avaient été deux êtres différents’ (Proust: I, 394). A disparity between his laboured mental image of Gilberte and the living reality is immediately pointed up.

17 The passage recounting Marcel’s experience of kissing Albertine will be explored in the next chapter of this thesis, which deals with narratorial point-of-view.
Photography is in effect interwoven into the narratives of both the young Marcel who struggles with his perceptual frustration and creative sterility and also of the later narrator who retrospectively appreciates the creative potential of the accumulated impressions of his earlier life.\textsuperscript{18} The use made of photography for the representation of the processes of consciously-controlled perception and voluntary memory will be studied first.

**Love-Based Blindness: Marcel's Lively Girls**

The desire for visual possession features strongly in Marcel’s dealings with the girls he falls in love with. This desire is repeatedly frustrated. Metaphoric appropriations of photography for the expression of Marcel’s desire for possession and domination of his desired object echo the explicit use made of photography by Saint-Loup for the same purpose with regard to his difficult mistress, Rachel (see chapter one of my thesis). Marcel’s eyes are described here as functioning in ways which closely parallel Saint-Loup’s photographic camera. In an episode from *Du côté de chez Swann* concerning Gilberte, physical motion and meaningless words prevent Marcel from successfully fixing the girl’s image — ‘l’image urgente et égarée’ (Proust: I, 394) — in his mind:

\begin{quote}
Tandis que je m’apprêtais à profiter de cet instant désiré pour me livrer, sur l’image de Gilberte que j’avais préparée avant de venir et que je ne retrouvais plus dans ma tête, à la mise au point qui me permettrait dans les longues heures où j’étais seul d’être sûr que c’était bien elle que je me rappelais, que c’était bien mon amour pour elle que j’accroissais peu à peu comme un ouvrage qu’on compose, elle me passait une balle [...]. (Proust: I, 394 — my italics)
\end{quote}

Marcel’s perceptual problem stems from the paradoxical nature of the situation in which he has placed himself: he feels the need to meet Gilberte so as to take away an image to be treasured in his memory while they are apart; yet he cannot truly see her when they are together because of all the extraneous distractions which interrupt his visual perusal of

\textsuperscript{18} Shattuck supports the notion that Marcel’s early life consists primarily in the gathering of experience. He states that ‘at the start, the most vivid segment of Marcel’s world is made up of impressions. These isolated perceptions of the natural world discover an indefinable yet almost palpable aura of significance in the ordinary objects and places that provoke them’ (Shattuck, 2000: 108).
her face and form. The complexity of the youthful Marcel’s relationship with time is evident in this passage from the novel. Not only is he already anticipating future events and savouring images of the past, he is looking forward to retrospective contemplation of events which have not yet taken place. In so doing he fails fully to grasp and appreciate the present moment in itself.

Two different elements of photographic practice are evoked in the passage quoted above. Marcel’s chaotic meetings with the living Gilberte contrast with the silence and stillness he requires so as to contemplate her image. His imperfect solution to this problem is to prepare to focus his eyes — ‘la mise au point’ — like a camera lens, so that they might accurately record an instant — ‘cet instant désiré’ — of Gilberte as he vaguely remembers her from yesterday, for future silent, solitary contemplation. The tendency Marcel shows here towards self-conscious perception, characterised by temporal projection and retrospection, is underlined by this reference to the photographic system of image production. In fact, Marcel is constantly trying to catch up with his earlier impressions of Gilberte. Each time they meet he has prepared himself to attempt to reinvigorate the faded image he took away the previous afternoon. An inevitable disparity exists between the girl he expects to find and her actual appearance, due to the temporal latency which characterises Marcel’s perception process. He attempts to calm his nervous anticipation of Gilberte’s presence by bringing his sight under deliberate control, as a photographer works the camera lens. Just as photographic practice requires advance preparation before the taking of a photograph and subsequent withdrawal to the darkroom.

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19 The later narrator affirms that ‘toule le temps que j’étais loin de Gilberte, j’avais besoin de la voir, parce que cherchant sans cesse à me représenter son image, je finissais par ne plus y réussir, et par ne plus savoir exactement à quoi correspondait mon amour’ (Proust: I, 392). His love is thus linked solely to Gilberte’s physical appearances and visual perception is the means he believes to be appropriate to his successful apprehension of her. However, Gilberte will not oblige him by keeping still. His repeatedly frustrated attempts to fix her image will contribute to Marcel’s ultimate understanding of the impossibility of arresting the flow of time. This realisation will have an important influence on the development of his determination to become a writer. The use of the lexicon of photography — ‘la mise au point’ — suggests the self-consciously mechanical nature of Marcel’s attempts to capture Gilberte’s image.

20 Marcel describes his wish to scrutinise Gilberte’s image ‘dans les longues heures où j’étais seul’ (Proust: I, 394) and bemoans the meaningless speech which accompanies their meetings and which ‘m’empêchait ainsi […] de garder le silence pendant lequel j’aurais pu enfin remettre la main sur l’image urgente et égarée […]’ (Proust: I, 394). His frustrated desire for stillness and silence on the part of both Gilberte and himself implies his need to control Gilberte in ways which parallel those of a conscientious portrait photographer as he manipulates his object, fixing its position for the camera.
for the development of the negative and the positive images, so Marcel aims consciously to command his visual perception of Gilberte, the better to capture a true and lasting impression of her.\(^{21}\)

The reference to Marcel’s ‘mémoire fatiguée’ (Proust: I, 392) in the pages preceding this passage from *Du côté de chez Swann* relating to Gilberte, is of interest not only because of the connection immediately established between perceptual contact with an object in the present and its contemplation in the future as an element of one’s past, but also because of the important distinction made in *À la recherche du temps perdu* between two types of memory: voluntary and involuntary. The memory process to which Marcel here refers is that of voluntary memory, which stands in contrast to the experiences of involuntary memory which occupy a central position in the conception and realisation of Marcel’s literary vocation. The most important difference between voluntary and involuntary memory is the multi-sensory nature of the latter, which overwhelms Marcel and connects his present experience with forgotten moments of the past.\(^{22}\) Voluntary memory relies solely on mental exertion for the successful remembering of the past. It is repeatedly denigrated throughout *À la recherche du temps perdu* as a worthless attempt to grasp the truth of past experiences.\(^{23}\) A clear parallel is established in Proust’s novel between voluntary memory and the photographic *image*. Graham finds six unambiguous references to photographs as a metaphor for the process of voluntary memory (Graham,

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\(^{21}\) Marcel’s behaviour here — his careful preparation for Gilberte’s fleeting presence and his subsequent meditation on her — is compatible with that of the photographer for whom, as Dubois asserts, ‘en amont et en aval [du] moment de l’inscription “naturelle” du monde sur la surface sensible, […] de part et d’autre il y a des gestes et des processus, tout à fait “culturels”, dépendant entièrement de choix et de décisions humaines, individuelles autant que sociales’ (Dubois, 1990: 83).

\(^{22}\) In the next section of this chapter the phenomenon of involuntary memory as a spur to Marcel’s literary creativity will be studied. My thesis will argue that voluntary memory is ultimately rehabilitated due to the central role it plays in the provision of impressions which the later narrator incorporates into his literary work.

\(^{23}\) The first explicit disparagement of voluntary memory appears in *Du côté de chez Swann* when the later narrator notes that ‘à vrai dire, j’aurais pu répondre à qui m’eût interrogé que Combray comprenait encore autre chose et existait à d’autres heures. Mais comme ce que je m’en serais rappelé m’eût été fourni seulement par la mémoire volontaire, la mémoire de l’intelligence, et comme les renseignements qu’elle donne sur le passé ne conservent rien de lui, je n’aurais jamais eu envie de songer à ce reste de Combray. Tout cela était en réalité mort pour moi’ (Proust: I, 43).
However, metaphor evocations of aspects of photographic practice occur frequently in the text where both voluntary and involuntary memory are concerned. Thus a distinction is made between the product of photographic practice, namely the photographic image, and the process of its creation. The former is consistently evoked in the metaphor representation of unfavourable aspects of voluntary memory alone, while the latter is referred to in relation to the processes of both voluntary and involuntary memory, thereby unifying two disparate ways of remembering. The use of photography in the metaphor representation of involuntary memory will be discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter.

With regard to Gilberte, Marcel's tired memory needs to be refreshed through renewed visual contact with her: the gathering of fresh 'impressions' of her both revives his jaded memory and reaffirms her role as love object. Marcel speaks of his love for Gilberte as a consciously constructed thing – 'mon amour pour elle que j'accroissais peu à peu comme un ouvrage qu'on compose' (Proust: I, 394). His belief in love as resulting from the deliberate mental exertion of the lover explains his sense of unease at the responsibility he must assume for the accurate perception of the unique girl he loves. The word 'ouvrage' suggests a literary work. This phrase can be read as an introjection from the later narrator who has assumed his literary vocation and retrospectively equates his romantic experience with his intellectual struggle to create such a book. In a process which echoes that of photographic image superimposition, Marcel prepares to superimpose each new image of Gilberte on the old, indistinct one in his memory. However, the disparity between the new impression and the old one is too great to allow this process to take place successfully. Instead, the new image is juxtaposed with the old one as the differences between them are thrown into relief. The result for Marcel is a

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24 The parallel between photography and voluntary memory is most evident in the context of Marcel's relationship with Albertine. Marcel's frustrated efforts to possess Albertine lead to reflections on the fallibility of this type of memory as a source of truth.

25 Hanney affirms that 'superimposition [...] suggests visual confusion and constant change. [It] is a coincidence of forms at one point in space. It involves the partial or total obscurement of one form by another version of the same form. It is thus a stratification of sorts [...] ' (Hanney, 1990: 92).

26 Hanney notes the feature of image juxtaposition which coincides with superimposition in Proust's narrative technique. She observes that 'the layers need not continue in depth, but rather en surface to form a global image with all of its variations taking part at once' (Hanney, 1990: 92).
prolific multiplicity of Gilbertes, each so distinctly different from the last as to constitute an entirely new entity (cf. note 16). The privileging of vision in Marcel’s perception of Gilberte is emphasised in this passage where both movement and speech are described as impediments to, rather than aids in, Marcel’s perceptual experience.

His privileging of vision constitutes Marcel’s gravest youthful error in sensory perception, but also his greatest strength in later years when he assumes his identity as creative literary artist: a paradox which is underlined by the metaphoric evocation of photography in the representation of the young Marcel’s visual perception process, as in the passage studied above. His unsatisfactory visual impressions of Gilberte will, by the fact of their sheer multiplicity, contribute to the later narrator’s awareness of the nature of perception and of the essential role played within this process by time. They will also provide him with raw material for the meticulous description of the world as it was visually apprehended by his former self. Marcel’s frustration with his carefully gathered, discontinuous, disparate impressions of Gilberte stems from his youthful failure to appreciate the importance of the passage of time as an element of perception; the later narrator has grasped this fact and is a sympathetic observer of Marcel’s repeated failed attempts to dominate Gilberte through the appropriation of her image. The metaphoric evocation of photography in situations such as this therefore serves to show, on the one

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27 Georges Poulet describes reality as exploding into a multitude of aspects when Marcel moves towards Albertine so as to kiss her. He writes that ‘Albertine décuiplée, multipliée, c’est déjà Albertine disparue. L’image vraie se perd au milieu d’une foule de masques. Y a-t-il même une image vraie? Incapable de choisir entre tant d’incarnations, toutes à la fois si variées et si trompeuses, l’esprit se trouve assailli par une pluralité folle qu’il a lui-même déchaînée, et, — ironie particulière —, déchaînée à la suite d’une action qui, il l’espérait, allait le conduire, tout au contraire, à l’unité’ (Poulet, 1982: 110). The same problem, in reverse, afflicts Marcel in relation to Gilberte: here it is Marcel who remains still and Gilberte who moves, but the result is the same.

28 Poulet affirms that, for Marcel, ‘l’expérience du mouvement aboutit donc à une manière de défaite’ (Poulet, 1982: 110). In passing a ball to him, Gilberte forces Marcel into physical movement and thereby denies him the stillness he requires in order to look closely at her. Casual chat prevents him from conveying his love. Social conventions hinder Marcel’s perception throughout his life: hence the recurrent voyeurism in À la recherche du temps perdu, which situations enable him to observe without interacting with his perceptual objects. Some of the voyeurism scenes in Proust’s novel will be explored later in this thesis.

29 Wegner notes that ‘Marcel’s recording of time produces multiple images in a discontinuous and serialised form. This occurs to such an extent that the frequency and number of images regarding a subject are secondary in interest to the — as we insist: chronophotographic — process in use’ (Wegner, 2003: 188). Image multiplication is a significant feature of the photographic system of image production. While Wegner argues for the prevalence of a chronophotographic paradigm, my thesis will focus on photography as applied to the stylistic representation of the juxtaposition and superimposition of images in Proust’s novel.
hand, Marcel's exasperated awareness of the worthlessness of his gathered impressions, and on the other hand, the later narrator's appreciation of those same impressions as detailed visual records of the past which can be incorporated into his creative literary work.

Photographic images, like Marcel's impressions of Gilberte, are of fundamentally unstable semiotic status: both have the potential to be seen and used in very different ways. To Marcel, his discontinuous, diverse impressions of the girl he loves are nothing but a strain on his tired voluntary memory as he attempts to attain the essential, extra-temporal Gilberte. Given the consistently negative parallel drawn by him between voluntary memory and the photographic image, the denigration of his impressions of Gilberte is reinforced by the evocation of photography with regard to his way of perceiving her. Conversely, the later narrator is aware of the usefulness of Marcel's impressions as tools for the creation of his literary work. Marcel's distaste for photography is effectively neutralised by the later narrator's decision to incorporate Marcel's erroneous, vision-heavy sensory impressions into the work of literature which can ultimately be understood to be *À la recherche du temps perdu* itself.

Love blurs Marcel's vision with regard to both Gilberte and Albertine. The emotional upheaval and sensory overload which result from Marcel's romantic fascination with these two girls are acknowledged as contributing to the problems inherent in his perception of them. These problems are represented in explicitly photographic terms. In relation to Gilberte, Marcel notes that:

> La manière chercheuse, anxieuse, exigeante que nous avons de regarder la personne que nous aimons [...] rend notre attention en face de l'être aimé trop tremblante pour qu'elle puisse obtenir de lui une image bien nette. Peut-être aussi cette activité de tous les sens à la fois et qui essaye de connaître avec les regards seuls ce qui est au-delà d'eux, est-elle trop indulgente aux mille formes, à toutes les saveurs, aux mouvements de la personne vivante que d'habitude, quand nous n'aimons pas, nous immobilisons. Le modèle cheri, au contraire, bouge; on n'en a jamais que des photographies manquées. (Proust: II, 60-61 — my italics)

30 The pragmatic flexibility of the photographic sign is regarded by Schaeffer as its most distinctive characteristic. My thesis is deeply informed by Schaeffer's conclusions. See chapter one of my thesis, where Schaeffer's ideas regarding the semiotic status of the photographic sign are discussed in detail in relation to Swann and Saint-Loup's engagements with photography.
The lack of clarity in his impressions of Gilberte which Marcel laments here is attributed both to the tremulous nature of his attention in her presence — an image which suggests the shaking hand of an inexperienced or nervous photographer — and to the moving object of perception. The result is of course blurred photographs: 'des photographies manquées'. In this passage Proust introduces the domain of photography obliquely through the words 'une image bien nette' and 'nous immobilisons,' before referring to it explicitly, thereby strengthening the metaphoric connection between consciously controlled visual perception and the photographic camera as manipulated by the photographer. The implication is that the body as neutral impression-recording machine (in particular the eyes) is susceptible to interference from unruly emotions which impede the registering of accurate impressions of the beloved. Thus a relation of duality is established between the body and the emotions, where the potentially perfect perceptual capacities of the former are compromised by the influence of the latter. This notion is reinforced by Marcel's observation that, when untroubled by strong emotion, he usually has no difficulty in immobilising the object of his gaze. The fallibility of the body/photographic camera symbiosis which is called up by the suggestion of the act of taking blurred photographs extends to the uneasy alliance of body and emotions in Marcel himself. The desire visually to immobilise the object of his affections shows Marcel's extreme need to retain physical and emotional control over both himself and his beloved. The passage of time defeats him because it contains and enables Gilberte's incessant movements and modifications of aspect, thereby frustrating his attempts to extract from her appearance an essential, absolute impression. The blurred photographs evoked imply that Marcel's perception of Gilberte is simply too slow: he is constantly playing catch-up and the present moment eludes him. His eyes function like a photographic camera which has been set at an inappropriately low speed, registering

31 Marcel’s distrust of his capacity for accurate visual perception is inscribed within a scientific tradition of body/mind disjunction which goes back to Descartes’ work in the seventeenth century using the camera obscura. In Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century, Jonathan Crary notes that 'if at the core of Descartes’ method was the need to escape the uncertainties of mere human vision and the confusion of the senses, the camera obscura is congruent with his quest to found human knowledge on a purely objective view of the world' (Crary, 1990: 48). The camera obscura is a precursor of the photographic camera and shares certain features with photography, most notably in the domain of image development.
Gilberte as she moves through time and space rather than recording immobile fragments of time and space in which she might appear caught or suspended.

The evocation of photography within the context of Marcel’s perception of the women he loves becomes more marked when he recounts his introduction to Albertine at Balbec. Reflecting on his emotion when finally certain that his long-awaited introduction to Albertine, who is to be the great love of his life, is about to take place at Balbec, Marcel observes that:

Pour le plaisir je ne le connus naturellement qu’« « peu plus tard, quand, rentré à l’hôtel, resté seul, je fus redevenu moi-même. Il en est des plaisirs comme des photographies. Ce qu’on prend en présence de l’être aimé, n’est qu’un cliché négatif, on le développe plus tard, une fois chez soi, quand on a retrouvé à sa disposition cette chambre noire intérieure dont l’entrée est ‘condamnée’ tant qu’on voit du monde. (Proust: II, 435 — my italics)

The gravity of being introduced to Albertine causes Marcel deliberately to postpone the experience, while the pleasure he gains from the exchange can be felt only later, in isolation. The temporal latency which characterised Marcel’s perception of Gilberte is here evident again: in order to enjoy the effects of the long-desired initiation of a relationship with Albertine, Marcel must be alone and true only to himself ‘redevenu moi-même’. Until such time as he is alone, the pleasure of meeting Albertine remains latent, captured as a negative print — ‘cliché négatif’ — which Marcel can develop only within the darkroom of the solitary self. There is great insistence in this passage on the need for solitude and independence for the successful savouring of felt pleasure. Here, perception and memory are explicitly represented through metaphors of photographic practice, from the framing and recording of the impression, which is then held in suspension, to its development within the darkroom of the self. Pleasure — itself a

32 The later narrator is aware of the temporal disjuncture which characterises Marcel’s visual perception process. Regarding Albertine’s changed physical appearance on their second meeting, the later narrator notes that ‘mais ce n’était qu’une seconde vue et il y en avait d’autres sans doute par lesquelles je devrais successivement passer. Ainsi ce n’est qu’après avoir reconnu non sans tâtonnements les erreurs d’optique du début qu’on pourrait arriver à la connaissance exacte d’un être si cette connaissance était possible. Mais elle ne l’est pas; car tandis que se rectifie la vision que nous avons de lui, lui-même qui n’est pas un objectif inerte change pour son compte, nous pensons le rattraper, il se déplace, et, croyant le voir enfin plus clairement, ce n’est que les images anciennes que nous en avions prises que nous avons réussi à éclaircir, mais qui ne le représentent plus’ (Proust: II, 437). The belated mental development of impressions, while faithful to the previous existence of the love object, do not represent her present reality.
feeling suggesting both emotional and sensory gratification — is represented here in explicitly visual, photographic terms.

The particular quality of temporal latency or suspension which characterises Marcel’s experience of pleasure in the passage quoted above mirrors a distinctive feature of Proust’s style of description, which is his habit of firstly depicting the effects of a particular, often pleasurable, experience before identifying its causes. Inherent in Proust’s style therefore is a quality of temporal latency which defers the gratification of the curious reader, who is repeatedly obliged to read on (and on) in order to discover the source or cause of the recounted experience.

**Trying to Fix the Fleeting La Berma**

A second example of the use of the lexicon of photography in the representation of Marcel’s visual perception occurs early in *À l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* when Marcel goes to the theatre to see La Berma. Approaching this much-longed-for event with trepidation (Proust: II, 17), Marcel seeks but fails to take away with him an ‘impression fragile et précieuse’ (Proust: II, 19) of the famous actress. While his agitation in Gilberte’s presence derives from his love for her, La Berma’s fame as a dramatic artist excites Marcel’s admiration. La Berma’s performance contains an aesthetic lesson for Marcel: because it is essential to dramatic performance, time demands the respect of the audience. The later narrator notes the cause of Marcel’s frustration:

> J’aurais voulu — pour pouvoir l’approfondir, pour tâcher d’y découvrir ce qu’elle avait de beau — arrêter, immobiliser longtemps devant moi chaque intonation de l’artiste, chaque expression de sa physionomie; du moins, je tâchais, à force d’agilité mentale, en ayant avant un vers mon attention tout installée et mise au point, de ne pas distraire en préparatifs une parcelle de la durée de chaque mot, de chaque geste, et, grâce à l’intensité de mon attention, d’arriver à descendre en eux aussi profondément que j’aurais fait si j’avais eu de longues heures à moi. Mais que cette durée était brève! (Proust: II, 20-21 — my italics)

Though Marcel does not appreciate this fact at the time, this episode contributes to the development of Marcel’s belated understanding of the significance of time in life and therefore in the arts.
As in the passage concerning Gilberte, Marcel’s anxiety stems from his lack of temporal control over his perception of La Berma. While watching her on stage, he is unable simultaneously to capture and enjoy the experience. His wish to immobilise individual moments of her performance is a desire for a kind of serialised photographic vision, where each gesture, facial expression and nuance of voice is individually preserved and detached from the flow of time and from multi-sensory stimulation. Marcel’s wish to immobilise important moments of his perceptual contact with the world indicates the fundamental importance of time as both impediment to and facilitator of Marcel’s perception and memory processes. In effect, he wants to isolate moments of the actress’s fleeting appearance on stage so that he may have the opportunity to study them profoundly once freed from the temporal constraints of the actual performance. The present moment of perceptual contact with the desired object moves too quickly to allow Marcel to engage fully with it. It is only après coup that he can hope thoroughly to explore La Berma’s words and gestures and thereby appreciate the true value of her performance.

A dichotomy of surface and depth is established in this passage, where time to himself—‘de longues heures à moi’—is confidently felt by Marcel to be the solution to a successful deciphering of the beauty of La Berma’s theatrical performance and of her creative genius. Thus time, while a tyrant for Marcel when in the presence of a desired object, would enable him to plumb the depths of meaning hidden in each moment of her performance if he were alone. When subject to the passage of time, however, he can

34 In a chapter of his thesis entitled ‘Serialisation,’ Wegner reviews Proust’s notion of time. He ultimately insists that chronophotography is the source of the representation of Marcel’s recording of time (Wegner, 2003: 188). Note the essentially mental nature of Marcel’s attempts to regulate his perception of La Berma. His dependence on and over-confidence in his mental faculties, at the expense of the evidence of his senses, contributes to his failure to immediately appreciate her performance. A problematic mind/body duality is evident in this passage. My thesis will explore the extent to which metaphoric evocations of photography contribute to the representation of the mind/body duality which is central to the development of Marcel’s unique vision and to his engagement with his creative vocation.

35 Bal and Wegner both explore the surface/depth dichotomy which is a feature of the Proustian narrative. Bal affirms that “the photographic mechanism […] insinuates itself into the problematised perspective in which visual depth leads to “flatness,” which is both less satisfactory and less revealing than the vision of the surface” (Bal, 1996: 201). Barthes takes flatness to be the essence of the photographic image (Barthes, 1980: 164).

36 The belief expressed here by Marcel underlines the predominantly visual nature of his perception. With regard to looking at visual images, Flusser notes that “while wandering over the surface of the image, one’s
only scan the surface of La Berma’s performance.\textsuperscript{37} He struggles to explore in detail his impressions of her but is defeated by the swiftness of her movements and speech — hence the later narrator’s lamentation ‘que cette durée était brève!’ The notion of penetration of the surface or external appearance of things in pursuit of a hidden essential truth recurs throughout \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} and is represented through the metaphor of radiography, itself an application of photography which is explored in greater detail in the fourth chapter of my thesis.\textsuperscript{38}

Marcel’s unconscious desire to disconnect visual images from temporal duration, points up the fundamental quality of temporal latency or suspension which characterises his way of apprehending the world around him. His youthful ideal of perception requires every impression gleaned from visual interaction with the world to be stored in his mind as a distinct moment of time and space, utterly disconnected from every other moment and held in suspension until called forth by the process of voluntary memory.\textsuperscript{39}

gaze takes in one element after another and produces temporal relationships between them. It can return to an element of the image it has already seen, and “before” can become “after”: The time reconstructed by scanning is an eternal recurrence of the same process’ (Flusser, 2000: 8-9). The process described here closely parallels Proust’s representation of Marcel’s conception of his perception and memory processes.\textsuperscript{37} Wegner discusses scanning as a response to flatness in Proust’s novel (Wegner, 2003: 47-56). Flusser notes that ‘the significance of images is on the surface. One can take them in at a single glance yet this remains superficial. If one wishes to deepen the significance, i.e. to reconstruct the abstracted dimensions, one has to allow one’s gaze to wander over the surface feeling the way as one goes’ (Flusser, 2000: 8). A rapid skimming over the surface of La Berma is all that Marcel can manage within the temporal constraints of her performance.

Examples of the use of radiography as a metaphor for the discovery of hidden realities include Françoise’s response to Marcel’s mother’s sensitivity to Françoise’s true feelings for her son-in-law (Proust: I, 53); involuntary words which imply a previously-unsuspected reality (Proust: II, 157); the characteristics common to all the women a man loves (Proust: II, 456); the need for contextualisation of truth (Proust: III, 232 and VII, 221); the gap between self-image and the image which others have of us (Proust: III, 262); Marcel’s pursuit of general psychological laws (Proust: VII, 25).

Hanney concludes that ‘the latent-images structures of negative plates and inscriptions’ in \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} are a significant element contributing to the internal coherence in the novel (Hanney, 1990: 152). Poulet insists on the importance of the spatial frame of each character, affirming that ‘invariablement c’est dans un paysage minutieusement circonscrit par l’auteur, que se montre pour la première fois le personnage proustien. […] Ainsi, pour Proust, les êtres humains apparaissent, placés dans certains lieux qui leur servent de support et de cadre, et qui déterminent la perspective selon laquelle il est permis de les voir’ (Poulet, 1982: 35, 38).
Uses of Photography in the Stylistic Representation of the Process of Voluntary Memory

Memory is by definition involved with the exploration of the past. Voluntary memories in *À la recherche du temps perdu* are the result of mental as opposed to multi-sensory activity. Samuel Beckett underlines Marcel’s poor opinion of voluntary memory, describing it as:

> The uniform memory of intelligence; and it can be relied on to reproduce for our gratified inspection those impressions of the past that were consciously and intelligently formed. It has no interest in the mysterious element of inattention that colours our most commonplace experiences. It presents the past *in monochrome*. [...] Its action has been compared by Proust to that of turning the leaves of an album of photographs. (Beckett, 1931: 32 – my italics)\(^{40}\)

The voluntary memory process is an important source of information for the characters and events described in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, where the experience of involuntary memory is confined to eleven distinct passages.\(^{41}\) Proust uses metaphors and similes drawn from the lexicon of photography to emphasise the mechanical, emotionless nature of the mental process which governs the process of voluntary memory. Fundamental conditions required for the effective completion of Marcel’s voluntary memory process include his withdrawal from social interaction to calm, solitary surroundings, usually his bedroom or some other dark room. He observes that ‘ma manière habituelle de me souvenir [est] une *longue* soumission passive à un souvenir incomplet, tout en tâchant doucement, prudemment, de l’êtendre’ (Proust: V, 326 — my italics). The physical passivity called for by Marcel for the successful working-out of memories reinforces the essentially intellectual nature of the process undergone by the recollected impression. The darkened room which facilitates Marcel’s voluntary memory process evokes the darkroom to which the photographer must retreat so as to develop his prints; the long periods of time required by the voluntary memory process contrast with the spatio-temporally discontinuous nature of Marcel’s visual perception process. Taken

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\(^{40}\) The comparison between voluntary memory and turning the pages of a photograph album, which Beckett refers to, is made in *Le Temps retrouvé* (Proust: VII, 180).

\(^{41}\) See Appendix II in Shattuck’s work for his ‘Table of the *Moments bienheureux*’ (Shattuck, 2000: 257-264).
together with the consistent evocation of the darkened room, the lengthy process of teasing out voluntary memories suggests the process of photographic image development. The use of the verb ‘étendre’ suggests the aggrandisement or blowing-up of the incomplete memory image.

The results of both processes are also metaphorically linked. Marcel explicitly equates photographs with voluntary memories. He notes that ‘notre mémoire ressemble à ces magasins qui, à leur devantures, exposent d’une certaine personne, une fois une photographie, une fois une autre. Et d’habitude la plus récente reste quelque temps seule en vue’ (Proust: II, 452). Voluntary memory juxtaposes older and more recent images of a particular person. There is a distinct lack of hierarchy in the temporal chronology of the images of a person presented by the voluntary memory once the most recently-recorded impression of them has ceased to dominate. Beckett affirms that ‘the images it chooses are as arbitrary as those chosen by imagination, and are equally remote from reality’ (Beckett, 1931: 32). With regard to Albertine, Marcel is struck by the number and diversity of his memories and also in particular by their haphazard arrangement in his mind:

Et puis comme la mémoire commence tout de suite à prendre des clichés indépendants les uns des autres, supprime tout lien, tout progrès, entre les scènes qui y sont figurées, dans la collection de ceux qu’elle expose, le dernier ne détruit pas forcément les précédents. (Proust: II, 438)

Marcel’s memories of Albertine, referred to as ‘clichés’ or snapshots, are evoked here as a jumble of unconnected images of specific fragments of time and space which co-exist in his memory and which lack any hierarchical system of temporal chronology; however, the notion of ‘progrès, entre les scènes’ does introduce a theatrical metaphor and a sense of narrative progression. The chaotic multiplicity of juxtaposed images suggested in this passage is a fundamental characteristic of the young Marcel’s essentially visual way of remembering. The use of the verb ‘exposer’ to describe the way in which the memory

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42 The prevalence of the juxtaposition of images relating to Marcel’s perception and memory processes undermines the claim made by Wegner that what he terms ‘serialisation’ — that is, a fundamentally chronophotographic basis to Proust’s notion of time — lies at the core of Proust’s engagement with photography for the representation of those same processes. It is interesting to note how images
displays its images plays on the contrasting ideas of exhibiting a work of art or subjecting photographic film to light when operating a photographic camera.

The voluntary memory process, clearly characterised by a structure of temporal latency which is metaphorically represented through photography, is described by Marcel as essential to the act of falling in love:

Certes les charmes d'une personne sont une cause moins frequente d'amour qu'une phrase du genre de celle-ci: 'Non, ce soir je ne serai pas libre.' On ne fait guere attention a cette phrase si on est avec des amis; on est gai toute la soirnee, on ne s'occupe pas d'une certaine image; pendant ce temps-là elle baigne dans le mélangé nécessaire; en rentrant on trouve le cliché, qui est déveoppé et parfaitement net. (Proust: IV, 193)

Once again, a retreat from social life to a private space is deemed necessary before the recorded impression can be perused by the memory. Between hearing the telling phrase and grasping its full implications is an extended period of time during which the image of the previously unsuspected life of the speaker is suspended in the requisite chemical mixture within the darkroom of Marcel's voluntary memory. The image develops into a perfectly clear snapshot on his return to solitude. The parallel drawn between the voluntary memory process and image development in the photographic darkroom with its chemical paraphernalia is reinforced in La Prisonniere when Marcel remarks that ‘nous trouvons de tout dans notre mémoire: elle est une espèce de pharmacie, de laboratoire de chimie, où on met au hasard la main tantôt sur une drogue calmante, tantôt sur un poison dangereux’ (Proust: V, 376). In regarding voluntary memory as a kind of chemical laboratory or pharmacy where random memory images are developed through a process strongly reminiscent of photography (the importance of the chemical elements of the photographic process and the dangers they posed to the health of the photographer were noted repeatedly by early commentators on and historians of photography), Marcel underlines his conception of both voluntary memory and photographic practice as scientific, mechanical processes. The sterility of the products of both voluntary memory and photographic practice in terms of creative potential is thereby implied. The extract

predominate in Marcel's experience of voluntary memory, regardless of which physical sense was involved in recording the given impression. Music, speech and physical appearance are all recollected by Marcel in exclusively visual and indeed specifically photographic terms.
quoted above sees voluntary memory as resulting in nothing more valuable than the simultaneous emergence of arbitrary, artificial substitutes for human emotion (drugs, poisons), which succeed only in paralysing Marcel. Far from being a spur to creative activity, voluntary memory inhibits his engagement with any activity whatsoever. The same is true of all the episodes discussed above in which the process and products of voluntary memory are figuratively represented through aspects of the photographic system of image production. Within this context, Proust consistently evokes the indiscriminate nature of voluntary memory. The huge quantities of discrete images it produces are essentially meaningless for Marcel because of the lack of any emotional connection between himself and his memory images. The next section of this chapter will show how Proust’s use of photography for the stylistic representation of involuntary memory establishes a link between the two contrasting ways of remembering experience. In the end the connection set up between voluntary and involuntary memory through the stylistic appropriation of photography serves to raise the status of voluntary memory to the point where it equals involuntary memory as both catalyst and tool for the realisation of Marcel’s literary vocation.
Photography as Metaphor for the Representation of Involuntary Memory

In the final volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Marcel’s conception and realisation of his creative literary vocation is shaped by his experience of a series of involuntary memories at the Guermantes matinée (Proust: VII, 161-233). Distinctive characteristics of the photographic system of image production are evoked in the metaphoric representation of the decisive experience of involuntary memory, and the representation through metaphor, metonym and simile of the dual narrator’s conception of the creative challenge which lies ahead and of the value of the resulting literary work is informed by photographic motifs drawn for the most part from the lexicon of photographic practice. This section of my thesis will explore each of these stages in Marcel’s journey towards active engagement with his creative vocation.

Intermittently throughout *À la recherche du temps perdu*, involuntary memory overwhelmed Marcel by connecting his sensory experience in the present with a forgotten moment of the past.¹ It superimposes the past on the present.² There is a uniform pattern underlying Marcel’s experiences of involuntary memory.³ Marcel is alone or wishes to be

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¹ Beckett writes that ‘involuntary memory is explosive [...] It restores, not merely the past object, but the Lazarus that it charmed or tortured’ (Beckett, 1931: 33). In *The Magic Lantern of Marcel Proust*, Howard Moss counts eighteen episodes of involuntary memory in Proust’s novel (Moss, 1963: 111-113). He observes that ‘involuntary memory induces perception and is not a repetition but a revelation. [...] Involuntary memories are forms of ecstasy, “mnemonic resurrections” that do not contain earlier experiences so much as new truths’ (Moss, 1963: 108; 111). As Moss suggests, it is the subtle differences between past and present experience which constitute the creative interstitial space where Marcel may ascertain significant truths pertaining to the experience of time.

² The superimposition of photographic images was a feature of scientific research on evolution, heredity and family characteristics. It began in the 1870s when Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, made the first composite photographs of convicted criminals in an attempt to show the features common to different types of criminal. Photographic image superimposition implies the stratification of multiple photographic impressions and suggests a distinctive surface/depth duality relating to both space and time. Involuntary memory involves the resurrection of forgotten spatio-temporal fragments of Marcel’s experience from the depths of his memory to the surface of his consciousness. A surface/depth duality repeatedly characterises the representation of involuntary memory and the creative process in *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

³ Shattuck’s ‘Table of the Moments Bienheureux’ traces the schematic nature of Marcel’s experiences of involuntary memory. Shattuck observes that although the tea-and-madeleine episode essentially sets the novel in motion, subsequently such episodes in Marcel’s life are rare and incomplete, before the intense involuntary memory series at the Guermantes matinée. He notes that ‘through two thousand pages [...] involuntary memory has virtually deserted him. Furthermore, these moments occur completely by chance, cannot therefore be chosen or willed, and leave Marcel the mere passive beneficiary of so significant a
so, when unexpectedly a physical sensation, accompanied by an intense feeling of happiness, creates a connection between the present moment and an analogous moment in his forgotten past. The desire for solitude so as to work out the significance of involuntary memory prefigures Marcel's later realisation of the need to withdraw from social life in order to devote himself to its representation in a work of literary art. Solitary retirement to a darkened room evokes the photographic darkroom where latent impressions are fixed, developed and printed. Marcel's response to this experience varies. Several times there is no reaction from him and the experience peters out (Proust: II, 482-483; III, 385-386; III, 530-531; VII, 161). Twice, Marcel senses the existence of a deeper meaning in the present sensation but postpones the attempt to discover it (Proust: II, 63-65; II, 284-287). Three times, the later narrator responds to involuntary memories with a lengthy meditation on the nature of time, experience, life and reality (Proust: IV, 152-157; V, 237-253; VII, 173-223 and 336-353). On one occasion Marcel produces a short piece of literary writing which celebrates the moment and gives him an intense feeling of satisfaction (Proust: I, 178-180). The tea-and-madeleine episode (Proust: I, 43-47) is complete and convincing enough to project its sustaining power forward across the meanderings of the narrative until the renewal of forces at the close' (Shattuck, 2000: 259). Beckett affirms that:

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\text{The first — the famous episode of the madeleine steeped in tea — would justify the assertion that his entire book is a monument to involuntary memory and the epic of its action. The whole of Proust's world comes out of a teacup, and not merely Combray and his childhood. (Beckett, 1931: 34)}
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Marcel's failure to respond and his deliberate procrastination interrupt the potentially creative train of thought which is set in motion by the experience of involuntary memory. The process of involuntary memory is suspended and the memory images it recalls remain latent impressions pointing Marcel towards a creative vocation with which he refuses seriously to engage. The representation of the interrupted involuntary memory process suggests the photographic system of image production which is characterised by temporal latency. The implication is that, though he refuses immediately to engage with it, Marcel's creative potential is not lost, but simply ignored and abandoned for an unspecified period of time.

The almost comical joy felt by Marcel after writing about the Martinville steeples results from his successful deepening of an obscure pleasure (Proust: I, 178). The later narrator remarks that his failure to treat similar experiences in the same way has undoubtedly consigned other such experiences to oblivion. Thus for Marcel the act of writing — in this case, for himself and not for others — is regarded as a fitting means of assimilating experience. In this passage the act of writing is explicitly represented through the surface/depth duality which characterises the photographic system of image production.
Despite the enthusiasm of Beckett and Shattuck, it is important to underline the weaknesses inherent in involuntary memory as it is represented in À la recherche du temps perdu. Its unpredictability and evanescence make it an unreliable edifice upon which entirely to base the construction of a literary work of art. The physical stasis which Marcel repeatedly insists upon as a prerequisite for the successful teasing-out of the significance of an involuntary memory points up the fundamental lack of practical, creative action demanded by the experience itself. In effect, negative action on Marcel’s part is required if he is to reach a positive awareness of the meaning of involuntary memory (Proust: I, 43-47); (Proust: II, 284-287); (Proust: II, 482-483); (Proust: III, 385-386). Physical stasis is a distinctive characteristic of the photographic system of image production. It is fundamental to the pose during the ritual of being photographed; to the photographer who steadies his camera; to the resulting image, which arrests the flow of time in a two-dimensional representation of space. Marcel’s repeated failure to pause in response to involuntary memory so as to attempt to grasp the meaning of the experience implies his continued erroneous efforts to apprehend the essence of reality through exhaustive perceptual contact with the world around him. At best, involuntary memories serve as strong multi-sensory hints leading him towards the conception and realisation of his creative vocation. Shattuck asserts that:

The much touted moments bienheureux do not bring Marcel to his vocation or confer on him any lasting happiness. They represent an important step toward both those ends, or more accurately, they are the guideposts that show him the right direction without themselves taking him to his goal except by anticipation. [...] The attitude of passivity on which they rely and the tendency they have to encourage the substitution of pleasure for effort, and objects for people, prevent them from offering the key to Marcel’s salvation. (Shattuck, 2000: 135)

Within the context of Marcel’s conception and realisation of his creative vocation, Shattuck’s assessment of the significance of involuntary memory corresponds to mine. This section of my thesis will explore the metaphoric representation of involuntary memory through motifs drawn from the photographic system of image production. The

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6 Beckett acknowledges that ‘involuntary memory is an unruly magician and will not be importuned. It chooses its own time and place for the performance of its miracle’ (Beckett, 1931: 33-34). Architecture is used by Proust as a metaphor for a literary work (Proust: VII, 338). In Expositions: littérature et architecture au XIXe siècle, Philippe Hamon explores the relations between literature and architecture in nineteenth-century France and notes the complexity of Proust’s creation of juxtaposed sites.
role of involuntary memory in relation to Marcel’s literary vocation, though critical, is fundamentally underpinned by the process of voluntary memory which is overtly disparaged by Marcel. As shown in the last section of my thesis, metaphoric evocations of photography also occur in the representation of voluntary memory. Uses of photography as metaphor, metonym and simile for involuntary memory and for artistic creation serve to connect the two memory processes within the overarching context of Marcel’s quest to become a writer. In the passage from his work quoted above, Shattuck mentions the anticipatory value of involuntary memory. Involuntary memory not only superimposes past and present impressions of space and time, it also prefigures some event or development in Marcel’s future. The most significant of these is the possibility of Marcel’s successful acceptance of responsibility for the practical realisation of his creative vocation. The metaphoric evocation of photography in the representation of involuntary memory underlines the precariousness of Marcel’s future as creative artist.

Involuntary Memory and Photographic Practice: Tea-and-Madeleine

Photographic practice as defined by Serge Tisseron in Le Mystère de la chambre claire: photographie et inconscient predominates in the metaphoric representation of involuntary memory. The emphasis placed on photographic practice as opposed to the photographic image in the metaphoric representation of the experience of involuntary memory points up the fact that it is an inherently productive but not altogether automatic process. It requires physically passive and mentally active engagement from Marcel if its significance is to be grasped. The simultaneous need for passivity and action suggests the negative/positive duality which characterises — albeit not consistently — the

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7 The tea-and-madeleine episode presages a creative act (Proust: I, 43-47); the Martinville steeples hint at a foreshadowed reality (Proust: I, 178-180); the smell in the little pavilion heralds his grandmother’s attack (Proust: II, 63); recollection of his grandmother in the hotel at Balbec presages his own death (Proust: IV, 152). The dual narratological viewpoint of the novel means that the later narrator may drop such hints.  
8 Cf. chapter one of my thesis in relation to Saint-Loup, page 47, for Serge Tisseron’s definitions of the term ‘photographic practice’.  
9 As shown in the first section of this chapter, the photographic image is evoked in the metaphoric representation of voluntary memory. The insistence upon elements of photographic practice within the context of involuntary memory underlines the temporal tension created by the experience: a momentary, ephemeral tension between present and forgotten past which calls for ultimate resolution through first mental and subsequently mental and physical creative action.
photographic system of image production. The representation of the first and most complete of Marcel’s experiences of involuntary memory draws on photography as a source of metaphor for both physical and mental aspects of Marcel’s response to the experience. Along with the madeleine cake, the tea in Marcel’s cup is an essential element in the resurrection of Combray in this passage. The tea may be understood to be the chemical solution which facilitates the development of Marcel’s involuntary memory images. Struggling to discover the cause of his happiness on sipping his tea-and-madeleine mixture, Marcel realises that the answer to this question is to be found in his own mind. He observes that:

Il est clair que la vérité que je cherche n’est pas en lui, mais en moi. Il l’y a éveillée, mais ne la connait pas, et ne peut que répéter indéfiniment, avec de moins en moins de force, ce même témoignage que je ne sais pas interpréter et que je veux au moins pouvoir lui redemander et retrouver intact, à ma disposition, tout à l’heure, pour un éclaircissement décisif. (Proust: I, 45 – my italics)

The indefinite repetition of the fading shock of happiness experienced on sipping his tea will not tell Marcel what he wishes to know. He must mentally interpret the truth concealed in the physical sensation. The verb ‘interpréter’ implies the importance of accurate spatio-temporal contextualisation of the physical sensation. The use of the words ‘clair’ and ‘éclaircissement’ — which have visual connotations of dawn and daylight — suggests the decisive enlightenment which the revelation of the meaning contained in this experience will bring to Marcel. However, such enlightenment is

10 The evocation of Japanese origami which unfold when soaked in water (Proust: I, 47) also recalls the photographic process of image development. Wegner affirms that ‘although Proust refers to a “Japanese game” he gives a very accurate description of the development stage of the photographic process, which simultaneously provides a close-up vision of the past’ (Wegner, 2003: 82).

11 The capacity for endless reproduction of an identical image is a distinctive feature of the photographic system of image production. Until he deciphers it, the physical sensation experienced by Marcel has no intrinsic value: it must be contextualised by the exercise of his mental faculties before its significance as a spur to creative activity can be ascertained. In the same way, the artistic merit of photographic images is determined by their situation within a specific socio-cultural framework. Just as the pragmatic flexibility of the photographic image underpins the precariousness of its status as art form, so Marcel’s experience of involuntary memory by no means guarantees his successful engagement with his creative vocation.

12 Marcel’s inability to provide a context for the new sensory experience provided by involuntary memory — ‘ce même témoignage que je ne sais pas interpréter’ — prefigures his repeated observations about the importance of context for correct interpretation of radiographic images (Proust: III, 232); (Proust: III, 262); (Proust: VII, 25); (Proust: VII, 221).
deferred until an unspecified point in the future: ‘tout à l’heure.’ Marcel remains in the dark because of his uncertainty as to how to proceed:

Je pose la tasse et me tourne vers mon esprit. C’est à lui de trouver la vérité. Mais comment? Grave incertitude, toutes les fois que l’esprit se sent dépassé par lui-même; quand lui, le chercheur, est tout ensemble le pays obscur où il doit chercher et où tout son bagage ne lui sera de rien. Chercher? pas seulement: créer. Il est en face de quelque chose qui n’est pas encore et que seul il peut réaliser, puis faire entrer dans sa lumière. (Proust: I, 45 – my italics)

Marcel’s hesitancy in response to the unfamiliar experience of involuntary memory points up the mental effort, portrayed here as a solitary journey in a dark land, demanded for the deciphering of the memory image once the initial, overwhelming sensation of joy has passed. Physical stimulus is useless: hence the teacup is put down and attention is concentrated on the mind’s attempt to find the truth which Marcel senses in the experience. Physical immobility characterises all of Marcel’s attempts — both whole- and half-hearted — to grasp the fundamental significance of involuntary memory, despite the fact that on several such occasions he is in a moving carriage or train. In the latter instances, he nonetheless endeavours to remain still himself. His immobility suggests the desire to arrest the passage of time. In Le Temps retrouvé, the description of the old men who attempt to conceal their advancing age by maintaining a rigid attitude as though posing for the photographic camera (Proust: VII, 248) echoes Marcel’s efforts to fix the fleeting involuntary memory and, by extension, the ephemeral past.

The description in the passage quoted above of the mind as ‘le pays obscur’ contrasts Marcel’s confused present physical and mental state with the clarity which could result from a successful engagement with the stimulus provided by his involuntary memory. Marcel is aware that he has the potential to create something unique: though it ‘n’est pas encore,’ the latent potential exists. His mind can create and bring to light — “faire entrer

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13 Tisseron affirms that ‘la compréhension de la vie psychique en termes d’assimilation permanente de l’expérience du monde nous permet de comprendre […] une caractéristique essentielle de la vie psychique. L’enfermement des diverses composantes d’une expérience — que ce soit dans la “boîte noire” de l’appareil photographique ou dans une “boîte noire” psychique — est toujours guidé par le désir d’en préserver intactes les composantes non assimilées afin d’en rendre possible, plus tard, l’assimilation’ (Tisseron, 1996: 30). Despite the immediate success of his recollection of the origin of the sensation caused by the tea-and-madeleine mixture, Marcel’s assimilation of the ultimate significance of involuntary memory for him does not take place until the Guermantes matinée described in Le Temps retrouvé.
dans sa lumière' — a truth which is alluded to in the physical sensation brought about by his tasting of the tea-and-madeleine mixture. The juxtaposition of darkness and light in this passage suggests the negative-positive stage of photographic image development: the recalled impression is not yet fully developed. The evocation of photography is strengthened by the reference to the mind as a dark space or darkroom in which latent impressions may be developed over time.\textsuperscript{14} The progression of ‘quelque chose qui n’est pas encore, que seul il peut réaliser, puis faire entrer dans sa lumière’ (my italics) underlines the sequence involved in the creative process in the mind: Marcel alone has the ability mentally — and ultimately physically, through writing — to realise something significant from the latent potential which physical sensation has communicated to him, before he can share it with others. The realisation of this mysterious truth must take place first in the darkness of the mind; the result can be shared only after the physical aspect of creative endeavour has been carried out.

In the tea-and-madeleine episode, Marcel’s evocation of photography in the description of the need for mental development of the sensory impressions recalled by involuntary memory shows an awareness of the distinctive relationship between photographic practice and time. Photographic practice involves a sequence of steps each of which is essential for the creation of a photographic image. While the resulting image is a two-dimensional representation of three-dimensional space at a specific moment in time, the ensemble of actions required for its production requires sustained — but also potentially interrupted — temporal investment. Thus there is an overlapping of the time represented in the photographic image and the time invested in the preparatory and development stages of its creation. Added to this is a third layer of time: that of looking at, displaying or discussing the photographic image. Tisseron observes that:

\begin{quote}
L’enfermement d’une image dans la ‘boîte noire’ du boîtier photographique n’est pas seulement réalisé avec l’espoir de sortir un jour cette image en la ‘développant’. Un autre
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} Marcel’s mind is repeatedly represented as a photographic darkroom or camera obscura in which his impressions of the world around him must be processed before they can be assimilated. Hamon underlines the emergence in the nineteenth century of a photography-based ‘imaginaire’ characterised by aesthetic and philosophical thinking based on the negative image (Hamon, 2002: 41). He affirms that ‘omniprésente, la chambre noire tend même à devenir, à côté de la machine à vapeur […] l’autre machine, l’autre structure, et l’autre métaphore du siècle’ (Hamon, 2002: 48-49).
espoir l’accompagne, tout aussi fort: celui de réveiller, développer et intégrer à l’occasion de la découverte de l’image, toutes les composantes de l’expérience — émotives, céstésthétiques, sensorielles... — qui s’étaient trouvées enfermées dans une ‘boîte noire’ psychique faute d’un espace et d’un temps où se déployer. Cet espoir inclut notamment la possibilité de réaliser une forme de symbolisation verbale de l’expérience qui a donné lieu à la photographie et qui a bien souvent été absente de cette expérience elle-même. (Tisseron, 1996: 31 – my italics)

Tisseron’s description of the introjection of experience through verbal communication of it to others is a step towards the sharing of one’s experience of the world through the written word. In Proust’s novel, involuntary memory is characterised by a coincidence of sensation in past and present which demands creative action from Marcel because of the changes wrought in him by the period separating the past sensory impression from its present echo. The identical nature of past and present sensation and the fleeting revival of visual memories of forgotten spatio-temporal locations throw into relief the discrepancy between the man experiencing the involuntary memory and his younger self. The sudden awareness of a disparity between past and present which is furnished by the experience of involuntary memory underlines the transformative effects of the passage of time and creates a mental interstice between the past and the present self which demands resolution through creative action. As with the verbal symbolisation of experience described above by Tisseron, which facilitates its assimilation without having been a feature of that original experience, so Marcel has a presentiment that through creative action he may conceive — ‘créer’ or ‘réaliser’ — something new and true from the impetus provided by involuntary memory. As he struggles ‘sans une clarté nouvelle’ (Proust: 1, 45) to discern the truth hidden in the tea-and-madeleine mixture, surface and depth are juxtaposed:

Je sens tressaillir en moi quelque chose qui se déplace, voudrait s’éllever, quelque chose qu’on aurait désancré, à une grande profondeur; je ne sais ce que c’est, mais cela monte lentement; j’éprouve la résistance et j’entends la rumeur des distances traversées. Certes, ce qui palpite ainsi au fond de moi, ce doit être l’image, le souvenir visuel, qui, lié à cette saveur, tente de la suivre jusqu’à moi. […] Arrivera-t-il jusqu’à la surface de ma claire conscience, ce souvenir, l’instant ancien que l’attraction d’un instant identique est venue de si loin solliciter, émouvoir, soulever tout au fond de moi? Je ne sais. (Proust: I, 45-46 – my italics)

This passage suggests the process of photographic image development by evoking the superimposition of present and past impressions. The emphasis placed on the slow,
tentative emergence of the visual memory connected with the specific taste of tea-and-madeleine underlines the need for temporal investment by Marcel if he is accurately to decipher the sensory stimulus provided by involuntary memory.\(^{15}\) A surface/depth duality characterises the metaphoric representation of this process: the surface of Marcel’s awakened consciousness is like a blank — ‘claire’ — sheet of paper on which the latent impression gradually develops into a positive memory image of a particular spatio-temporal location as it emerges from the profound and dark recesses of the mind. Marcel’s detachment from his former self is pointed up by his passivity with regard to the development of his involuntary memory image: the latter must struggle to emerge without assistance from him.

Due to the identical physical sensations connecting past and present instants of time, a visual image of the space he occupied at a specific moment in the past tries fleetingly to superimpose itself on Marcel’s present surroundings. However, the tea-and-madeleine episode results in the emergence from his teacup of more than one specific instant of Marcel’s past: what he ultimately discovers is Combray in its entirety, at all times of day and in all weathers.\(^{16}\) Even before his recollection of the whole of Combray, the tea-and-madeleine mixture revives not a single instant of his past, but a regular Sunday morning ritual he and his aunt enjoyed.\(^{17}\) That Combray’s varied states are subsequently remembered all at once by Marcel implies that his involuntary memory calls up a vast

\(^{15}\) In fact, Marcel admits that it was not until a long time after this experience that he discovered the significance of his joy: ‘(quoique je ne susse pas encore et dusse remettre à bien plus tard de découvrir pourquoi ce souvenir me rendait si heureux)’ (Proust: I, 47). Thus there is a temporal hiatus between the experience of involuntary memory and the appreciation of its importance as a spur to creative action. The use of the verb ‘devoir’ implies a compulsion to abandon the train of thought which might lead Marcel to a realisation of his literary vocation. The later narrator is here acknowledging Marcel’s lack of maturity and preparedness to engage with the vocation for which the creative potential is nonetheless clearly already present.

\(^{16}\) The later narrator recalls that ‘[…] avec la maison, la ville, depuis le matin jusqu’au soir et par tous les temps, […] tout cela qui prend forme et solidité, est sorti, ville et jardins, de ma tasse de thé’ (Proust: I, 47). The evocation of Combray as taking shape and solidity on the clear surface of Marcel’s consciousness underlines the suggestion of photographic image development in the darkroom.

\(^{17}\) ‘Et tout d’un coup le souvenir m’est apparu. Ce goût c’était celui du petit morceau de madeleine que le dimanche matin à Combray […] ma tante Léonie m’offrait après l’avoir trempé dans son infusion de thé ou de tilleul’ (Proust: I, 46). Thus involuntary memory does not, on this occasion, confine itself to a unique spatio-temporal occurrence in Marcel’s past life. Rather it revives a particular but repeated experience in a specific spatial location, which is superimposed in multiple layers on the present moment in the life of the adult Marcel. Image repetition or multiplication is a characteristic of the photographic system of image production.
juxtaposition of disparate images of the past which together are superimposed on Marcel’s present spatio-temporal location in his Paris home. No hierarchy is suggested in the profuse emergence of the village, its inhabitants and its varied meteorological conditions. Instead simultaneity and indiscriminateness characterise Marcel’s instantaneous and involuntary recollection of forgotten elements of his childhood visits to the village. The plurality and impartiality of Marcel’s remembered impressions are underlined before a break in the narrative, after which the arrival in Combray of the young Marcel and his family for such a visit is described. Proust’s manipulation of grammatical tenses throughout ‘Combray’ and particularly after the tea-and-madeleine episode results in what Gérard Genette has defined as an essentially iterative narrative. In Figures III, Genette states that:

Ce type de récit, où une seule émission narrative assume ensemble plusieurs occurrences du même événement (c’est-à-dire, encore une fois, plusieurs événements considérés dans leur seule analogie), nous le nommerons récit itératif. [...] Aucune œuvre romanesque, apparemment, n’a jamais fait de l’itératif un usage comparable — par l’extension textuelle, par l’importance thématique, par le degré d’élaboration technique — à celui qu’en fait Proust dans la Recherche du temps perdu. (Genette, 1972: 148-149)

The effect of the iterative is to underline the repetitive nature of experience. The use of the iterative in ‘Combray’ effectively superimposes upon each other the regular, routine rituals experienced by the child Marcel in that village. An awareness of the dual narratological viewpoint of À la recherche du temps perdu is essential to an accurate understanding of the significance of Proust’s use of the iterative throughout ‘Combray’. At the time of the tea-and-madeleine episode, Marcel neither understands nor seeks to appreciate the significance of the experience and the happiness it brings him (Proust: I, 47). By turning away from the opportunity to realise the creative potential of his life, Marcel abdicates his potential role as artist for the first time. Thus the detailed description of the resurrected Combray which immediately follows the tea-and-madeleine episode is not informed by any awareness of his creative vocation from Marcel’s point of view. It is an apparently aimless evocation of the village as remembered by him thanks to his first

18 The next chapter of my thesis will explore the dual narratological structure of À la recherche du temps perdu within the context of the role of photography in the representation of the conception and realisation of Marcel’s creative vocation.
experience of involuntary memory. However, due to the revelation of and his engagement with his creative vocation during the Guermantes matinée, the later narrator retrospectively grasps the hidden significance of this involuntary memory. His understanding shapes the representation of Combray which follows. While the tea-and-madeleine-induced involuntary memory evokes, in a dramatic multi-sensory way, forgotten aspects of the life Marcel lived at Combray, it is the later narrator’s manipulation of the results — from a spatio-temporal position far removed from Marcel as he first experiences involuntary memory — which shapes the representation of the everyday life of the village. The temporal disparity which inevitably exists between the Marcel who has just experienced involuntary memory for the first time and the later narrator implies that, for the latter, memories of Combray which were first recalled involuntarily have now become voluntary memories. The use of the iterative points up the generalised, imprecise nature of the young Marcel’s memories of the time he spent in Combray; what is highly specific is the recollection of his situation in space, not time.\(^{19}\)

Genette affirms that:

> En fait, et contrairement à ce que l’on est souvent porté à croire, l’être proustien est aussi peu sensible à l’individualité des moments qu’il l’est au contraire, spontanément, à celle des lieux. Les instants ont chez lui une forte tendance à se ressembler et à se confondre, et cette capacité est évidemment la condition même de l’expérience de la ‘mémorie involontaire.’

( Genette, 1972: 154)

While the tea-and-madeleine episode undoubtedly revives forgotten memories of the life led in Combray by the child Marcel and hints strongly at the creative potential of his life, the subsequent representation of life in the village is informed by multiple spatio-temporal points of view. In terms of their importance as tools for the realisation of Marcel’s literary vocation, the processes of involuntary and voluntary memory are not as disparate in value as might be assumed from the trenchant distinction drawn between

\(^{19}\) Georges Poulet notes that ‘lorsqu’au fond de la mémoire quelque image du passé s’offre confusément à la conscience, il reste encore à celle-ci une tâche à accomplir […] . Cette tâche porte un nom. Elle s’appelle localisation. Or, de même que l’esprit localise l’image remémorée dans la durée, il la localise dans l’espace. Ce n’est pas seulement certaine période de son enfance, que l’être proustien voit sortir de sa âse de thé; c’est aussi une chambre, une église, une ville, un ensemble topographique solide, qui n’erre plus, qui ne vacille plus’ (Poulet, 26-27). The very solidity and sustainability of the memory images which provide the basis for the detailed description of life in Combray indicates the later narrator’s indebtedness to voluntary as opposed to involuntary memory for those images.
them by Marcel (Proust: I, 43). The evocation of the process of photographic image development in the metaphoric representation of the tea-and-madeleine episode points up the presence of latent creative potential in the events of Marcel’s own past. That his creative potential faces an uncertain future due to Marcel’s lack of ability or motivation to discover the meaning of the experience is emphasised through the evocation of the process of photographic image development, which is itself the means of producing images of uniquely ambiguous semiotic status. The use of elements of the photographic system of image production in the metaphoric representation of both voluntary and involuntary memory creates a critical link between the two kinds of memory which are ostensibly in opposition to one another throughout À la recherche du temps perdu.

Involuntary Memory at the Guermantes Matinée: Marcel’s Conception of His Creative Vocation

Photography provides the lexicon for the representation of both involuntary memory and Marcel’s subsequent elaboration of his hopes for his creative vocation. Together with his recognition of Mlle de Saint-Loup, the series of involuntary memories which is experienced by Marcel in the final volume of À la recherche du temps perdu prompts him finally to resolve to devote the remainder of his life to the creation of a literary work of art. Alone in the library before meeting the girl he will regard as the embodiment of his past, Marcel’s response to the five successive involuntary memories he experiences makes clear his new conception of his creative vocation and of the desired effect of a realised literary work.

20 Each stage in the process of photographic image production is permeated by uncertainty or anxiety regarding the artistic value of the resulting images, which may be regarded as works of art, as entirely devoid of value, or as somewhere between these two extremes. Until the revelations of Le Temps retrouvé concerning his literary vocation, Marcel’s apprehension of the world and of his own experience is characterised by a strong sense of doubt. In Marcel Proust on l’esthétique de l’entre-deux: poétique de la représentation dans ‘À la recherche du temps perdu’, Pedro Kadivar observes that ‘la représentation que se fait le narrateur de lui-même et des choses, de la réalité environnante et de son positionnement dans l’espace et dans le temps est disloquée, trouée d’incertitude [...]’ (Kadivar, 2004: 34).

21 Shattuck affirms that recognition is ‘the crowning mental operation of the novel and Marcel’s long delayed achievement’ (Shattuck, 131). The final act of recognition for Marcel concerns his own existence within the flow of time. This realisation is the final catalyst which pushes him actively to engage with his creative vocation.
Tenuous evocations of the lexicon of photography are manifest from the beginning of Marcel’s reflections on the effect of the involuntary memory series: ‘alors on eût dit que les signes qui devaient, ce jour-là, me tirer de mon découragement et me rendre la foi dans les lettres, avaient à coeur de se multiplier’ (Proust: VII, 175 – my italics) and ‘je m’efforçais de tâcher de voir clair [...] et ensuite de dégager l’enseignement que je devais en tirer’ (Proust: VII, 176 – my italics) both suggest unconscious associations on Marcel’s part (or perhaps conscious associations on the part of the later narrator who retrospectively assesses his experience: the dual narratological structure of the Proustian narrative will be explored in chapter three of this thesis) between engagement with a creative vocation and the active process of developing and printing latent photographic impressions in the darkroom.

With regard to his perception of time, Marcel’s understanding of the significance of involuntary memory hinges upon the creatively valuable interplay between the present moment and involuntary memory’s spontaneous, unconscious and fleeting resurrection of the past. As in the tea-and-madeleine episode, the passage of time is made manifest through the tension generated by the mirroring of past and present sensory experience. The relationship between past and present is of greater significance than either moment in itself: his youthful experience contextualises Marcel’s later life and thereby gives it a meaning and truth which transcends both past and present to demand future expression. Thus involuntary memory is more than the sum of its parts. Marcel defines it as:

Rien qu’un moment du passé? Beaucoup plus, peut-être: quelque chose qui, commun à la fois au passé et au présent, est beaucoup plus essentiel qu’eux deux. Tant de fois, au cours de ma vie, la réalité m’avait déçu parce qu’au moment où je la percevais non imagination, qui était mon seul organe pour jouir de la beauté, ne pouvait s’appliquer à elle, en vertu de la loi inévitable qui veut qu’on ne puisse imaginer que ce qui est absent. Et voici que soudain l’effet de cette dure loi s’était trouvé neutralisé, suspendu, par un expédient merveilleux de la nature, qui avait fait miroiter une sensation [...] à la fois dans le passé, ce qui permettait à mon imagination de la goûter, et dans le présent où l’ébranlement effectif de mes sens [...] avait ajouté aux rêves de l’imagination ce dont ils sont habituellement dépourvus, l’idée d’existence — et grâce à ce subterfuge avait permis à mon être d’obtenir, d’isoler, d’immobiliser — la durée d’un éclair — ce qu’il n’appréhende jamais: un peu de temps à l’état pur. (Proust: VII, 179 – my italics)
Involuntary memory permits Marcel a kind of perceptual experience which differs from the flawed discontinuous perception he has struggled vainly to control throughout his life. Due to the fact of the mirroring of past and present sensation, which can therefore be both physically experienced as new and mentally savoured as familiar, involuntary memory transcends its constituent elements by unexpectedly immobilising a fragment of pure time. It facilitates a simultaneously continuous and discontinuous appropriation of the present world and of his past, from a viewpoint ‘en dehors du temps’ (Proust: VII, 177). Comparing the brevity of the experience to a flash of lightning suggests the photographic flash, evoked earlier in relation to moonlit Paris. The metaphoric link between natural nocturnal light and the photographic flash is strengthened by the earlier episode during the war when, observing moonlit Paris, Marcel remarks that ‘le clair de lune semblait comme un doux magnésium continu permettant de prendre une dernière

22 Shattuck notes Marcel’s frustration with his visual perception of the world and affirms that ‘for Proust and the Narrator, the basic unit of subjective life is the image. It occurs in a variety of synonyms, including instantané (a photographic snapshot) […]. Though it remains the basic unit of observation and memory, the single image turns out to be an orphan, a meaningless fragment snatched out of the flux’ (Shattuck, 2000: 126-127). Wegner observes that, in the novel, ‘there is a preponderance of single “states” arranged in series over the possibility of temporal or narrative flux. The novel may be likened to a series of hyper-real hallucinations seen from within the confines of one camera obscura […]. Time is given and becomes visible primarily in Marcel’s modes of vision’ (Wegner, 2003: 77). While Wegner supports the notion that A la recherche du temps perdu is founded on ‘a perceptive-cognitive routine which implies a temporal mode of continuity’ (Wegner, 2003: 78), he acknowledges that this routine is disrupted by ‘anxieties arising from desire as well as those that constitute it’ (Wegner, 2003: 78). Given the ubiquity of anxiety and frustration in Marcel’s perceptual engagement with the world, and the fact that the world of A la recherche du temps perdu is accessible only through the viewpoints of Marcel and the later narrator, my thesis supports the idea that discontinuity is the predominant temporal mode of the novel.

23 The metaphoric representation of past and present sensation as mirroring one another implies a visualisation of the physical sensation by Marcel. Mirroring suggests an inversion of the image: a subtle but critical disparity between past and present experience. The tension caused by this interstice between past and present sensation provides the impetus for Marcel’s new awareness of his existence in time, which awareness will contribute significantly to his decision to take up his literary vocation. Hanney asserts that ‘with metaphor, the common ground or term is distance or space, at once destructive and creative, inhibitory and productive’ (Hanney, 1990: iii). A mirror is an integral part of the photographic camera, and equally, the photographic image provides a mirror image of the photographed object — that is, an image in which the object is inverted from left to right.

24 With regard to involuntary memory, Wegner notes that ‘this form of temporal ecstasy marks the most radical possibility of self-experience, as it coincides with a complete appropriation of the past. On a more fundamental level, involuntary memories also signify a disruption, namely one of the lived temporal continuum. […] Marcel’s moments bienheureux mark the discontinuous surfacing of images, irregular ‘punctuations’ of his quotidian continuum through involuntary irruptions’ (Wegner, 2003: 79-80). Wegner sees Marcel’s description of the extra-temporal experience of involuntary memory as marking a transition into mythology. Kadivar contends that ‘la référence mythologique, en ouvrant le temps présent au temps mythique, tente de penser le monde dans une unité originelle et dans une continuité qui aboliit les limites temporelles ainsi que la dichotomie rigide entre le sacré et le profane, le réel et l’irréel, l’actuel et l’ancien. […] Si le mythe révèle le réel, c’est parce qu’il le rattache à un temps immémorial et originel, en le retirant d’une temporalité linéaire dans laquelle le présent fuit le passé’ (Kadivar, 2004: 83-84).
fois des images nocturnes de ces beaux ensembles comme la place Vendôme [...]’ (Proust: VII, 109-110). Magnesium flash powder was commonly used for night-time, indoor and underwater photography from the late 1880s until the 1920s.

With regard to his creative vocation, it is the interaction of past and present and the tension generated by the subtle differences between them which prove significant for Marcel in the experience of involuntary memory. The past provides the meaningful framework for both the present and the future. Radiography is repeatedly evoked in the metaphoric representation of the need for precise contextualisation of experience in À la recherche du temps perdu. An application of the photographic system of image production, radiography is characterised by a distinctive surface/depth duality which Proust appropriates for the metaphoric representation of the significance of involuntary memory. The past is a skeleton woven from the original truths of Marcel’s early life. This skeleton is obscured by the opaque flesh of habit and thoughtlessness, until involuntary memory bares it by simultaneously stimulating Marcel’s consciousness of his past; of the essential nature of the truths dimly perceived in the past and unexpectedly confirmed in the present; of the urgent need for creative action so as to express those truths. The potentially productive interaction of body and mind in Marcel’s experience of involuntary memory is unique to his experience and acts as a powerful stimulus urging him towards creative action because of the fundamental insight it affords into the fleeting nature of time and his own existence within it. The urge to action which results from the experience of involuntary memory suggests Henri Bergson’s understanding of the power of memory and of how the relationship between past and present influences future action.

In Matière et mémoire, Bergson affirms that:

25 Cf. note 12 for stylistic appropriations of radiography in Proust’s novel in the representation of the need for contextualisation of personal experience.
26 By displaying the skeletal underpinnings of the body, radiographic images are more closely associated with decay and death than portrait photography because they anticipate the body’s future state. Involuntary memory at the Guermantes matinée prompts Marcel to engage with his creative vocation because of his sudden awareness of his advanced age and imminent death. Barthes notes that ‘la Photographie est comme la vieillesse: même resplendissante, elle décharne le visage, manifeste son essence génétique’ (Barthes, 1980: 162). Radiographic images are in essence both general and particular: no two skeletons are identical, but individuality is effaced through the inability of the uninitiated to comprehend the images. They must be contextualised. In the same way, Marcel’s conception of his literary vocation following the experience of involuntary memory indicates his desire to understand the significance of his early life through creative action.
Si le système nerveux est construit, d’un bout à l’autre de la série animale, en vue d’une action de moins en moins nécessaire, ne faut-il pas penser que la perception, dont le progrès se règle sur le sien, est toute entière orientée, elle aussi, vers l’action [...] ? [...] En fait, il n’y a pas de perception qui ne soit imprégnée de souvenirs. Aux données immédiates et présentes de nos sens nous mêlons mille et mille détails de notre expérience passée. (Bergson, 1970: 181-183)

Marcel’s conviction that through the serendipitous revival of past experience he has come to understand the nature and importance of time retrospectively confirms the merit of his past life, which up to this point had been regarded by him as utterly wasted and worthless — *du temps perdu*.

The transient power of involuntary memory is represented through the fleeting superimposition of past spatial locations on the Guermantes library of the present — a recurring element of his experience of involuntary memory, as Marcel affirms:

Toujours, dans ces resurrections-là, le lieu lointain engendré autour de la sensation commune s’était accouplé *un instant*, comme un lutteur, au lieu actuel. Toujours le lieu actuel avait été vainqueur; [...] ces resurrections du passé, *dans la seconde qu’elles durent*, sont si totales qu’elles n’obligent pas seulement nos yeux à cesser de voir la chambre qui est près d’eux [...] . Elles forcent nos narines à respirer l’air de lieux pourtant lointains, notre volonté à choisir entre les divers projets qu’ils nous proposent, notre personne toute entière à se croire entourée par eux, ou du moins à *trébucher entre eux et les lieux présents* [...]. (Proust: VII, 181-182 – my italics)

It is the essentially transitory nature of involuntary memory and of the joy it inspires — explicitly contrasted with the dull permanence of the fruits of voluntary memory 27 — which prompts Marcel to secure it forever in a literary work of art. In order to fix his contemplation of the essence of his revived sensory experiences in a work of art, Marcel evokes a complementary mental process of drawing them out of darkness: a process

27 « Mais ce trompe-l’œil qui mettait près de moi un moment du passé, *incompatible avec le présent*, ce trompe-l’œil *ne durait pas*. Certes, on peut *prolonger* les spectacles de la mémoire volontaire qui n’engagne pas plus des forces de nous-même que feuiller un livre d’images’ (Proust: VII, 180 – my italics). The contrast between the ephemeral involuntary memory image and the voluntary memory image which can be contemplated in a dispassionate, leisurely manner rests on their relationship with the present. The differences between present and past are momentarily thrown into relief by the experience of involuntary memory. Mental and physical action is necessary so as to tease out the significance of those differences. By contrast, the lack of connection between voluntary memory and the present means that it lacks context and therefore meaning: it seems to be only a random fragment of the past and creates no tension between past and present. Accurate contextualisation of remembered experience is essential if the significance of that experience is to be understood by Marcel.
which parallels the development and printing of a latent photographic impression. The need for active temporal investment for the successful completion of this process is underlined: it is not an instantaneously achieved end but can only result from decisive action on Marcel’s part. Thus the decision to engage with the act of literary creativity, which in itself demands prolonged temporal investment, is directly influenced by the brevity of the experience of involuntary memory. The final series of involuntary memories act upon Marcel like an unexpected sequence of rapidly-fading snapshots or Polaroid photographs, which tantalise him by establishing, overwhelmingly but fleetingly, a visual connection with forgotten elements of his past and convincing him of his creative potential through the happiness they repeatedly inspire. They throw him off balance and leave him briefly suspended between past and present in a spatio-temporal interstice, the exploration and resolution of which demands creative endeavour.

The evocation of photographic practice in the metaphoric representation of the experience of involuntary memory validates the creative potential heralded by this experience while simultaneously pointing up its precarious future; it underlines the fact that the decision to create a work of art lies only with Marcel and will entail a significant mental and physical investment if it is ultimately to prove fruitful. The problematic body/mind duality which has characterised Marcel’s perception and apprehension of the world all his life is guided towards a successful resolution through the possibility of mind and body working together towards the common goal of creating a work of art. Having entered the Guermantes matinée and recognised the relentless passage of time by its effects on the physical appearance of those he knew in the past, Marcel comes to realise that, once the decision to engage with his vocation has been wholeheartedly and

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28 "Aussi, cette contemplation de l’essence des choses, j’étais maintenant décidé à m’attacher à elle, à la fixer […] Il fallait tâcher d’interpréter les sensations comme les signes d’autant de lois et d’idées, en essayant de penser, c’est à dire de faire sortir de la pénombre ce que j’avais senti, de le convertir en un équivalent spirituel. Or, ce moyen qui me paraissait le seul, qu’était-ce autre chose que faire une œuvre d’art?" (Proust; VII, 182-185 – my italics). The combined use of numerous verbs of action in a single sentence, such as ‘m’attacher,’ ‘fixer,’ ‘tâcher d’interpréter,’ ‘essayant de penser,’ ‘faire sortir’ and ‘convertir’ points up the necessity for self-conscious efforts to manipulate the raw creative potential of his remembered sensory impressions for the purpose of creating a work of art. The problematic body/mind duality which has frustrated Marcel throughout his life in his attempts to contemplate visually perceived objects is now resolved through the realisation of the possibility of successful body/mind co-operation in pursuit of a single goal: the creation of a work of art.
consciously embraced, the process of his mental and physical investment in a work of art will be to a large extent *mechanical*. Marcel affirms that ‘oui, à cette œuvre [...] il était temps de me mettre. [...] Une condition de mon œuvre telle que je l’avais conçue tout à l’heure dans la bibliothèque était l’approfondissement d’impressions qu’il fallait d’abord recréer par la mémoire. Or celle-ci était usée’ (Proust: VII, 340). The *voluntary* memory process is evoked here as essential to the creation of a work of art — a willed, conscious recreation of past impressions through the workings of memory, which can then be deepened or developed through the act of writing. Marcel’s engagement with the creative process is neither fortuitous nor passive: his resolution *actively* to deepen his understanding of his impressions of the past is a fundamental aspect of that process. It will involve forcing himself to avoid social life; to maintain a solitary existence; to think out fully the gathered sensory impressions of his life and to write them down.²⁹ The final involuntary memory series leads Marcel to appreciate the value of voluntary memory — previously regarded as charmless and dead — with regard to the laborious creation of a literary work of art. Within the context of Marcel’s conception of his literary vocation, the evocation of photography in the metaphoric representation of voluntary and involuntary memory serves to unify the two previously-contrasted memory processes. Marcel’s earlier negativity towards voluntary memory is retrospectively neutralised by his belated insight into its value when purposefully and deliberately harnessed and contextualised for the creation of a literary work of art. Marcel comes to realise that the discontinuous temporal relations between voluntary memory and the present can be turned to his advantage within the context of the creation of a work of art: he will be free to manipulate the raw material of his past for the purposes of his literary work. Thus while engagement with his creative vocation is prompted by the dramatic immobilisation

²⁹ **Or la recreation par la memoire d’impressions qu’il fallait ensuite approfondir, eclairer, transformer en equivalents d’intelligence, n’était-elle pas une des conditions, presque l’essence meme de l’œuvre d’art telle que je l’avais conçue tout à l’heure dans la bibliothèque?’** (Proust: VII, 349). In this sentence several dualities which recur throughout Proust’s novel and which characterise the photographic system of image production — though by no means exclusively — are evoked as fundamental elements of Marcel’s process of literary creativity, which will be based on his consciously recreated memories: surface/depth; darkness/light; sensory (bodily) impression/its mental equivalent. These dualities point up the paradoxical nature of the creative act: essentially systematic and methodical physical action, centred on mental development of recollected sensory impressions. Mechanical physical action and idiosyncratic mental action are equally important elements of the creative act.
of time in the experience of involuntary memory, the pragmatic flexibility of voluntary memory images will enable Marcel to craft a work of art from the material they provide.

To Write a Book: Resolution of Marcel’s Problematic Body/Mind Duality

Having resolved to write a book, Marcel outlines his understanding of the challenge posed by the process of literary creation. Although by far the most dominant metaphor in the passage quoted below is the book, his conception of the mental and physical act of literary creation following the series of involuntary memories at the Guermantes matinée is also represented through metaphors drawn from the photographic system of image production. With regard to his newly-embraced literary project, Marcel remarks that:

"Quant au livre interieur de signes inconnus [...] pour la lecture desquels personne ne pouvait m'aider d'aucune regle, cette lecture consistait en un acte de creation ou nul ne peut nous suppléer ni meme collaborer avec nous. [...] Ce livre, le plus penible de tous a déchiffrer, est aussi le seul que nous ait dicté la réalité, le seul dont l'‘impression’ ait été faite en nous par la réalité même. [...] Ne vient de nous-même que ce que nous tirons de l’obscurité qui est en nous et que ne connaissent pas les autres. (Proust: VII, 186-187 – my italics)

Artistic creation is defined here as the deciphering — or reading — of latent impressions which are unique to the individual artist and are suspended in darkness before being drawn forth or printed through the creative act. Kadivar explores the multiple meanings of the word ‘impression’ as employed in Proust’s terminology of perception. He observes that:

"Le champ de signification que propose le mot [...] dit le clair-obscur d’une irrémédiable solitude entre le narrateur et le réel qu’il tente d’approcher, une solitude qui est celle du réel dans son inaccessibilité et celle du narrateur dans sa difficulté à saisir le réel [...] Le mot impression contient à lui seul tous les il me semblait et il me paraissait généreusement dispersés dans l’œuvre et signifie en même temps le mouvement dans lequel le réel vient au narrateur. (Kadivar, 2004: 75)"

30 Regarding the creative act, Marcel quickly concludes that ‘des impressions telles que celles que je cherchais à fixer ne pouvaient que s’évanouir au contact d’une jouissance directe qui a été impuissante à les faire naître. La seule manière de les goûter davantage, c’était de tâcher de les connaître plus complètement, là où elles se trouvaient, c’est-à-dire en moi-même, de les rendre claires jusque dans leurs profondeurs’ (Proust: VII, 184). Repeated references to a desire to fix fugitive impressions and to clarify their depths within himself evoke the fixing of fragments of time and space in the development of a photographic image, and the surface/depth duality which characterises photographic image superimposition in particular.
As Kadivar notes, Marcel seems to be the passive recipient of impressions of reality throughout his life; however as a writer he becomes the active communicator of his own reality. The verb ‘tirer’ which appears in the passage from Le Temps retrouvé quoted above alludes to both photography and the printing press. The emphasis placed on the need for seclusion and hard work for the success of literary endeavour underlines the isolated struggle essential to the creative act. A painful but essential withdrawal from others in order to create a work of art is juxtaposed with the happy prospect of successfully communicating his intimate relationship with reality through the resulting work. The final reference to ‘les autres’ implies that a fundamental desire to communicate his experience of reality lies at the heart of Marcel’s engagement with his creative vocation. Unlike Saint-Loup, who refused to show other people the photographic images he had made of Rachel, Marcel aims to impart his vision of the world through his literary art. His willingness to share his vision with others points up the fact that Marcel now accepts the validity of his subjective appropriation of experience. Through the involuntary memory series and his recognition of the inexorable passage of time, he has fully assimilated or introjected the world as his senses and his memory recorded it throughout his life. Marcel observes that:

On éprouve, mais ce qu’on a éprouvé est pareil à certains clichés qui ne montrent que du noir tant qu’on ne les a pas mis près d’une lampe, et qu’eux aussi il faut regarder à l’envers: on ne sait pas ce que c’est tant qu’on ne l’a pas approché de l’intelligence. Alors seulement quand elle l’a éclairé, quand elle l’a intellectualisé, on distingue, et avec quelle peine, la figure de ce qu’on a senti. (Proust: VII, 203)

Here the intellect is a light source essential to the emergence of the latent impressions of sensory and emotional memories into negatives from which positive prints — images of uncertain but potential artistic merit — can be developed. The resulting image or ‘figure’

31 The first section of the next chapter of my thesis will study the role of photography in the representation of Marcel’s physical passivity, within the context of the dual narrative focalisation of the Proustian narrative.

32 In Le Temps retrouvé, Marcel repeatedly underlines the importance of solitude, darkness and silence for creative endeavour. The camera obscura and the photographic darkroom are both suggested through such references which also occur throughout À la recherche du temps perdu, most notably in relation to interrupted or abandoned instances of involuntary memory — (Proust: II, 63-65); (Proust: II, 284-287); (Proust: II, 482-483); (Proust: III, 385-386). Barthes acknowledges the need for similar conditions when looking at photographic images. He writes that ‘la photographie doit être silencieuse […]. La subjectivité absolue ne s’atteint que dans un état, un effort de silence (fermer les yeux, c’est faire parler l’image dans le silence)’ (Barthes, 1980: 88-89).
is reversed: it differs in this subtle degree from what was felt. It is a visual representation of the mentally-developed sensory impression. Having assimilated his experience, Marcel is finally capable of creative action. The paralysis — both physical and creative — which characterises Marcel’s viewpoint throughout much of À la recherche du temps perdu can now cease as what Serge Tisseron refers to as ‘la symbolisation sensori-affectivo-motrice’ (Tisseron, 1996: 27) takes place through the writing of his book.  

Though the work of art which he resolves to produce is a literary one, the predominance of visual imagery in À la recherche du temps perdu shows the privileged position of visual perception in Marcel’s sensory contact with the world throughout his life. The decision to write replaces Marcel’s lifelong and frustrated attempts visually and internally to appropriate the essence of reality: his resolve swaps this erroneous ‘symbolisation sensori-affectivo-motrice’ for solitude, darkness and the waiting blank page. The latter type of symbolisation has the supreme merit of being capable of being shared with others. The intellectual effort required for a successful outcome to the creative process as understood by Marcel will be utterly dependent upon the sensory impressions gathered throughout his life: hence Marcel retrospectively rehabilitates the countless abortive efforts he has previously made to come into (usually visual, but also tactile, auditory and olfactory) contact with reality. By subjecting his memories of sensory experience — whose origins, voluntary or involuntary, are ultimately immaterial — to intellectual development through the process of writing his book, Marcel can hope to convey his subjective experience of reality. He affirms that:

33 As defined by Serge Tisseron, ‘la symbolisation sensori-affectivo-motrice’ is an important element of a person’s mental assimilation of their experience of the world; the physical actions which constitute their response to new sensory experiences and to the emotions which are felt, facilitate the successful introjection of that experience. Tisseron affirms that photographic practice, as opposed to the photographic image, contributes to the mental assimilation of experience in precisely this way. Marcel’s decision to create a literary work of art is a resolution actively and sustainedly to engage in the mechanical motor activity of writing in order to attain just such an assimilation of his life experiences as conveyed by his senses and emotions: an impossible resolution so long as he regarded his own life as unworthy subject matter for representation in a work of art.

34 Kadivar asserts that ‘l’expérience visuelle constitue en soi un des volets les plus complexes et les plus riches de la perception du réel dans la Recherche. […] Le narrateur proustien est […] sans cesse à court de voir, de sorte que la vision elle-même devient un champ de recherche où sont constamment à l’œuvre la déception et le manque qui relancent sans cesse le désir du regard’ (Kadivar, 2004: 93).
A parallel is asserted here between the systematic process of creating a work of literary art which will accurately communicate the writer’s subjective impressions of life and of the world and the photographic process of image development. The description of the irresolute apprentice writer’s over-reliance on reason suggests a repeatedly interrupted or abandoned session in the photographic darkroom, where his strength or willpower gives out. Sensory impressions have been finally recognised by Marcel as the essential raw material of his future work of art. The exercise of pure reason, like his youthful efforts visually to appropriate the essence of reality in the external appearance of the world, will yield nothing of personal value for the creation of a work of art; however, the exploitation of the metaphorical potential of language in the representation of that very struggle will serve to express Marcel’s unique point of view on experience and will ultimately trace the peripatetic development of the later narrator’s conception and realisation of his literary vocation against seemingly overwhelming odds in the forms of his sloth, ill health and advancing age. Involuntary memory deepens and enriches lived experience; metaphor deepens and enriches the meaning of language. The process of literary creativity itself is understood to be arduous and to demand courageous resolve from the writer in his withdrawal from contact with the world. The surface/depth duality is again evoked in this passage: surface reality is denigrated as Marcel conveys

35 Throughout *À la recherche du temps perdu* the apathetic Marcel neglects fully to engage with the prompts provided by involuntary memory, preferring instead to continue searching for truth in the people, places and objects he encounters rather than within himself. The process of photographic image development is explicitly evoked in the metaphorical representation of both involuntary memory and creative action. The latter is understood to comprise mechanical and intellectual elements which are equally important for the successful communication of Marcel’s experience of reality.

36 ‘Quant aux vérités que l’intelligence […] cueille à claire-voie, devant elle, en pleine lumière, leur valeur peut être très grande; mais elles ont des contours plus secs et sont planes, n’ont pas de profondeur parce qu’il n’y a pas eu de profondeurs à franchir pour les atteindre, parce qu’elles n’ont pas été recréées’ (Proust: VII, 204). Reason-based truths lack depth because Marcel’s experience does not support them and so they are not validated by the contextualising power of his memory.

37 ‘Et quand nous aurons atteint la réalité, pour l’exprimer, pour la conserver nous écarterons ce qui est différent d’elle et que ne cesse de nous apporter la vitesse acquise de l’habitude. […] Les vrais livres doivent être les enfants non du grand jour et de la causerie mais de l’obscurité et du silence’ (Proust: VII, 204).
his newfound awareness of the need primarily to question his own motivations in his visual appropriation of the world, rather than the objects of his perception in themselves. It is the truths gleaned from the cumulative effects of his sensory and emotional experiences which must be expressed in a work of literary art.

In spite of his awareness of the happy mutual dependency of body and mind in the writing of his novel, the difficulties inherent in the act of artistic creation are not lost on Marcel. Suffering and danger are possible outcomes of his engagement with the process of literary creation: the death of his established social self is understood by him as essential to this engagement. However, he regards the act of literary creation, while mechanical in its drudgery and threatening in the emotional and mental demands it makes on the author, as succeeding in transubstantiating and transfiguring both the physical and mental elements of the creative act into the resulting work of art. Photography is evoked in the description of the creative act through which the productive body-and-mind performs a particular kind of 'light-writing':

Il est vrai que cette vérité, qui n’est pas compatible avec le bonheur, avec la santé, ne l’est pas toujours avec la vie. Le chagrin finit par tuer. [...] Mais puisque les forces peuvent se changer en d’autres forces, puisque l’ardeur qui dure devient lumière et que l’électricité de la foudre peut photographier, puisque notre sourde douleur au cœur peut élever au-dessus d’elle, comme un pavillon, la permanence visible d’une image à chaque nouveau chagrin, acceptons le mal physique qu’il nous donne pour la connaissance spirituelle qu’il nous apporte; laissons se désagrégé notre corps, puisque chaque nouveau parcelle qui s’en détache vient, cette fois lumineuse et lisible, pour la compléter au prix de souffrances dont d’autres plus doués n’ont pas besoin, pour la rendre plus solide au fur et à mesure que les émotions effritent notre vie, s’ajouter à notre œuvre. (Proust: VII, 213 – my italics)

The transubstantiation of physical and mental effort through the act of literary creativity is represented here as a change of form but not of essence for the truth contained in the objects and events described in the literary work. Sustained artistic endeavour, however distressing, will transform the essential truths learned by Marcel into permanently visible images which will be communicable to others.38 The fact that Marcel evokes visual imagery in this passage as the culmination of his efforts to create a work of literature

38 Due to the existence of the photographic negative, a photographic image is effectively capable of existing forever, since it can be redeveloped and reprinted ad infinitum. Similarly, the printing press can reprint Marcel’s literary work over and over again into the future, thereby guaranteeing the permanence of the images he has created in his written work.
points up once again the predominance of the visual in Marcel’s apprehension of the world. Photography is the only system of image production to which explicit reference is made. Heat and lightning — *ardeur* et *foudre* — together suggest the fervent zeal with which Marcel aims to assume the task of writing so as to fix his past life in words. Marcel has already used photography in the depiction of his nocturnal perception of wartime Paris (Proust: VII, 109). The evocation in the passage quoted above of stored-up heat — *ardeur* — as a means of producing light, and lightning as a means of taking a photograph, suggests an overlapping of the realms of nature and chemistry, the latter being the scientific exploration of the former. Marcel’s literary endeavours are, by an association of contiguity, the intellectual development into a permanent image of the countless ‘natural’ sensory impressions which have been stored up throughout his life until they pour forth in words on the page. The act of writing parallels the photographic process of image development. The repeated references to light in this passage reinforce this idea: the word photography itself signifies ‘light-writing’. Lightning flashes are evoked elsewhere (Proust: VII, 276, 337) with regard to the fortuitous recollection of forgotten images of people and to the experience of involuntary memory. Lightning implies the momentary illumination of significant land- and cityscapes from Marcel’s past life. The act of writing is presented here as an editing process, akin to that of photographic image development, in which experience is cropped from spatio-temporal continuity and submitted to varying degrees of exposure through the attention paid or significance accorded to it by the writer.

The physical penalty potentially to be paid for engagement with creativity is also represented through motifs drawn from the photographic system of image production:

39 The concern with places rather than people which can be detected throughout *À la recherche du temps perdu* and which is explored comprehensively in Georges Poulet’s *L’Espace proustien* is reinforced by the description of lightning within the context of Marcel’s literary project. Marcel’s unconscious appreciation of places as the fundamental framework of his world extends to his conception of his own mind. He notes that ‘l’esprit a ses paysages dont la contemplation ne lui est laissée qu’un temps. J’avais vécu comme un peintre montant un chemin qui surplombe un lac dont un rideau de rochers et d’arbres lui cachent la vue. Par une brèche il l’aperçoit, il l’a tout entier devant lui, il prend ses pinceaux. Mais déjà vient la nuit où l’on ne peut plus peindre, et sur laquelle le jour ne se relèvera pas’ (Proust: VII, 340). While painting fails him as a means of recording the fleeting landscape of his mind, photography — as permitted by the brief flash of lightning over a dark scene — can successfully preserve an image of the terrain, for future perusal by the creative artist, as he works to produce his book.
Marcel’s beleaguered body, splintered through the corrosive action of his recreated emotions and the physical effort of writing into luminous and legible fragments, paradoxically contributes to the solidification and completion of his work. The gradual emergence of an enduring, dense literary work from fragments of Marcel’s suffering body, now become bright and communicable to others through the act of writing, evokes the development and printing of a photographic image. Opaque flesh disintegrates through the act of writing and is transformed into luminous, legible signs: darkness is gradually and systematically — ‘au fur et à mesure’ — defied by the illumination afforded by the writing process and the resulting work of literary art. In a parallel process, a photographed body imprints itself on the sensitive photographic film; the body writes itself in light on the chemically-sensitised film, which following the development and printing process produces a permanent image — a photographic sign of an isolated moment of time and space. The final section of the sentence quoted above is an example of the dovetailing of the two main narratorial points-of-view in the novel.

Barthes affirms that ‘une sorte de lien ombilical relie le corps de la chose photographieé à mon regard: la lumière, quoique impalpable, est bien ici un milieu charnel, une peau que je partage avec celui ou celle qui a été photographie’ (Barthes, 1980: 126-127). Sontag notes that ‘a photograph is never less than the registering of an emanation (light waves reflected by objects) — a material vestige of its subject in a way that no painting can be’ (Sontag, 1977: 154). In his memoir Quand j’étais photographe, first published in 1900, Félix Nadar recalled Balzac’s fear of the effect of being photographed on the body, which he rationalised thus: ‘L’homme à jamais ne pouvant créer — c’est-à-dire d’une apparition, de l’impalpable, constituer une chose solide, ou de rien faire une chose —, chaque opération daguerrienne venait donc surprendre, détachait et retenait en se l’appliquant une des couches du corps objecté. De là pour ledit corps, et à chaque opération renouvelée, perte évidente d’un de ses spectres, c’est-à-dire d’une part de son essence constitutive’ (Nadar, 18). While Balzac dreaded the irretrievable loss of his essential self through the ritual of being photographed, Proust, through the metaphoric evocation of photography, describes the act of writing as a transubstantiation and transfiguration of his essential self into the created work. Proust’s evocation of photography for the stylistic representation of the core idea of *À la recherche du temps perdu* — namely, how a man becomes a writer, that is, how he makes of the raw material of life as he has lived it a symbolic work — implies his awareness of and profound appreciation for the unique semiotic relationship between the photographed object and the photographic image. The connotative potential of language is enriched by the evocation of the photographic image which is characterised by a distinctive power of denotation.

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20 Radiography is also alluded to in the passage explored above, where the disintegration of the flesh exposes the more permanent structure which underlies it. The contextualising power of the act of writing ensures that the strangeness of Marcel’s idiosyncratic appropriation of experience can be communicated to the reader in his literary work.

41 Barthes affirms that ‘une sorte de lien ombilical relie le corps de la chose photographieé à mon regard: la lumière, quoique impalpable, est bien ici un milieu charnel, une peau que je partage avec celui ou celle qui a été photographie’ (Barthes, 1980: 126-127). Sontag notes that ‘a photograph is never less than the registering of an emanation (light waves reflected by objects) — a material vestige of its subject in a way that no painting can be’ (Sontag, 1977: 154). In his memoir *Quand j’étais photographe*, first published in 1900, Félix Nadar recalled Balzac’s fear of the effect of being photographed on the body, which he rationalised thus: ‘L’homme à jamais ne pouvant créer — c’est-à-dire d’une apparition, de l’impalpable, constituer une chose solide, ou de rien faire une chose —, chaque opération daguerrienne venait donc surprendre, détachait et retenait en se l’appliquant une des couches du corps objecté. De là pour ledit corps, et à chaque opération renouvelée, perte évidente d’un de ses spectres, c’est-à-dire d’une part de son essence constitutive’ (Nadar, 18). While Balzac dreaded the irretrievable loss of his essential self through the ritual of being photographed, Proust, through the metaphoric evocation of photography, describes the act of writing as a transubstantiation and transfiguration of his essential self into the created work. Proust’s evocation of photography for the stylistic representation of the core idea of *À la recherche du temps perdu* — namely, how a man becomes a writer, that is, how he makes of the raw material of life as he has lived it a symbolic work — implies his awareness of and profound appreciation for the unique semiotic relationship between the photographed object and the photographic image. The connotative potential of language is enriched by the evocation of the photographic image which is characterised by a distinctive power of denotation.
approaches the end of his task, fearing for his life and hence for his as-yet-incomplete work.\(^{42}\)

**Marcel’s Conception of the Effect of His Literary Work**

Photographic practice is alluded to in the metaphoric representation of Marcel’s conception of the power of literature as a means of communicating a writer’s apprehension of the world.\(^{43}\) Marcel is ambitious. He hopes to create a truly valuable work which will fulfil the purpose he attributes to all great art — the representation of a firm grasp of reality so that its inherent multiplicity can be appreciated.\(^ {44}\) In affirming that the ultimate goal of art is to create awareness of the diversity of viewpoints on reality which exist in the world, Marcel again evokes the photographic system of image production: the dualities of darkness/light and negative/positive photographic images and the process of developing photographic images point up the significant effect of literary art on the reader:

La vraie vie, la vie enfin découverte et éclaircie, la seule vie par conséquent pleinement vécue, c’est la littérature. Cette vie qui, en un sens, habite à chaque instant chez tous les hommes aussi bien que chez l’artiste. Mais ils ne la voient pas, parce qu’ils ne cherchent pas

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\(^{42}\) The later narrator’s fear of death while his work remains incomplete is made clear in a lamentation for the mind’s imprisonment within the body. The later narrator observes that ‘il fallait partir en effet de ceci que j’avais un corps, c’est-à-dire que j’étais perpétuellement menacé d’un double danger […]’. Et avoir un corps, c’est la grande menace pour l’esprit, la vie humaine et pensante, dont il faut sans doute moins dire qu’elle est une imperfection […] dans l’organisation de la vie spirituelle. Le corps enferme l’esprit dans une forteresse; bientôt la forteresse est assiégée de toutes parts et il faut à la fin que l’esprit se rende’ (Proust: VII, 340-341). The resolution through the act of literary creation of the problematic mind/body duality which dogs Marcel throughout his life is here shown to be only a temporary relief, as anxiety mounts in the face of imminent death. Immortality is achieved through the completed text but is uncertain until the end of the creative process.

\(^{43}\) ‘Certes, j’avais l’intention de recommencer dès demain, bien qu’avec un but cette fois, à vivre dans la solitude. Même chez moi, je ne laisserais pas de gens venir me voir […] Et d’aillleurs, n’était-ce pas pour m’occuper d’eux que je vivrais loin de ceux qui se plendraient de ne pas me voir, pour m’occuper d’eux plus à fond que je n’aurais pu le faire avec eux, pour chercher à les révéler à eux-mêmes, à les réaliser?’ (Proust: VII, 291-292 – my italics). Solitude, depth, attempts at revelation and fabrication: all of these words evoke elements of the photographic system of image production.

\(^{44}\) Marcel asserts that ‘la grandeur de l’art véritable […] c’était de retrouver, de ressaisir, de nous faire connaître cette réalité loin de laquelle nous vivons, de laquelle nous nous écartons de plus en plus au fur et à mesure que prend plus d’épaisseur et d’imperméabilité la connaissance conventionnelle que nous lui substituions, cette réalité que nous risquerions fort de mourir sans avoir connue, et qui est tout simplement notre vie’ (Proust: VII, 202). The verb ‘ressaisir’ shows the difficulty of the search for elusive reality in which the true artist must engage.
The lexicon of photography articulates Marcel’s deeply-held convictions about the importance of literary art and its effect on readers. As a means for the successful communication of individual subjectivity, literature has no rival. It serves as a means for the individual intelligence to develop the countless photographic negatives which are stored in the memory. In this passage, where it refers to individual memory, the word ‘clichés’ carries the double meaning of photographic negative and unoriginal, overused phrase. The reference to clichés here marks the point at which the overt hostility which characterises much of Marcel’s thinking about the photographic image throughout À la recherche du temps perdu is explicitly repealed. With regard to memory, such clichés are hateful only in so far as they are useless without the conscious intervention of the intellect for their development and appreciation by the individual; within the context of language, nothing is more distasteful to Marcel than the reflex employment of words and phrases which have been stripped of significance for the evocation of a person’s most important possession: their life. The use of the word ‘révélation’ for the description of the power of literary style implies the shock inherent in the experience of subjective reality through reading, while also referring directly to the development stage in photographic practice: the emergence of the latent image on chemically-sensitised paper. The fact that Marcel insists on the impossibility of attaining awareness by direct, conscious means, of the qualitative differences in the way individuals apprehend the world, underlines the significance of the act of literary creativity itself. In developing an individual writing style, Marcel will endeavour to convey his vision of the world of his past life: literary representation is the sole means available to him for the fulfilment of this longing. The dizzying multiplicity of idiosyncratic points of view on the world and on experience which is communicated by works of art is repeatedly pointed up by Marcel and is a distinctive feature of the photograph. Marcel observes that ‘grâce à l’art, au lieu de voir...”

45 Cf. the introduction to this thesis for a comprehensive account of the distinctive features of the photographic system of image production. Sontag observes that ‘any photograph has multiple meanings;
un seul monde, le nôtre, nous le voyons se multiplier, et autant qu’il y a d’artistes originaux, autant nous avons de mondes à notre disposition [...]’ (Proust: VII, 202). The act of reading brings the reader into contact with the reality of the author, and it also encourages the development of some of that reader’s own ‘innombrables clichés.’ The powers of symbolisation of language are a fundamental element of this process of communication between author and reader. Optical imagery is central to the representation of this effect of a work of literary art:

En réalité, chaque lecteur est quand il lit le propre lecteur de soi-même. L’ouvrage de l’écrivain n’est qu’une espèce d’instrument optique qu’il offre au lecteur afin de lui permettre de discerner ce que sans ce livre il n’eût peut-être pas vu en soi-même. La reconnaissance en soi, par le lecteur, de ce que dit le livre, est la preuve de la vérité de celui-ci [...] . (Proust: VII, 217-218)

Literature enables the reader to discover his own hidden truths; the book is an optical instrument which facilitates the disclosure of latent aspects of the self. For Marcel, the most significant truth which he has gleaned from the experiences recounted in *À la recherche du temps perdu* concerns the nature of his perception of the passage of time. Involuntary memory plays a central role in the emergence of this truth for Marcel. Within the overarching context of the conception and realisation of Marcel’s creative vocation, the systematic use of photography as a metaphor for the representation of the processes of voluntary and involuntary memory, and for both the act of literary creativity and the effect of a literary work, draws together elements of the Proustian narrative which would otherwise seem disparate.

indeed, to see something in the form of a photograph is to encounter a potential object of fascination. The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: ‘There is the surface. Now think – or rather feel, intuit – what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way.’ Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy’ (Sontag, 1977: 23).
III. Narrative Focalisation in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*: Image Juxtaposition

Photographic Motifs and the Dual Narrative Focalisation of *À la recherche du temps perdu*

The narratological structure of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* is composed of multiple voices speaking in the first person singular.\(^1\) Two voices predominate: that of the young Marcel who lives his experience for the first time, and that of the later narrator who retrospectively observes the apprehension of the world by his younger self.\(^2\) These two principal narrating voices emerge from different points in space and time in relation to the events recounted in the narrative of Marcel's life. Their discrete spatio-temporal locations provide a dual framework for the representation of their points-of-view on the people, places and objects with which they come into contact. Gérard Genette affirms that Proust's novel is a 'récit à focalisation interne' (Genette, 1972: 206). He goes on to note that:

Les deux instances de la focalisation et de la narration [...] restent distinctes même dans le récit 'à la première personne', c'est-à-dire lorsque ces deux instances sont assumées par la même personne [...]. Le narrateur en 'sait' presque toujours plus que le héros, même si le héros c'est lui, et donc la focalisation sur le héros est pour le narrateur une restriction de champ tout aussi artificielle à la première personne qu'à la troisième. (Genette, 1972: 210-211)

This section of my thesis will explore the way in which the dual narratological structure of *À la recherche du temps perdu* is used to undermine any potential certainty which

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\(^1\) This section of my thesis will be informed by the works of Gérard Genette (*Figures I; Figures III*), B.G. Rogers (*Proust's Narrative Techniques*) and Paul Ricoeur (*Temps et récit*), which explore the narrative techniques employed by Proust with regard to narrative focalisation. 'Un amour de Swann' is the only section of Proust's novel which features narration in the third-person singular. The term 'focalisation' which was coined by Genette has visual connotations and suggests the technical manipulation of a photographic camera or other optical instrument.

\(^2\) B.G. Rogers sees the relationship between Marcel and the later narrator as resulting in a narratorial 'double vision'. He observes that 'thanks to the plan and structure of *À la Recherche*, two main narrative viewpoints are present throughout. The later position in time of the overall narrator gives Proust almost all the advantages of the "ideal" third-person narrator, while preserving the limited viewpoint of Marcel, at the time of experience, by deliberately adopting his, sometimes distorted or incomplete, conclusions. Thus both viewpoints are present and alternate continually [...]’ (Rogers, 1965: 103).
might otherwise characterise the appropriation of the world and of experience by Marcel. The representation of Marcel’s limited viewpoint with regard to his experience is informed by his spatial relationship with the objects of his perception. In several important scenes in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, elements of photographic practice are suggested in the representation of Marcel’s spatial position in relation to the objects of his perception. A recurrent motif in Marcel’s engagement with the world is his physical immobility and lack of interaction with the objects of his perception. This tendency to motionless detachment is expressed in its most extreme form in the scenes where Marcel plays the role of voyeur. As voyeur, Marcel observes the behaviour of other people from a spatial location which is typically separated from the objects of his perception by a window or an aperture. The window or aperture simultaneously outlines and restricts his field of vision, as Pedro Kadivar affirms:

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3 Georges Poulet’s *L’Espace proustien* informs the work of this section of my thesis. Poulet writes that ‘la métamorphose du temps en espace, Proust non seulement s’en accommode mais s’y installe, la pousse à l’extrême et en fait finalement un des principes de son art’ (Poulet, 1982: 10). Marcel’s visual apprehension of experience is rooted in fixed and minutely described spatial settings. Photography provides a unique system of visual representation of the spatialisation of time. Wegner notes that ‘Proustian Time manifests itself in a *méthode graphique* in which the body figures as the locus of such spatialisation, as photosensitive material which registers the *graphique surnaturel* of successive temporal states’ (Wegner, 2003: 93).

4 B.G. Rogers affirms that ‘Marcel’s function is that of the static, passive observer who plays no personal part in the scene, where his role is that of a camera, not an actor’ (Rogers, 1965: 137). Rogers goes on to point out that ‘in general his physical presence is reduced to a minimum. He does not answer, for example, when he is spoken to; his conversation, when it exists, is mostly paraphrased, and reported indirectly, in direct contrast with the dialogue of the other characters […]’. Accompanying Proust’s tendency to ignore Marcel’s fictional rôle is an inevitable depreciation in his personality and an immobility and passivity (sic.) matched by no other character’ (Rogers, 1965: 139-140).

5 Marcel’s first, formative experience of surreptitiously observing others without being seen occurs at Combray when he spies on his parents and their guests at dinner in the garden, having resolved to kiss his mother goodnight (Proust: I, 32). Other scenes where Marcel sees without being seen take place at Montjouvin (Proust: I, 157-163); in Paris when he admires Odette’s ‘jardin d’hiver’ from the street (Proust: II, 162-163); on his unexpected return to his grandmother in Paris (Proust: III, 132); when he spies on Charlus and Jupien’s encounter in Jupien’s workshop (Proust: IV, 9-11); in Venice (Proust: VI, 230); both outside and inside Jupien’s male brothel (Proust: VII, 118-136). Several other important characters in Proust’s novel display voyeuristic tendencies, notably when jealous. Swann’s efforts to discover Odette’s infidelity include loitering outside the window he mistakenly believes to be hers (Proust: I, 268-271). Charlus and Jupien attempt to act as voyeurs at le Palace at Maineville when they hope to discover Morel’s infidelity (Proust: IV, 466-467); subsequently an unexpected photograph of Charlus provokes the same reaction in Morel as the actual presence of the baron at Maineville (Proust: IV, 467-468). Sontag states that ‘taking photographs has set up a chronic voyeuristic relation to the world […]’. Photographing is essentially an act of non-intervention’ (Sontag, 1977: 11).

6 Several critics have explored the function and meaning of the window in Proust’s work: a chapter of Moss’s *The Magic Lantern of Marcel Proust* studies the sexual connotations of windows in the novel; the first chapter of Hanney’s *The Invisible Middle Term in Proust’s ‘À la recherche du temps perdu’* examines the shift from looking in at to looking out of windows and sees it as marking the transition from aimlessness to purpose in Marcel’s engagement with his vocation; Wegner’s doctoral thesis includes a
In both facilitating and impeding Marcel’s appropriation of experiences in which he plays no active role, the window at once satisfies and rekindles his perceptual desire. The cutting-out and fragmenting of the world which is operated by the window frame echoes the function of the photographic viewfinder which delineates the borders of the photographic image. Regarding the specificity of the photographic frame as a restrictive device, Schaeffer affirms that ‘l’image photographique [...] lorsqu’elle possède un cadre-coupe, sollicite effectivement un hors-champ: elle est ressentie comme étant “en défaut” par rapport à la plenitude du champ quasi perceptif’ (Schaeffer, 1987: 120). Kadivar’s evocation of the fragment, as opposed to the detail (which informs the work of Bal and Wegner) raises interesting questions within the context of Proust’s use of photographic motifs in the representation of Marcel’s processes of perception and memory. The fragment suggests itself as one part of a whole which has disintegrated or been broken up; the detail, on the other hand, is a self-contained, individual element of a larger unit.

The immobility which characterises scenes where narrative focalisation occurs through Marcel is also underlined in scenes where Marcel is in a state of motion: on a train, in a carriage or a car; or when he is walking or simply moving his body (particularly when he kisses Albertine). The use of photographic motifs in scenes where narrative focalisation occurs through Marcel-in-motion will be dealt with in the next section of this chapter. An exploration in this section of two key scenes where Marcel remains still will point up the recurrent use made of photographic motifs within the context of Marcel’s apprehension of unexpected and disorienting aspects of the world. It will show how photography is

chapter entitled ‘Frames’ in which he gives a philosophical account of enframing; Kadivar’s Marcel Proust ou esthétique de l’entre-deux: poétique de la représentation dans ‘A la recherche du temps perdu’ contains a section called ‘Poétique de la fenêtre’ which gives a short but thorough account of the role of the window in Proust’s novel.
used as a counter-model, foil or *repoussoir* in the formation of Marcel’s early understanding of both literature and love.

The spatio-temporal location of the later narrator in these scenes is interesting because of the distances — temporal, spatial and ultimately vocational — separating him from Marcel. Distance in time and space is a distinctive characteristic of the photographic system of image production. Dubois observes that:

> Le principe d’une séparation à la fois dans le temps et dans l’espace, d’une faille irréductible entre signe et référent, ce principe est véritablement fondamental. Il vient souligner radicalement que la photographie, en tant qu’index, toute liée physiquement, toute proche qu’elle soit de l’objet qu’elle représente et dont elle émane, n’en reste pas moins absolument coupée de lui. (Dubois, 1990: 92-93)

The gap opened up between Marcel and the later narrator by intervening years means that they are of necessity separate entities.\(^7\) Time divides them absolutely, one from the other. Malcolm Bowie observes that:

> The narrated child and the narrating adult are not the same person at all; growing up has driven them apart; they are at either end of a continuous procession of selves and now feel foreign to each other; and their apartness and non-identity gives the narrative, from its earliest moment on, distances to measure and analytic work to do. (Bowie, 1998: 269-270)

However, the voices of the later narrator and Marcel are unified by their use of the first-person singular pronoun ‘*je*’.\(^8\) An illusion of seamless dual narratorial co-operation and of temporal discontinuity is thus created. Genette affirms that:

> Une des fictions de la narration littéraire, la plus puissante peut-être, parce qu’elle passe pour ainsi dire inaperçue, est qu’il s’agit là d’un acte instantané, sans dimension temporelle. […] L’acte de narration de Marcel ne porte aucune marque de durée, ni de division: il est instantané. Le présent du narrateur, que nous trouvons, presque à chaque page, mêlé aux divers passés du héros, est un moment unique et sans progression. (Genette, 1972: 234)

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\(^7\) Shattuck notes that ‘the double / projects a stereoscopic perspective and creates a narrative relief or depth perception on the events related. […] We are carried back toward a protagonist growing up and forward toward a mature adult watching his (own) progress. That stylistic device also operates structurally to permit asides, recall related events, and remind us how far we have travelled in this seemingly infinite itinerary’ (Shattuck, 2000: 162).

\(^8\) Bowie notes that ‘yet child and adult are very much alike in their fever and uncertainty; in the sense of personal discontinuity they share; and in their common intuition that if the world is ever to become intelligible it will become so as a result of solitary mental exertion’ (Bowie, 1998: 270).
The absence of duration in the act of narration by Marcel and the later narrator is distinct from the temporal duration of the story which is being narrated. Due to its indexical quality, absence of spatio-temporal duration is a distinctive characteristic of the photographic image or snapshot which captures a unique instant of time and space.

The disparity between the two narratorial voices in *À la recherche du temps perdu* is underlined by the contrast between the seemingly inactive later narrator and the socially dynamic Marcel. From the opening pages of the novel where he describes the essentially passive feat of falling asleep, the physical inertia and aimlessness of the later narrator are emphasised. Alteration of the voices of Marcel and the later narrator in the representation of Marcel’s experience constitutes a juxtaposition of diverse spatio-temporal points-of-view on a given event. The later narrator is not bound by chronology in the same way that Marcel is: he is free to place the events he witnesses within the context of later knowledge if he so wishes. Thus several aspects of a particular event or situation may be juxtaposed. Juxtaposition of the two main narratorial voices in *À la recherche du temps perdu* results in a proliferation of possible interpretations of Marcel’s lived experience. Consequently, a fundamental uncertainty as regards the significance or coherence of Marcel’s experience underpins the narrative. A temporal hiatus in the narrative also ensues frequently as Marcel’s linear journey through experience is

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9 At the beginning of *À la recherche du temps perdu* the later narrator is situated in a bed in a darkened room. The nocturnal and bedbound situation of his musings is repeatedly underlined (Proust: I, 43); (Proust: I, 83-84); (Proust: I, 184); (Proust: I, 376); (Proust: IV, 370-375); (Proust: V, 3). A contrast is thus established early in the narrative between the inward-looking later narrator who is isolated in a dark room and the socialite Marcel.

10 In differentiating between juxtaposition and superimposition, Poulet states that ‘l’une et l’autre impliquent la présence de deux réalités contiguës, mais non fondées, placées de telle sorte que l’esprit va de l’une à l’autre sans les confondre comme sans les multiplier. Mais la juxtaposition suppose la simultanéité des réalités jointes, tandis que la superposition requiert la disparition de l’une pour qu’ait lieu l’apparition de l’autre’ (Poulet, 1982: 112). Poulet’s definition of juxtaposition is wholly satisfactory in the context of my thesis. However, I will explore how the superimposition of photographic images is evoked by Proust to convey a sense of temporal and spatial depth which is predicated on the retention of the initial image.

11 The most important piece of knowledge — that Marcel will one day resolve to write — is not divulged until the revelations of *Le Temps retrouvé*, by which time the voices of Marcel and the later narrator have begun to merge. Rogers affirms that ‘since *À la Recherche* is based upon a dramatic structure, the final narrator though “omniscient” withholds essential information whose inclusion before *Temps Retrouvé* would destroy the plot’ (Rogers, 1965: 103).
provisionally suspended. This suspension of action creates an effect of immobility or absence of temporal duration for which a parallel may be found in the stasis which characterises several elements of photographic practice (such as the pose required for portrait photography; the static photographer; the intermittent nature of the development and printing of a photographic image; the representation of a unique spatio-temporal instant in the resulting image). Evocations of the lexicon of photography point up the latent, but as yet un-contextualised and un-channelled, potential of Marcel’s experience within the overarching context of the conception and realisation of his creative vocation. Schaeffer affirms that:

Comme l’interprétation des signes conventionnels, celle des signes naturels n’est possible que dans le contexte d’un certain savoir. Outre d’un savoir du monde, il faut encore disposer du savoir de l’arché: une photographie fonctionne comme image indicielle à condition qu’on sache qu’il s’agit d’une photographie et ce que ce fait implique. (Schaeffer, 1987: 41)

Just as a lack of knowledge of the photographic system of image production makes it impossible accurately to interpret the indexical image, so the essential meaning of Marcel’s experience throughout À la recherche du temps perdu will be indecipherable until the confirmation in Le Temps retrouvé of his resolve actively to pursue his creative vocation. Narrative suspension of resolution results in a text characterised by ambiguity or uncertainty. The ability of the later narrator to place unsettling elements of Marcel’s experience within the context of the conception and realisation of his creative vocation is for the most part not exercised; however, hints are dropped along the way, which imply that the significance of Marcel’s experience will eventually be made clear. Stylistic and thematic uses of photographic motifs in scenes characterised by an alternation of narrative focalisation through Marcel and the later narrator underline the ambiguity which surrounds the fundamental significance of Marcel’s experience.

12 The later narrator’s exploration of the abundance of ways in which Marcel’s experience may be construed repeatedly overwhelms the plot development of À la recherche du temps perdu as Rogers notes, ‘events, as such, are not important; their meaning is. [...] An impression of immobility is the inevitable consequence’ (Rogers, 1965: 146, 150).
Kisses and Conflicts I: The baiser du soir at Combray

Combray is the setting for two episodes which constitute Marcel's earliest lessons in cruelty: the first he experiences in relation to his mother and the second he witnesses at Montjouvain, between Mlle Vinteuil and her lesbian lover. The photographic reproduction of works of art is briefly and unexpectedly discussed in the first episode; a photographic portrait of M. Vinteuil plays a significant role in the latter. The later narrator hints that both of these experiences have far-reaching consequences. In neither case does the later narrator indicate the precise nature of the future significance of these two experiences. Marcel's restricted viewpoint dominates, therefore, but due to the later narrator's interjection, his conclusions cannot be regarded as entirely accurate or definitive. Both episodes are fundamentally concerned with the long-term effects of a parent/child relationship on the child in question. The baiser du soir episode describes the agony of the child Marcel who waits — in vain, as well he knows, since Swann is their dinner guest — for his inaccessible mother to come and kiss him goodnight in his bedroom. His misery reaches a pitch where, disregarding the dire consequences, he resolves to stay awake until he has seen her once more and exacted his kisses. Having reached this decision, Marcel opens his bedroom window:

J'ouvris la fenêtre sans bruit et m'assis au pied de mon lit; je ne faisais presque aucun mouvement afin qu'on ne m'entendit pas d'en bas. Dehors, les choses semblaient, elles aussi, figées en une muette attention à ne pas troubler le clair de lune, qui doublant et reculant chaque chose par l'extension devant elle de son reflet, plus dense et concret qu'elle-même, avait à la fois aminci et agrandi le paysage comme un plan replié jusque-là, qu'on développe.

(Proust: 1, 32 – my italics)

Regarding the goodnight kiss, the later narrator observes that 'il y a bien des années de cela. [...] La possibilité de telles heures ne renaîtra jamais pour moi. Mais depuis peu de temps, je recommence à très bien percevoir si je prête l'oreille, les sanglots que j'eus la force de contenir devant mon père et qui n'éclatèrent que quand je me retrouvai seul avec maman. En réalité ils n'ont jamais cessé [...] ' (Proust: I, 36). The fact that the later narrator recalls his childish sobs many years later is a strong suggestion of the essentially negative effect of the episode on the child Marcel. Before Marcel witnesses the Montjouvain scene, the later narrator affirms that 'c'est peut-être d'une impression ressentie aussi auprès de Montjouvain, [...] impression restée obscure alors, qu'est sortie, bien après, l'idée que je me suis faite du sadisme. On verra plus tard que, pour de tout autres raisons, le souvenir de cette impression devait jouer un rôle important dans ma vie' (Proust: I, 157). The explicit reference to sadism signals one possible interpretation of the events witnessed at Montjouvain (note the later narrator's use of the words 'peut-être'); but the following sentence implies an alternative and even more significant meaning to be drawn from the scene.
Through the physical act of opening the window, Marcel expresses his need for direct communication and intimacy with his mother; yet his reluctance to be overheard implies a simultaneous desire to see without being noticed. The subsequent immobility of the child is mirrored in the uncanny stillness of the altered moonlit landscape which he contemplates — ‘aminci et agrandi’ suggests the alterations in scale which can result from manipulation of a photographic negative. His fear of discovery prevents him from overlooking the dinner party; thus is Marcel frustrated in his wish to observe his mother unawares as a precursor to physical contact with her. A negative/positive duality characterises this scene where so many things are reversed. Marcel’s true wishes are stifled and are only negatively expressed through his furtive opening of the window and his motionless waiting. The open window delimits a strange moonlit landscape: the observation that the shadows thrown by the objects he perceives appear to be denser than the moonlit objects themselves, suggests a photographic negative; while the use of the verb ‘développer’ evokes — if only distantly or non-contextually — the development of a photographic image in the darkroom. Marcel is aware that his uncharacteristic disobedience can have only a negative outcome. He finds himself in unfamiliar behavioural and perceptual territory. His own alien conduct finds a parallel in the distorted scene which he describes as being outlined by his window. The reference to a freshly unfolded map implies the unknown consequences of his misbehaviour. Like the suspended animation of the Combray landscape at night, Marcel remains still as he anticipates the forbidden encounter with his severe mother: both the fearful but resolutely transgressive boy and the thinned, enlarged landscape are fixed in time and space.

Opening the window is essentially an act of non-intervention on Marcel’s part. Sontag refers to the act of taking a photograph in precisely the same terms. She notes that ‘even if incompatible with intervention in a physical sense, using a camera is still a form of participation. Although the camera is an observation station, the act of photographing is more than passive observing’ (Sontag, 1977: 11). Opening his window is an attempt by Marcel to draw his mother into his environment without her knowledge. Hanney notes that ‘looking out of windows represents a foray into the world of nature and of what is for Proust the next step beyond nature: the world of art’ (Hanney, 1990: 14). The link established between moonlight and photography throughout *À la recherche du temps perdu* was discussed in the last chapter of this thesis. In the scene explored here, the moon illuminates a world where the daytime order of Marcel’s life is inverted: he is alone and unable to gain access to his mother. Genette affirms that ‘en fait, la “description” proustienne est moins une description de l’objet contemplé qu’un récit et une analyse de l’activité perceptive du personnage contemplant, de ses impressions, découvertes progressives, changements de distance et de perspective, erreurs et corrections, enthousiasmes ou déceptions, etc. Contemplation fort active en vérité [...]’ (Genette, 1972: 136).
His mother’s subsequent shocking acquiescence to his demands is the reverse of the anticipated negative outcome of his actions. Rather than punish him for his disobedience, she spends the night reading to him in his room. However, Marcel’s guilty consciousness of the pain he inflicts upon her through the subjugation of her will to his conveys an important message to him with regard to love and suffering. The fulfilment of his desire — in this case, for contact with his mother — does not bring him joy in the end: quite the reverse, in fact. Narrative focalisation through Marcel conveys a view of the baiser du soir episode as a predominantly negative experience of maternal love.

Marcel’s negative point-of-view on the baiser du soir episode is juxtaposed with the later narrator’s more cautiously positive reaction to the experience. The response of the later narrator underlines the complex emotional consequences of the experience for the young boy and the gravity of the effect on Marcel of his mother’s inconsistency: her seemingly cruel indifference to Marcel’s suffering, followed by her surprising compliance with his wish to have her near him. The later narrator believes her to have inflicted serious and lasting damage on her son in absolving him of the need to control his nervous impulses (see note 13). He understands that, because of her yielding to his demands, the sensibility which Marcel has inherited from his mother remains unchecked and his will is critically weakened. Since willpower will be essential to engagement with his creative vocation, responsibility for the flaw in Marcel’s character, which deprives him of self-control and which the later narrator traces back to the baiser du soir episode, is thus laid squarely at his mother’s feet. However, her good intentions are also acknowledged by the later narrator: thus is the ambiguity of human behaviour recognised by him. The later narrator affirms the severity of his mother and grandmother in their treatment of him. However, he understands now that they were motivated by love. Recollecting their awareness of his

18 Marcel’s frustrated determination to kiss his mother at Combray is echoed in his experience of kissing Abertine. The latter episode and the importance of photography in its description will be explored later in this chapter. The volte-face in his mother’s response to Marcel’s behaviour in this scene is the direct opposite of the expected negative outcome and initially seems wholly positive to the child (Proust: I, 37).

19 Shattuck notes that ‘the good-night kiss [...] scene in the Search emphasises a strong aftertaste of disappointment over the fact that his mother and father give in to his importunings’ (Shattuck, 2000: 8). The unexpected contrast between the expected, positive emotional response to his mother’s presence and the negative reality points up a recurrent negative/positive duality throughout the scene.
night-time fears, he notes that ‘elles m’aimaient assez pour ne pas consenter à m’épargner de la souffrance, elles voulaient m’apprendre à la dominer afin de diminuer ma sensibilité nerveuse et fortifier ma volonté’ (Proust: I, 37). A negative/positive duality characterises the judgements of Marcel and the later narrator on this early experience: the former dwells predominantly on unpleasant aspects of the experience; the latter underlines possible affirmative consequences of it. The extreme difficulties involved in any attempt accurately to assess either the motivations underlying aspects of human behaviour or the ultimate significance of interaction between those who feel deep love for one another, as in the parent/child relationship, are implicit in the conflicting conclusions of Marcel and the later narrator with regard to the baiser du soir episode.

His mother’s suggestion that they read one of the books his grandmother is to give Marcel for his birthday leads to the later narrator’s unexpected digression on the subject of his grandmother’s distaste for the photographic reproduction of works of art. He remembers her preference for ‘des gravures anciennes [...] qui représentent un chef-d’œuvre dans un état où nous ne pouvons plus le voir aujourd’hui’ (Proust: I, 40) over the commercial banality of modern photographic art reproductions. The later narrator asserts that it is the passage of time, as it is manifested in alterations in the appearance of art works, or in the modifications in language evinced by the pastoral novels of George Sand, which attracts Marcel’s grandmother, because of the awareness created in the viewer or reader both of the past and of the impossibility of revisiting it. Her disapproval of the vulgarity of photography stems from its rendering in the present of

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20 The later narrator pokes fun at the effects on his artistic education of his grandmother’s efforts to avoid photographic reproduction of art works. He observes that ‘il faut dire que les résultats de cette manière de comprendre l’art de faire un cadeau ne furent pas toujours très brillants. L’idée que je pris de Venise […] était certainement beaucoup moins exacte que celle que m’eussent donnée de simples photographies’ (Proust: I, 40). His gentle criticism of her ideas implies that, if at one time he accepted her ideas without question, he no longer shares his grandmother’s opinions about the photographic reproduction of works of art.

21 The later narrator observes that ‘les romans champêtres de George Sand qu’elle me donnait […] ma grand-mère les avait achetés de préférence à d’autres comme elle eût loué plus volontiers […] quelqu’une de ces vieilles choses qui exercent sur l’esprit une heureuse influence en lui donnant la nostalgie d’impossibles voyages dans le temps’ (Proust: I, 41). His grandmother’s belief in the impossibility of journeying through time, which she attempts to transmit to her grandson through her careful supervision of his artistic education, will ultimately be negated by his experience of involuntary memory.
objects and art works which belong to a former age. The same understanding of the restorative power of the photographic image informs Charlus’s more positive opinion when he remarks that ‘la photographie acquiert un peu de la dignité qui lui manque quand elle cesse d’être une reproduction de réel et nous montre des choses qui n’existent plus’ (Proust: II, 331). The evocation of photography in the baiser du soir episode prefigures the importance of the photographic image of M. Vinteuil in the sadism scene witnessed by Marcel at Montjouvain. It also underlines the uncertainty faced by the reader in response to the baiser du soir episode. The dual narratological structure of Proust’s novel which facilitates the juxtaposition of Marcel’s negative viewpoint and the later narrator’s more modulated reaction makes it difficult for the reader accurately to assess the significance of the episode within the context of Marcel’s evolving creative vocation. Just as the pragmatic flexibility of the photographic image means that its value cannot be definitively fixed, so the juxtaposition of the narratorial voices of Marcel and the later narrator during the baiser du soir episode might be seen to result in a multiplicity of potential interpretations of its importance.

The position of the seemingly incongruous reference to photography in the baiser du soir episode is of interest: the later narrator makes his remarks at the point in the narrative when Marcel’s mother has unpacked four of George Sand’s pastoral novels, including François le Champi from which she will read to him. Novels are unknown worlds to Marcel; each new book is to him a unique entity. His mother’s talent as a reader is praised by the later narrator, who compliments her as ‘une lectrice admirable par le respect et la simplicité de l’interprétation [...]’ (Proust: I, 41-42). Unlike his

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22 Due to its indexical quality, the photographic image affirms the existence both in the present and in the past of that which it represents. Cf. notes 32 and 33 regarding the reviving power of the photographic image. In the case of photographic reproduction of art, new life in the present is conferred on the represented object. Marcel’s grandmother’s profound attachment to the past as an unattainable entity guarantees her dislike for a system of representation which has the effect of so decidedly connecting past and present.

23 The later narrator observes that ‘les procédés de narration [...] qu’un lecteur un peu instruit reconnaît pour commun à beaucoup de romans, me paraissaient simplement — à moi qui considérais un livre nouveau non comme une chose ayant beaucoup de semblables, mais comme une personne unique, n’ayant de raison d’exister qu’en soi — une émanation troublante de l’essence particulière à François le Champi’ (Proust: I, 41). While fundamental differences in the notion of ‘émanation’ characterise photography and literature as it is understood by Marcel in this passage, a tentative parallel may be traced here between the two systems of representation.
grandmother's convoluted efforts to acquaint her grandson with several layers — 'épaisses' (Proust: I, 40) — of art in one visual representation of a particular work of art, his mother communicates the mystery of the Sand narrative, directly and simply, through her voice. Marcel is soothed. Thus literature is the means of healing the rift between his mother and himself and of reconciling them to one another. It also connects Marcel with the mysterious world of François le Champi. In reading aloud, his mother fleetingly revives the rural life of the past which is represented in George Sand's novel. His grandmother's choice of George Sand for its benign influence on the mind 'en lui donnant la nostalgie d'impossibles voyages dans le temps' (Proust; I, 41) implies her determination to convey to Marcel an important message concerning the ephemeral and irrecoverable nature of time. Yet his mother's reading facilitates a transparent oral resurrection of France's rural past life and therefore provides the fleeting illusion of exactly the type of journey through time which his grandmother believed impossible and whose suggestion she abhorred in the photographic image. The later narrator thus implies that Marcel's first experience of the books given to him by his grandmother subtly undermines the very lesson she wished him to learn from them. The explicit reference to her misguided attitude to photography prefigures her erroneous outlook on literature.

**Kisses and Conflicts II: Love and Pain in the Montjouvain Scene**

The notion of a fundamental link between love and pain is reinforced in Marcel's apprehension of the sadism scene at Montjouvain. Marcel's spatial position, directly outside the window looking in, is the reverse of the position he occupied in the baiser du soir episode. It is night: Marcel is once again in a dark space and does not move for fear

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24 Wegner affirms that 'the episode of profanation — coded for the most part in optical terms — must be regarded as one of the most momentous instances of framing, for the memory of this episode will decisively alarm and haunt Marcel in connection with Albertine. In other words, seeing Vinteuil's photographic portrait being desecrated will become Marcel's single most traumatic scene of voyeurism' (Wegner, 2003: 131). The significance of the Montjouvain scene with regard to Albertine will be assessed within the context of the superimposition of images in Proust's novel, in the final chapter of my thesis.

25 Poulet explores the effect of representing Marcel's experience of looking in windows, noting that 'observé ainsi du dehors, à intervalles, par une série de coups d'œil qui le décourent, le monde se compartimente, il se divise en une certaine quantité de cases, à l'intérieur de chacune desquelles se place une scène différente' (Poulet, 1982: 125).
of discovery as he observes a scene which revolts him. He sees more than he can immediately understand — as is acknowledged by the later narrator before the description of what takes place within the room. Therefore the fundamental meaning of the scene remains hidden (cf. footnote 13) until the discussion of it in *La Prisonnière*. As was the case in the *baiser du soir* episode, the interjection of the later narrator at the beginning of the scene undermines the reliability of Marcel’s narrating voice, without supplying a stable or definitive alternative. Thus the significance of the scene remains profoundly ambiguous: judgement must again be suspended. The effect of this deliberate deferral of explanation of the meaning of this and other scenes in *À la recherche du temps perdu* is to create a sense of temporal hiatus and narrative discontinuity; due to the dual narratological framework of the novel and the resulting juxtaposition of spatio-temporally separate narratorial voices, events in Marcel’s life are represented as distinct and discontinuous episodes whose significance within the context of his whole life experience remains indeterminate throughout the novel. Together with the parts played by the two women in the theatre-like sitting-room, the ambiguous role of the photographic image in the Montjouvin scene underlines the frustrating uncertainty regarding the implications of Marcel’s experience which characterises the Proustian narrative until *Le Temps retrouvé*.

Although Mlle Vinteuil and her lesbian lover are the only occupants of the sitting-room at Montjouvin, their actions hinge upon Mlle Vinteuil’s relationship with her dead father. Descriptions of M. Vinteuil before his death show him to be a man of excessive sensitivity and politeness, to such a degree that his own tastes and desires are consistently repressed or negated when in the company of other people. In a spying episode which

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26 Thus is Marcel conveniently absolved of any deliberate voyeurism in this instance. He explains that ‘la fenêtre était entrouverte, la lampe était allumée, je voyais tous ses mouvements sans qu’elle me vit, mais en m’en allant j’aurais fait craquer les buissons, elle m’aurait entendu et elle aurait pu croire que je m’étais caché là pour l’épier’ (Proust: I, 157). The description of the lamp-lit room establishes the theatrical connotations of the Montjouvin scene, where the window functions temporarily as the invisible fourth wall of a conventional theatre. Marcel’s physical immobility and mute attention during this dramatic scene also suggest the late nineteenth-century studio photographers who recorded images of sitters in elaborate and wilfully misleading settings. In *A. A. E. Disdéri and the Carte de Visite Portrait Photograph*, Elizabeth Ann McCauley affirms that ‘the carte […] represented the aspirations of the sitters’ (McCauley, 1985: 3).

27 Poulet affirms that ‘juxtaposés! N’est-ce pas là […] la méthode proustienne par excellence? Celle qui consiste à éliminer la durée, à supprimer la distance, à réduire le monde à un nombre déterminé d’images isolées, contiguës, strictement délimitées, qui, accrochées, pour ainsi dire, à la même cimaise, s’offrent simultanément au regard?’ (Poulet, 1982: 125-126).
prefigures the scene between Mlle Vinteuil and her lover, Marcel observes M. Vinteuil’s machinations before his own parents’ entry so as to ensure that they see his compositions on the piano. M. Vinteuil then refuses to play them (Proust: I, 111-112). M. Vinteuil’s refusal to satisfy his own desires — social and creative — is repeatedly alluded to. His overt behaviour — and subsequently that of his daughter — may be regarded as entirely negative: it is the direct opposite of his true feelings. A loving and overly attentive father, he is also extremely critical of others. That his daughter shares many of his personality traits is established early in the representation of their relationship.

A photographic image of the composer plays a key role in the scene which is witnessed by Marcel at Montjouvain and which develops the theme of problematic parent/child relations which was raised during the baiser du soir episode. As he gazes into Mlle Vinteuil’s sitting-room before the arrival of her lover, Marcel recalls his mother’s thoughts on Mlle Vinteuil’s duty to honour her late father’s memory: ‘Pauvre M. Vinteuil, disait ma mere, il a vecu et il est mort pour sa fille, sans avoir reçu son salaire. Le recevra-t-il après sa mort et sous quelle forme? Il ne pourrait lui venir que d’elle’ (Proust: I, 158). Marcel’s recollection of his mother’s words points up what she regards as the debt of honour which all children owe to their parents, particularly after their death. The implication is that such a duty must one day be assumed by her son if he is to pay suitable tribute to her role in his life. Mlle Vinteuil’s treatment of her father’s photograph in the Montjouvain scene is understood by Marcel as a desecration of his memory and as such as a deplorable dereliction of duty. Having deliberately placed a photograph of her dead father in a conspicuous position by the couch where she and her lover are lying, Mlle Vinteuil suddenly protests:

“Oh! ce portrait de mon père qui nous regarde, je ne sais pas qui a pu le mettre là, j’ai pourtant dit vingt fois que ce n’était pas sa place.” Je me souvins que c’étaient les mots que

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28 The first reference to M. Vinteuil in A la recherche du temps perdu notes his strict views on slovenliness (Proust: I, 110). His disapproval of Swann’s inappropriate marriage is openly expressed (Proust: I, 111, 147).

29 It is Marcel’s grandmother who points out the sensitivity shared by father and daughter and which she regards as the true nature underlying the girl’s bold features: ‘[…] et on voyait s’éclairer, se découper comme par transparence, sous la figure hommase du “bon diable”, les traits plus fins d’une jeune fille éplorée’ (Proust: I, 112). Composite photography or radiographic imagery are suggested in this description of the clear outline of Mlle Vinteuil’s fundamental, inherited personality.
M. Vinteuil avait dits à mon père à propos du morceau de musique. Ce portrait leur servait sans doute habituellement pour des profanations rituelles, car son amie lui répondit par ces paroles qui devaient faire partie de ses réponses liturgiques: “Mais laisse-le donc où il est, il n’est plus là pour nous embêter.” (Proust: I, 160 – my italics)

The use here made by Mlle Vinteuil of the photographic portrait of her father shows the complexity of her emotional response to his death and points up the ambivalence of her feelings.\(^\text{30}\) Soon after the invention of photography in 1839, portrait photography began to provide accurate and accessible records of individual physiognomies and thus of family likenesses. In *The Beautiful and the Damned: The Creation of Identity in Nineteenth Century Photography*, Peter Hamilton states that:

> Photography offered the middle classes a new means of being represented both as individuals and as a group. But it also answered a deep longing for keepsakes of loved ones in a period when distance and death separated people far more frequently than they do now. [...] Photography preserved the dearly loved’s likeness in perpetuity. This was a significant matter in an age when the emotional investment made in the family was growing. [...] The emotional centrality of the family — nuclear as well as extended — as the key building block in nineteenth-century western society offers a clue to the extensive use of photography to idealise and memorialise this social institution. (Hamilton, 2001: 10-12)

The photographic portrait of the late M. Vinteuil is an indexical icon which furnishes an irrefutable record of his features and therefore of the family resemblance between father and daughter — it is tangible proof of their genetic connectedness. With regard to family photograph albums, Dubois asserts that:

> Assurément ce qui confère une telle valeur à ces albums, ce ne sont ni les contenus représentés en eux-mêmes, ni les qualités plastiques ou esthétiques de la composition, ni le degré de ressemblance ou de réalisme des clichés, mais c’est leur dimension pragmatique, leur statut d’index, leur poids irréductible de référence, le fait qu’il s’agit de véritables traces physiques de personnes singulières qui ont été là et qui ont des rapports particuliers avec ceux qui regardent les photos. (Dubois, 1990: 77)

The behavioural similarities between father and daughter are underlined by her echoing of her father’s words regarding his deliberately displayed music manuscripts. In evoking M. Vinteuil’s musical creativity, Marcel draws attention to the composer’s creative vocation and the question of his artistic legacy. While her father’s use of the phrase

\(^{30}\) The use of the phrases ‘sans doute habituellement’ and ‘devaient faire partie’ in the passage quoted above implies that the scene Marcel is witnessing may not be unique: Marcel is clearly projecting his own thoughts onto the scene before him.
quoted above drew attention to his newly created musical works of art, Mlle Vinteuil’s words point up an innovative use of the photographic portrait. As will ultimately be revealed, it is Mlle Vinteuil’s lover who saves M. Vinteuil’s music from oblivion by painstakingly transcribing his manuscripts. Marcel points up the parallel between the daughter’s idiosyncratic use of the photographic image in this scene and her father’s perverse manner of drawing attention to his music before denying himself the pleasure of playing it for others. Implicit in the evocation of this parallel between the conduct of father and daughter is the likelihood that Mlle Vinteuil’s exploitation of the photographic image in this scene will have equally unsatisfactory results as regards her own gratification: the possibility of pleasure is doomed from the beginning because of her inability — inherited from her father — to view pleasure as anything other than sinful.31

The ritual profanation of the father’s photographic image at Montjouvain underlines several prevalent themes in À la recherche du temps perdu: filial love and duty, heredity and the nature of desire. It also points up the way in which distinctive characteristics of the photographic image will contribute to Mlle Vinteuil’s knowing pursuit of inevitable dissatisfaction. The power of the gaze in the photographic image plays a significant role with regard to the sequence of Mlle Vinteuil’s actions. Walter Benjamin affirms that ‘looking at someone carries the implicit expectation that our look will be returned by the object of our gaze. [...] To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return’ (Benjamin, 1990: 184).32 In this scene the photographed gaze of the good father is understood by the daughter as observing unblinkingly the transgressions through which she wishes to prove herself wicked — through which she wishes actively to assert her difference from him. His scrutiny is essential to her satisfaction. In effect, Mlle Vinteuil uses the photograph as a means of reviving her defunct parent.33 Her lover’s words — ‘laisse-le donc où il est, il n’est plus

31 Contemplating the sadism scene, the later narrator observes that ‘ce n’est pas le mal qui lui donnait l’idée du plaisir, qui lui semblait agréable; c’est le plaisir qui lui semblait malin’ (Proust: I, 162).
32 Mlle Vinteuil’s words — ‘ce portrait de mon père qui nous regarde’ — imply her conviction that the photographic representation of her father is looking at and therefore criticising her actions. She revives him by looking at his photographic portrait.
33 Barthes observes that ‘l’immobilité de la photo est comme le résultat d’une confusion perverse entre deux concepts: le Réel et le Vivant: en attestant que l’objet a été réel, elle induit subrepticement à croire qu’il est vivant [...]’ (Barthes, 1980: 123).
là pour nous embêter’ — convey the girls’ unconscious awareness of the paradoxical semiotic status of the photographic image as indexical icon and thus its power as an instrument for the profanation of the memory of M. Vinteuil. The first part of her lover’s sentence — ‘laisse-le donc où il est’ — is ambiguous: it could allude to the photographic portrait or to M. Vinteuil himself. The second half of the sentence — ‘il n’est plus là pour nous embêter’ — refers explicitly to the man, both acknowledging his absence and underlining the frustration which his living presence caused the two girls. Thus the photographic portrait functions as a means of simultaneously establishing M. Vinteuil’s presence in the room while delighting in his definitive absence and their resulting personal freedom to indulge their desires. Their pleasure will be heightened by his gaze as he looks out of the photographic image. Dubois affirms that:


It is interesting to note the precise nature of Mlle Vinteuil’s (mis)behaviour before her dead father’s photographed gaze. She and her lover recreate the parent/child ritual of the goodnight kiss:

Elle sauta sur les genoux de son amie, et lui tendit chastement son front à baiser comme elle aurait pu faire si elle avait été sa fille, sentant avec délices qu’elles allaient ainsi toutes deux au bout de la cruauté en ravissant à M. Vinteuil, jusque dans le tombeau, sa paternité. (Proust: I, 161)

Even when attempting to behave in ways inconceivable to her prudish father, Mlle Vinteuil continues to define herself in relation to him: she persists in struggling to derive her identity from him even after his death. Barthes affirms that ‘le lignage livre une identité plus forte, plus intéressante que l’identité civile — plus rassurante aussi, car la pensée de l’origine nous apaise [...]’ (Barthes, 1980: 162). Her actions are an echo of a tender ritual she may have shared with him. The chaste kiss between Mlle Vinteuil and her lover evokes Marcel’s own obsession with the ritual of *le baiser du soir* which he enacted with his mother and which he pursued despite his mother’s resistance one night.
at Combray. The virtuous kiss on the brow which she receives from her lover lacks any outward sexual connotations: only Marcel’s projected thoughts suggest a possible underlying frisson. Narrative focalisation through Marcel during the Montjouvain scene, succeeds in conveying his ideas about the damaging nature of parent/child relationships in particular and love relationships in general, which he expresses in relation to Mlle Vinteuil and her father, but which may equally derive from his feelings towards his own mother. Cruelty is pointed up as a potential element of every relationship based on love. In acting out the parental kiss on the forehead, Mlle Vinteuil seems to seek to taunt and wound her father: she violates the exclusivity of their private ritual by repeating it with a vicious young woman. In so doing, Mlle Vinteuil appears to try wilfully to distance herself from her father; yet ultimately and paradoxically, her actions succeed in conveying her sense of loss and loneliness. She can only attempt to deceive herself that it is she who is dissociating herself from him, she who is hurting him. In fact it is his death which has separated them absolutely and, no matter how outrageous her behaviour, her father can never reprove her. She hurts only herself and is conscious of this fact, in spite of the illusion generated by the indexical quality of the photograph: hence her frustration, which is expressed in the move from offensive conduct before the photographic image to offensive action towards the image itself. However, it is important to note that Marcel does not actually witness the act of spitting on the photograph:


At this point, Mlle Vinteuil closes the shutters and the window, thereby preventing Marcel from witnessing the act of spitting on the photograph. Spitting directly on her

34 Brassaï affirms that “le souvenir de M. Vinteuil commence à être profané quand Mlle Vinteuil tend son front à baiser à la visiteuse, la substituant ainsi à son père” (Brassaï, 1997: 95).
35 The ritual profanation of the photograph is thus left to Marcel’s imagination. The theatrical connotations of the Montjouvain scene are pointed up by Mlle Vinteuil’s pretence of a desire to close the shutters once her lover arrives: despite her statements to the contrary, the (remote, though of course in this case, real) possibility of being observed in fact contributes to her sexual gratification and underlines the element of conscious performance in her desecration of her father’s memory through the photographic image. Mlle Vinteuil’s conduct raises the question of outward appearance and emotional reality and implies that the

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father’s photographic portrait is an escalation of the transgressive behaviour of the two young women. Whereas receiving a kiss from her lover suggests an effort to impose a distance between her father and herself, spitting on his photograph is a violent attempt to be close to him. Marcel sees the profanation of the photographic image of the dead man as equivalent to a blow struck at the living man. His shocked disapproval is evident when he observes that ‘je savais maintenant, pour toutes les souffrances que pendant sa vie M. Vinteuil avait supportées à cause de sa fille, ce qu’après la mort il avait reçu d’elle en salaire’ (Proust: I, 161).

Narrative focalisation at Montjouvin shifts to the later narrator once the shutters of Mlle Vinteuil’s room have been closed. The later narrator responds to Marcel’s spying by asserting his belief in Mlle Vinteuil’s good nature (Proust: I, 162). His opinion contrasts with Marcel’s revolted disgust at the scene. The later narrator suggests the possibility that Mlle Vinteuil’s actions are the antithetical manifestation of a fundamentally sound Vinteuil character and of faithful filial affection. He regards the daughter’s inability to experience sexual gratification even through fetishistic and sadistic means as an accentuated reproduction of the father’s perverse self-denial of pleasure. The reproduction in the daughter of the father’s harmful attitude towards pleasure suggests the negative/positive characteristic of the photographic system of image production: in both father and daughter, the expression of desire is consistently negative. In his exploration of the possible significance of Mlle Vinteuil’s actions, the later narrator points up the genetic legacy connecting Mlle Vinteuil to her family by drawing attention to the blue eyes passed from paternal grandmother, to father, to daughter.\textsuperscript{36} Mlle Vinteuil cannot escape the effects of her heritage any more than she can alter the colour of her eyes. In spite of a natural inclination towards the enjoyment of pleasure, she is doomed to hold herself back from it because of the lessons learned through a lifetime spent with her

\textsuperscript{36} The reference to the family resemblance of grandmother, father and daughter points up once again the power of the gaze in terms of identity affirmation through mutual visual recognition. As previously stated, photography provided middle-class nineteenth-century society with a new and accurate means for the preservation of family likenesses.
father. This fatal, inherited flaw is pointed up in her fetishisation of his photographic image. Thélot notes that:

La profanation de la ressemblance ne s'accomplit pas sans raison comme profanation d'une photographie. Non seulement l'image objective est reçue comme la plus ressemblante qui soit, si bien qu'elle est confondue avec le modèle qu'elle représente et prise par les deux jeunes filles pour fétiche de leur blasphème, mais du coup elle métaphorise cette ressemblance comme telle. (Thélot, 2003: 204)

Due to its indexical quality, the photographic image affirms the bonds between father and daughter as no other system of visual representation can. As an orphaned only child, Mlle Vinteuil is now completely alone. The photographic portrait of her father is a visual trace of her family heritage and thus an affirmation of her identity. In defiling the photographic image, she expresses (indirectly and negatively, as befits her father’s daughter) her love for him and her frustration at his loss and her consequent isolation. The semiotic status of the photographic image as indexical icon fits it for the paradoxical purpose of simultaneous negation and affirmation of the father’s absence. It is thus a suitable instrument for Mlle Vinteuil’s simulated sadism because, while it cannot restore him to her as a living man, it can momentarily provide the illusion of the same. In role-playing with the photographic portrait of her father, Mlle Vinteuil is ultimately playing it very safe as regards the pursuit of pleasure which she has been taught to find so evil: she is unconsciously aware of the dissatisfaction that must inevitably arise from her desire to scandalise a dead man. The distinctive semiotic status and pragmatic flexibility of the photographic image fit it admirably for the purpose of deliberately and endlessly deferring her own gratification.

Mlle Vinteuil’s continuing love for her father is also underlined by her willed revival of him through ritualised interaction with his photographic image. The scene witnessed by Marcel at Montjovain is ultimately suggestive more of masochism than sadism. Thélot affirms that ‘c’est la [...] ressemblance [...] qui explique que Mlle Vinteuil prit son plaisir dément mais naturel à cracher sur le portrait de son père. Elle n’a craché en vérité que sur elle-même’ (Thélot, 2003: 207). A frustrating consciousness of her duty to his memory and a sense of her own inadequacy may provide the impetus for Mlle Vinteuil’s
furious, aggressive transgression of the norms of kindness which characterised her relationship with her father during his life. In *La Prisonnière* the later narrator describes the act of spitting on the photographic portrait of the father as a source of mad pleasure—‘un plaisir dément’ (Proust: V, 249)—for Mlle Vinteuil; her lover simply plays along. The fact that her lover is the person to rescue her father’s creative work by devoting herself to the deciphering of his manuscripts is the ultimate redeeming feature of Mlle Vinteuil’s life in the eyes of Marcel and the later narrator. However, as previously stated, the later narrator merely alludes in *Du côté de chez Swann* to his future understanding of the Montjouvain scene, without divulging the nature of that understanding. In affirming the fundamental goodness of Mlle Vinteuil’s nature, he allows for the hope that her apparently sadistic conduct in relation to her father’s photographic image shows an underlying love and awareness of filial duty which will ensure that her father’s memory is honoured appropriately.

That Mlle Vinteuil’s lover is responsible for the dissemination of Vinteuil’s musical compositions is a detail which is not disclosed until *La Prisonnière* (Proust: V, 249), where the later narrator affirms that it is Mlle Vinteuil’s self-abnegation and her love for her father which enable her lover to dedicate herself to the composer’s works. Through her facilitation of the labours of the latter, Mlle Vinteuil honours the memory of her father as creative artist. In grappling persistently with the indecipherable manuscripts, her lover takes on the role of reader of unknown symbols which, in *Le Temps retrouvé*, will be identified by the later narrator as an essential element of the creative act (Proust: VII, 186).

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37 The act of spitting itself may be regarded as a mocking parody of the procreative act of ejaculation.
38 In *La Prisonnière*, the later narrator affirms that ‘du vivant même du grand musicien elle avait appris de la fille le culte que celle-ci avait pour son père. C’est à cause de ce culte que dans ces moments où l’on va à l’opposé de ses inclinations véritables, les jeunes filles avaient pu trouver un plaisir dément aux profanations qui ont été racontées’ (Proust: V, 249).
39 Thélot points up the parallels between Mlle Vinteuil’s lover and the later narrator of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, observing that ‘cette coupable sauvee par l’art est ainsi le modèle du narrateur. Cette homosexuelle profanant la figure du père mais sauvant sa musique initié le héro à la possibilité spectaculaire de l’homosexualité, au parjure de la famille par le désir, et pourtant au plus grand art. Cette jeune fille [...] qui est apparue perverse et vile par le cadre d’une fenêtre éclairée la capturant dans le rôle de son sadisme, mais qui à la fin rend à Vinteuil le service le plus pur — à maints égards le narrateur l’imite [...]’ (Thélot, 2003: 204).
The importance of the parent/child relationship in the development of the character of the child, which is affirmed in the baiser du soir episode, is reiterated in the Montjouvain scene. There are notable similarities between the two parent/child relationships represented in the episodes explored above. Absence and the agony of separation characterise both in significant ways: the mother who refuses to come up to perform a ritual on which her child's peace of mind depends and the father whose example prevents his daughter from experiencing pleasure, and whose death has left her alone. Both appear to be predicated on intense and predominantly negative emotions prompted in the child by the behaviour of the parent: anguish and fear in the first case; cruelty and disrespect in the latter. In the case of the baiser du soir episode, Marcel experiences his mother's love as consistent repression and frustration of his desires: his most urgently felt needs are repeatedly denied by her, and his first seriously wilful opposition to her code of discipline ends in the new and bitter knowledge of guilt at having caused her pain. In the same way, Mlle Vinteuil in the Montjouvain scene is not satisfied by the acting-out of the homosexual desires which, during her father's life, she had been obliged to conceal in his presence. Her deliberate contravention of familial norms of interaction fails to give her pleasure precisely because her father is no longer alive to be shocked by it.40

In both the baiser du soir episode and the Montjouvain scene, the disparate points of view of Marcel and the later narrator contribute to the representation of a profoundly unstable reality: its meaning is essentially arbitrary and lacking in purpose or context because of the confusion generated by the multiplicity of possible interpretations of it. Only at the end of the novel will the meaning of individual experiences of Marcel's life which are recounted throughout the novel, and the relationships between them, be made clear. Poulet affirms that:

Lorsque le roman proustien se termine, quand la conscience qui n’a cessé d’en enregistrer les événements, se trouve en mesure de jeter sur eux un regard final, rétrospectif et elucidateur, alors la multiplicité discontinue des épisodes, pareille jusqu’au ce moment à une série de tableaux isolés et juxtaposés, se trouve faire place dans l’esprit de celui qui en embrasse

40 Marcel takes careful note of her facial expression and body language as she closes the shutters: 'Mlle Vinteuil, d’un air las, gauche, affairé, honnête et triste vint fermer les volets et la fenêtre [...]’ (Proust: I, 161). Her emotions appear to be rather gloomy: the opposite or negative of those which her actions seem to seek.
Metaphoric and thematic evocations of photography contribute to the sense of spatio-temporal stasis which results from the dual narratological structure of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. They also serve to point up the fundamental incoherence of Marcel’s experience throughout his life. Only through his resolution actively to engage in the conception and realisation of a creative literary work based on his own past will Marcel succeed in imposing a retrospective framework on his experience of the world.

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41 Wegner affirms that ‘the function of photography in Proust renounces a practice of naïve realism: it negates the very assumption of a human language which reflects speculatively or like a mirror-image the reality of “the given”. [...] So if there is a philosophy of photography to be deduced from the *Recherche*, it may be formulated as follows: photography exposes — in a sense: makes visible — that there can be no reliable experience of reality. It shows that there is nothing permanent and stable to be seen’ (Wegner, 2003: 110).
Narrative Focalisation through Marcel-in-Motion

The effects of spatio-temporal immobility which are produced by the dual narratological structure of the Proustian narrative and which were explored in the last section of this chapter in relation to scenes where Marcel remains still, are further underlined in several key scenes where Marcel is in motion. The contrast between his physical movement and the static nature of his visual perception points up the fundamentally discontinuous nature of Marcel’s visual apprehension of the world and thus his youthful failure to appreciate the essential importance of the passage of time. Being in motion places Marcel in an altered spatio-temporal state with regard to the world around him. By virtue of his movement through space, his relationship with the objects of his perception undergoes unexpected and sometimes unwelcome transformations. Poulet affirms that, for Marcel, ‘l’expérience du mouvement aboutit [...] à une manière de défaite’ (Poulet, 1982: 110).

The discomfiture which marks Marcel’s experience of movement serves to underline his habitual inaction (both physical and creative) and his stasis as observer of a world to which he belongs, but in which he prefers to play no active role beyond that of a detached spectator, who controls the objects of his perception by carefully enframing them. The act of enframing the objects of his perception is in itself an affirmative deed for Marcel.

42 Marcel recounts the particularities of his experiences of travelling by train (Proust: II, 214-224); in a carriage (Proust: I, 177-180); (Proust: II, 275-288); and in a motor-car (Proust: IV, 385), as well as describing the effects of displacing his body from its usual static position in relation to the object of his perception: when he walks in on his unsuspecting grandmother (Proust: III, 132-134); when he moves to kiss Albertine (Proust: III, 350-355). With regard to involuntary memory, physical movement is repeatedly referred to as both a catalyst for and an impediment to the experience: three times, he is in a carriage when he experiences involuntary memory; on one occasion he is going down the stairs and on another, he is on a train. See Shattuck’s ‘Table of the Moments Bienheureux’ for a synopsis of each of Marcel’s experiences of involuntary memory, his location and state of mind (Shattuck, 2000: 257-264).

43 Due to its spatio-temporal specificity and its status as indexical icon, the photograph is the most appropriate image for the metaphoric representation of Marcel’s struggle to comprehend temporal continuity through spatial discontinuity. Wegner affirms that ‘in the Recherche we may read that the territory to be conquered by photography is one of movement and thus of temporality’ (Wegner, 2003: 83). Dubois notes that ‘la lumière [...] est un ensemble d’ondes électromagnétiques dotées de propriétés particulières, essentiellement de l’ordre de la continuité et de la régularité. [...] Or, à partir du moment où ces ondes lumineuses homogènes, émises ou réfléchies par ce qui constituerait l’objet photographié (le spectacle, la scène), traversent les lentilles de l’objectif et viennent toucher uniformément, d’un seul coup et dans un seul instant, toute la surface sensible de la pellicule, à partir de ce moment, [...] des discontinuités, des granularités, des effets aléatoires, locaux et ponctuels, vont s’introduire irréductiblement [...]’ (Dubois, 1990: 98-99).
Combined with his physical immobility throughout much of the novel, it suggests the photographer consciously working in tandem with the camera. The aimlessness of his perception is underlined by the evocation of photography, given the pragmatic flexibility and consequent uncertainty which are essential characteristics of the photographic image as defined in the work of Schaeffer. Until Marcel’s creative vocation is embraced in *Le Temps retrouvé*, a fundamental lack of purpose underpins his perceptual contact with the world. The result of this mode and understanding of the process of perception is an abundance of discontinuous memory images which remain absolutely discrete but capable of juxtaposition in the mind of the later narrator. Poulet observes that:

> La juxtaposition est le contraire d’un mouvement. C’est un assemblage d’objets qui restent à leur place, en des lieux fixes, tandis que le mouvement […] est un déplacement qui transfére telle image du passé dans le présent, ou qui fait ‘jouer aux quatre coins’ les différentes parties d’un paysage. Dans la juxtaposition, aucune distance n’est franchie, aucune unification comme aucune multiplication ne sont réalisées. Tout simplement les choses qui existent, se contentent de poursuivre leur existence les unes près des autres, sans se rapprocher comme sans se repousser. (Poulet, 1982: 118-119)

Poulet underlines the immobility of juxtaposed individual memory images and the infrangibility of the borders of each of these images. The juxtaposition in Marcel’s mind of his memory images is not dictated by a hierarchy of time and place. Images recorded at discrete moments in the past are juxtaposed with one another according to their relevance to the scene before Marcel’s eyes at the present time and regardless of their spatio-temporal origin. As with photography, the spatio-temporal specificity of each recorded and juxtaposed memory image guarantees its status as a unique image and precludes the possibility of fusion or confusion.

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44 Informative research on frames in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* has been carried out by both Frank Wegner and Pedro Kadivar: cf. the previous section of this chapter for references.

45 The next section of this chapter of my thesis will explore the superimposition of images in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The superimposition of images in Proust’s novel involves the retention of an original image which is subsequently overlaid with relevant images, typically of the same person or of a member of the same family. The result produces the effect of a composite photograph or X-ray image. This stylistic feature of the Proustian narrative is particularly relevant with regard to the themes of heredity or lineage and romantic love.
The alternation of the narrating voices of Marcel and the later narrator is underlined by the juxtaposition of their disparate points-of-view on the same object of Marcel’s perception. In Temps et récit, Paul Ricoeur notes that:

Au total, les deux notions de point de vue et de voix sont tellement solidaires qu’elles en deviennent indiscernables. [...] Il s’agit plutôt d’une seule fonction considérée sous l’angle de deux questions différentes. Le point de vue répond à la question: d’où perçoit-on ce qui est montré par le fait d’être raconté? donc: d’où parle-t-on? La voix répond à la question: qui parle ici? (Ricoeur, 1984: 148)

The point of view of Marcel-in-motion, as he comes into contact with new aspects of the world, differs from that of the later narrator who retrospectively appraises his experience. The physical position of the later narrator, lying in bed in a darkened room, is suggested from the first pages of À la recherche du temps perdu. His solitude, physical immobility and the darkness together hint at the camera obscura or, more particularly, the photographic darkroom, in which latent memory images are developed and juxtaposed with each other according to the whim of the photographer. The spatio-temporal immobility which is a distinctive characteristic of the photographic image underpins the dual narratological technique employed by Proust and is reinforced in scenes where Marcel is in motion. Though engaged in physical action, Marcel as he moves seems to be the still point around which the world turns. The interjections of the later narrator in these scenes reinforce the sense of stasis and the suspension of plot development which repeatedly characterise the Proustian narrative. Explicit evocations of photography in several such scenes show Proust’s understanding and manipulation of this system of image production with regard to the representation of Marcel’s idiosyncratic apprehension of the world and in particular of objects of desire. In underlining the discontinuous nature of his visual perception of the world, references to photography in scenes in À la recherche du temps perdu where Marcel is in motion, create a

In Proust’s Nocturnal Muse, William Stewart Bell underlines the importance of sleep and dreams at the opening of Proust’s novel (Bell, 1962: 5). In Axel’s Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930, Edmund Wilson also affirms that Proust’s novel ‘begins in the darkened room of sleep’ (Wilson, 1962: 145).

Wegner affirms that ‘Marcel’s gaze is incapable of registering the change or movement of objects. Within his visual field the world moves in the very “pas saccade” which characterises Golo’s disquieting progressions as projected by the magic lantern. This is why the instantane may be seen as the basic unit of Proustian perception’ (Wegner, 2003: 72). In scenes where it is Marcel himself who moves, the discontinuity which characterises his visual apprehension of the world becomes even more marked.
simultaneous awareness of the relentless flow of time and thus of Marcel’s unsuspected
and ineluctable position within both time and space. The distinctive semiotic
relationship between the photographic image and the photographed object means that
such references also affirm the veracity of the surprising and often disconcerting new
visual reality with which Marcel comes into contact. Diverse and even contradictory
aspects of the same object are juxtaposed, creating a fundamental sense of uncertainty
regarding the world as appropriated by Marcel — yet it must be noted that these aspects
are aspects of the same object.

The photographic representation of moving objects facilitates the acquisition of an
unprecedented appreciation of the mechanics of physical motion and also of the ceaseless
passage of time, because it cuts out an instant of tangible motion, the continuation or
completion of which is bound up with temporal continuity. The flow of time is pointed
up through the photographic immobilisation of an element of a continuous action and
hence the fragmentation of that action. Sontag affirms that:

The photograph is a thin slice of space as well as time. [...] Through photographs, the world
becomes a series of unrelated, freestanding particles. [...] The camera makes reality atomic,
manageable, and opaque. It is a view of the world that denies interconnectedness, continuity,
and which confers on each moment the character of a mystery. (Sontag, 1977: 22-23)

Marcel is unaware of his position in time; the later narrator is fully conscious of it. In Le Temps retrouvé,
the later narrator observes that ‘nous avons beau savoir que les années passent, que la jeunesse fait place à
la vieillesse, que les fortunes et les trônes les plus solides s’écroulent, que la célébrité est passagère, notre
manière de prendre connaissance et pour ainsi dire de prendre le cliché de cet univers mouvant, entraîné par
le Temps, l’immobilise au contraire’ (Proust: VII, 270). Photography is explicitly referred to in this passage
as a metaphor for the erroneous way in which the world is apprehended by the protagonist Marcel
throughout his life. The juxtaposition of temporal flow and spatial immobility is understood by the later
narrator to be a fundamental paradox which characterises Marcel’s way of visually appropriating the world.
It is therefore possible retrospectively to appreciate the significance of references to photography as a
means of underlining the essential importance of the passage of time within the context of Marcel’s
ultimate conception and realisation of his creative vocation.

Wegner contends that ‘the continuum of movement may be dissected into a sequence of stationary states
of movement. In this sense, photography is just as revolutionary as the invention of the telescope. The
camera becomes a zoom, a slow motion device which domesticates the most minute temporal fragments.
This deconstruction of movement, a transformation of dynamics into a sequence of consecutive, self-
emergent physical states means nothing less than a glimpse into the depth of time’ (Wegner, 2003: 83).
As the ultimate attempt photographically to record movement, chronophotography results in serialised representations of individual instants of a single movement.\textsuperscript{50} Chronophotography is predicated on the notion of a static camera or photographer deliberately recording multiple images of a moving object. Such images are typically displayed successively and horizontally, as on a contact sheet.\textsuperscript{51} The arguments presented by Wegner with regard to the chronophotographic paradigms which he detects as a means of tracing movement in \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} are persuasive, particularly in relation to the photographic analysis of motion and the spatialisation of time. However, the dual narratological structure of Proust’s novel implies a fundamental and systematic interruption of the serialised representation of individuals and scenes, in successive temporal states, which might result from Marcel’s unconscious process of visual perception alone. Rather there is a seemingly random juxtaposition of images which originate at different points in time and space, and whose evocation depends on the impetus of the present moment as both lived by Marcel and retrospectively explored by the later narrator.\textsuperscript{52}

A moving photographer may record images whose significance eludes him at the time of exposing the light-sensitive film, precisely because of the spatio-temporal disorientation attendant upon his mobile state. An element of temporal latency is essential to the process of gaining an understanding of the ultimate meaning of the image which must be developed and printed in the photographic darkroom. Tisseron observes that ‘le geste de déclencher l’obdurateur opère une coupure du flux lumineux. Dans les appareils de type Reflex, cette coupure est même matérialisée par la disparition de l’image dans le viseur.

\textsuperscript{50} In the chapter of his doctoral thesis entitled ‘Serialisation’, Wegner gives a comprehensive account of the research into chronophotography which was carried out by Muybridge and Marey in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{51} Bal affirms that ‘photography [...] offers the possibility of a rapid, broken succession of different images of a same object. Such a succession can lead to the production of a series of snapshots that write the trace of movement. This movement is not cinematographic, but recalls rather the effect of a “contact sheet” (Bal, 1997: 201).

\textsuperscript{52} The juxtaposition of visually perceived reality in the present and memory images of the same object is particularly evident in relation to the girls and women with whom Marcel falls in love. One pertinent example is Marcel’s recollection of his first sighting of the young girls at Balbec. His tremulous first impressions of them are, the following morning, juxtaposed with a photographic image of the girls as small children which, as pointed out by the later narrator, he was subsequently to see (Proust: II, 388-389). In this passage the dual narratological structure of the novel is pointed up through the explicit evocation of a photographic image.
Catching Sight of Grandmother Unawares

Walking in, unannounced, on his beloved grandmother, following his unexpected return to Paris from Doncieres, Marcel finds himself in an unfamiliar and profoundly disorienting position in relation to her. Because of his precipitate entrance, his grandmother is not yet conscious of his presence:

J'étais là, ou plutôt je n'étais pas encore là puisqu'elle ne le savait pas [...]. De moi [...] il n'y avait là que le témoin, l'observateur, [...] le photographe qui vient prendre un cliché des lieux qu'on ne reverra plus. Ce qui, mécaniquement, se fit à ce moment dans mes yeux quand j'aperçus ma grand-mère, ce fut bien une photographie. (Proust: III, 132 – my italics)

Paradoxically, it is Marcel’s impulsive physical action in leaving Doncieres and his rapidity of movement in entering the drawing room — actions all prompted by his strong emotional attachment to and desire to be near his grandmother — which cause his eyes mechanically to record an instant — ‘une photographie’ — of a life led by his grandmother from which he is wholly absent and which he has never before contemplated. For a moment, he becomes the reluctant photographer of his own fleeting
non-existence in relation to his grandmother. The use of the phrase 'des lieux qu'on ne reverra plus' underlines the uniqueness of this experience and its spatio-temporal specificity. The ritual of photographic portraiture is typically characterised by the immobility of the photographer, if not always of the photographed object. However, it is Marcel's physical movement in this scene which creates the conditions for a perceptual experience which is nevertheless described in terms of photography. The temporal latency which characterises the photographic system of image production as a rule is here inadvertently circumvented by his rapid motion, with the result that Marcel comes into immediate visual contact with an incomprehensible and unassimilable image of his beloved grandmother. This fact is pointed up due to the dual narratological structure of the novel: it is the later narrator who analyses the episode. The response of the later narrator to this experience is a curious and uneasy observation regarding the duality of stasis and animation which he has come belatedly to understand as an essential characteristic of the perception of those he loves:

Nous ne voyons jamais les êtres chéris que dans le système animé, le mouvement perpétuel de notre incessante tendresse, laquelle, avant de laisser les images que nous présente leur visage arriver jusqu'à nous, les prend dans son tourbillon, les rejette sur l'idée que nous nous faisons d'eux depuis toujours, les fait adhérer à elle, coincider avec elle. (Proust: III, 132-133 – my italics)

His rapid entrance into the drawing-room temporarily but fatally immobilises Marcel's love for his grandmother and thereby prevents it from tempering the effects of time on her physical appearance. Thus physical movement overwhelms or suspends emotional cognisance. His coldly dispassionate appraisal of her countenance is distinctly at odds with his long-held affectionate image of her. The use of the word ‘mécániquement’ to

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53 As part of her doctoral thesis at the University of Cambridge, Katja Haustein explores the ways in which photography is used in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* in order to elucidate the relationship between self and other.

54 Cf. Proust: II, 61, where the later narrator laments his inability to conserve anything but 'des photographies manquées' of the women he loves. Barthes notes the minimal movement of the finger which is required in order to fix a photographic image on the sensitive film in the camera. He affirms that 'pour moi, l'organe du Photographe, ce n'est pas l'œil (il me terrifie), c'est le doigt: ce qui est lié au déclen du objectif, au glissement métallique des plaques [...] ' (Barthes, 1980: 32). Until the invention of high-speed camera shutters and very sensitive film, the stillness of the photographer was a prerequisite if the desired result was a sharply defined, clear photographic image.

55 Cf. Serge Tisseron regarding the importance of assimilation of experience and of the photographic representation of experience (Tisseron, 1996: 26-34).
describe the process by which his eyes record the image of his grandmother points up the contrast between the purely physical act of visual perception which occurs in this episode and his habitual emotionally and temporally charged visual perception of his grandmother. His haste exposes him to an impression of her in which she is equally devoid of her feelings for him. Like her distracted and ill-fatedly fleet grandson in this scene, she is not animated by her love and so does not project the image to which he is accustomed. Her physical immobility echoes her emotional detachment from him. The photograph which he describes as being taken by his eyes therefore represents a repellent stranger:

[...] tout d'un coup, dans notre salon qui faisait partie d'un monde nouveau, celui du Temps, celui où vivent les étrangers dont on dit 'il vieillit bien', pour la première fois et seulement pour un instant car elle disparut bien vite, j'aperçus sur le canapé, sous la lampe, rouge, lourde et vulgaire, malade, rêvassant, promenant au-dessus d'un livre des yeux un peu fous, une vieille femme accablée que je ne connaissais pas. (Proust: III, 134 – my italics)

Marcel’s swift physical movement through space contributes directly to his new and uncomfortable awareness of the fundamental truth that time dominates his grandmother and, by extension, himself and his whole world. A duality of movement and immobility characterises this episode where the passage of time is pointed up through the paradoxical fixing by Marcel’s moving eyes of an unwelcome and fleeting, but irrefutable, impression of his grandmother as an unfamiliar, ill, elderly and dishevelled woman. The evocation of photography in this passage underlines the veracity of the impression which is recorded by Marcel’s eyes and shows his consciousness of the inexorable and sinister power of time.56 Sontag affirms that:

Photography is an elegiac art, a twilight art. Most subjects photographed are, just by virtue of being photographed, touched with pathos. An ugly or grotesque subject may be moving because it has been dignified by the attention of the photographer. [...] All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt. (Sontag, 1977: 15)

56 Barthes’s ‘ça a été’ points up the documentary power of the photographic image in affirming past events and states of being. Barthes observes that ‘dans la Photographie, je ne puis jamais nier que la chose a été là. Il y a double position conjointe: de réalité et de passé. Et puisque cette contrainte n’existe que pour elle, on doit la tenir, par réduction, pour l’essence même, le noème de la Photographie’ (Barthes, 1980: 120).
The death of Marcel’s grandmother is prefigured in this passage through the evocation of the photographic image. The passage of time will end her life and with it the life Marcel has lived in relation to her: therefore Marcel’s own mortality is also suggested here. The image recorded by his eyes on entering the drawing-room makes him briefly and painfully aware of the purely physical reality of his grandmother’s existence and of her vulnerability to time. Although anathema to Marcel’s habitual idea of his beloved grandmother, the image recorded of her by his eyes, independent of his affection, is not dismissed in this episode. Rather it is acknowledged and meticulously described. However, it is the later narrator rather than Marcel who acknowledges and describes the unflattering image. The dual narratological structure of *À la recherche du temps perdu* results in the juxtaposition of the image of the animated, loving and clever woman with whom Marcel has been familiar all his life and the purely physical image of her which is recorded by his eyes at the moment of his entrance into the drawing room and which is retrospectively described by the later narrator. The use of the phrase ‘pour la première fois’ draws attention to the freshness of this experience for Marcel while simultaneously suggesting that it is not the last time that it is to occur: the notion of repetition is therefore called to mind.57

In *Le Temps retrouvé*, Marcel’s ultimate awareness of his mortality and of his advancing age is central to his decision actively to engage with his creative literary vocation. The significance of this episode lies therefore in the fact that it is the first time that Marcel is made aware, however fleetingly, of the destructive power of time. The explicit references to photography point up the precariousness of the latent knowledge acquired through Marcel’s quickly forgotten experience in this scene and only developed many years afterwards by the later narrator.

The evocation of the photographic system of image production implies the undeniable truth of the visual image recorded by Marcel. The brevity of Marcel’s awareness of the alternative and undesirable grandmother whom he glimpses for a moment is repeatedly

57 The implication in this passage is that the unwelcome image of his grandmother which is recorded by Marcel as he enters the drawing room will be recalled more than once in the future — thus memory, both voluntary and involuntary, has the potential to resurrect the alienating image of the grandmother.
underlined by the later narrator: phrases such as ‘tout d’un coup’ and ‘seulement pour un instant car elle disparut bien vite’ point up the short-lived nature of the experience for Marcel and suggest his relief at its transience. Implicit in these phrases is the suggestion that the episode is immediately forgotten by Marcel once his grandmother is made aware of his presence and his estrangement from her is erased through the resumption of their habitual modes of interaction. Tisseron notes the treatment of family photographs which present an unwelcome image and explores the reasons why such photographs can be rejected:

Tout d’abord, elle peut ne pas trouver de correspondance dans le monde intérieur de celui qui la regarde parce qu’elle témoigne de quelque chose qui n’a pas pour lui statut psychique de représentation. D’autres fois, elle est rejetée parce qu’elle montre quelque chose que celui qui la regarde ne veut pas voir. À la différence du cas précédent, il s’agit de quelque chose qui a pour lui statut de représentation mais qu’il refuse. (Tisseron, 1996: 149)

The latter case which is outlined by Tisseron echoes Marcel’s response to his ocular ‘photograph’ of his grandmother. While Marcel is unwilling to explore the significance of this disconcerting image and abandons it with relief, the later narrator has come to appreciate the importance of the information conveyed by the experience.58 His evocation of photography draws attention to the consciousness of time which Marcel attains, albeit fleetingly, through contact with a disconcerting image of a woman whose illness and imminent death are made manifest to him through his unanticipated visual contact with her purely physical self. Rapid movement through space facilitates Marcel’s acquisition through his eyes of new knowledge regarding the destructive power of time. The immobility which characterises his photographic perception of his grandmother as she sits absorbed in activities wholly unconnected with him points up the paradoxical way in which the passage of time becomes discernible to him. His awareness of temporal flow and continuity emerges as a direct consequence of his own physical impetuousness; yet the stasis which characterises his description of the experience in terms of photography points up both its brevity and his refusal immediately to engage with it so as fully to

58 According to Tisseron’s description of the process of mentally assimilating experience, the later narrator has succeeded in introjecting a physical experience which, at the time, was rejected by Marcel and thus indefinitely consigned to the ‘boîte noire psychique’ (Tisseron, 1996: 21) of sensory memory.
understand its significance. The evocation of photography also suggests the latent meaning contained in the initially dismissed but subsequently re-evaluated episode.

The fact that Marcel discovers his grandmother 'promenant au-dessus d'un livre des yeux un peu fous' recalls the baiser du soir episode at Combray. There, his mother read to him from the George Sand novels which were a gift from his grandmother. His grandmother's former determination to educate her grandson and her belief in the positive formative power of carefully chosen literature stand in marked contrast to the image in this passage of a wild-eyed old woman whose attention to her book is as negligible as it is to her grandson. While in his childhood the gift of literature was understood by Marcel's grandmother to be a positive means for her to guide the development of her grandson's aesthetic sensibility, her cursory engagement with her book in the drawing-room in Paris suggests a present lack of commitment to and faith in this ideal. Her inattention to Marcel — the future writer — is mirrored in her treatment of the book she holds. A profound sense of doubt with regard to the power of literature is the inevitable consequence for Marcel of the shockingly desultory manner in which his grandmother peruses her book. Coupled with the explicit evocation of photography as a metaphor for the process of his disconcertingly strange visual perception of her, the description of his grandmother as an inattentive reader serves to compound the distressing negativity of the episode for Marcel. At the same time, however, the fact of its minute description shows that the later narrator has succeeded in fully assimilating the experience, thereby attaining an awareness of the supremacy of temporal flow and thus of the imperative of engaging with his creative literary vocation. Significant truths are therefore conveyed negatively to Marcel in this episode: their positive potential as catalysts for the production of a creative work of art is understood by the later narrator only after a prolonged period of temporal latency.59

59 The negative/positive duality which characterises this episode is another feature of the photographic system of image production. This duality parallels the duality of movement and stasis which is also discernible here: Marcel's physical mobility creates the conditions in which he records an image which is immediately rejected as incompatible with his habitual positive image of his grandmother. The outcome of movement therefore seems initially to be purely negative, as affirmed by Georges Poulet. However, the ultimate significance of the experience has positive consequences within the context of Marcel's creative vocation, since it is the first and therefore most striking event which obliges Marcel to acknowledge the importance of time.
Trying To Kiss the Girl: A Juxtaposed Multiplicity of Albertines

A second episode in which a juxtaposition of movement and stasis is established through the evocation of multiple photographic images occurs in Paris when Albertine visits Marcel and allows him to kiss her. The love which Marcel felt for Albertine at Balbec, when she refused his kiss, has been replaced by purely physical desire when they meet again in Paris. Marcel wonders at the changes which must have taken place in Albertine’s life ‘qui eussent peut-être expliqué qu’elle eût accordé si aisément à mon désir momentané et purement physique ce qu’à Balbec elle avait avec horreur refusé à mon amour’ (Proust: III, 355). The utterly physical nature of Marcel’s desire for Albertine in Paris contrasts with his more complex feelings for her at Balbec, which he recalls in this scene: the result is a juxtaposition of multiple images of Albertine as he has perceived her at different points in time and space. A parallel is established in this episode between Marcel’s altered, predominantly corporeal interest in Albertine and his purely physical perception of his grandmother on his return from Doncières. Photography is evoked in both episodes in order to underline the disconcertingly mechanical and emotionally sterile nature of these perceptual experiences for Marcel.

Once certain that Albertine will accept his kiss, Marcel pauses and notes that ‘qu’Albertine me fût maintenant si facile, cela me causait plus que du plaisir, une confrontation d’images empreintes de beauté’ (Proust: III, 350). Secure in the knowledge that she is now accessible to him as object of desire, Marcel surveys a proliferation of images of Albertine which he has retained since his first encounter with her and which point up the variety and complexity of his attitudes in relation to her:

Je me rappelais Albertine d’abord devant la plage, [...] n’ayant pas pour moi une existence plus réelle que ces visions de théâtre où on ne sait pas si on a affaire à l’actrice qui est censée apparaître, à une figurante qui la double à ce moment-là, ou à une simple projection. Puis la femme vraie s’était détachée du faisceau lumineux, elle était venue à moi, mais simplement pour que je pusse m’apercevoir qu’elle n’avait nullement, dans le monde réel, cette facilité amoureuse qu’on lui supposait dans le tableau magique. [...] Et voici que dans un troisième plan elle m’apparaissait réelle, comme dans la seconde connaissance que j’avais eue d’elle, mais facile comme dans la première; facile, et d’autant plus délicieusement que j’avais cru si longtemps qu’elle ne l’était pas. (Proust: III, 350-351 – my italics)
Marcel’s initial belief in Albertine’s inaccessibility extends to a doubt as to her physical existence: his sense of her incorporeality is underlined through the reference to actresses and theatrical light projections.⁶⁰ The sunlight which bathes Albertine at Balbec, and from which Marcel sees her as being initially indivisible, is for him synonymous with the artificial light sources, the camera obscura and the magic lantern which were used in nineteenth-century theatre to create the effect of spectral presences onstage.⁶¹ The idea of Albertine as a composition of pure light is also suggestive of the photographic image which records objects through contact between rays of light and the chemically-sensitised film in the photographic camera. The interaction of light and silver oxides constitutes the photographic image. Dubois affirms that:

L’effet de texture granulaire de la photographie est d’un tout autre ordre [que la peinture]: les grains n’y définissent pas le support, ils sont la matière même de l’image, la substance propre dans et par laquelle la représentation aura à se révéler et à se fixer. [...] Ensuite, ces mêmes grains […] n’ont en eux-mêmes aucun rapport formel avec ‘l’image’, avec la représentation analogique des objets, avec les figures, la scène, le spectacle que finalement le regarder de la photo reconnaîtra. Ce n’est pas une des moindres causes de fascination de la photographie, que de pouvoir ainsi faire passer le message de l’informe corpusculaire que sont les grains du cliché aux plages identifiables de la représentation. (Dubois, 1990: 100-101)

The suggestion in the passage from Le Côté de Guermantes is that, with regard to Albertine at Balbec, Marcel’s eyes have functioned as a camera while his memory has developed and faithfully retained each image of her. For Marcel, Albertine herself is the light rays which, over time, have burned themselves into his memory as onto reels of film.

The three references to the theatre which illustrate the first stage of Marcel’s relationship with Albertine set up a parallel between sunlit beach and darkened theatre. The self-conscious artificiality of the theatrical space and of its onstage inhabitants is suggested through this metaphorical equivalence of beach and theatre for Marcel as a framework within which to encounter Albertine.

The use of the camera obscura for the projection of images onto the stage of a theatre was posited in the sixteenth century. In Natural Magick: Wherein are set forth all the Riches and Delights of the Natural Sciences (first edition 1558; first English edition 1658), Giovanni Battista della Porta observes that ‘now for a conclusion I will add that, then which nothing can be more pleasant for great men, and Scholars, and ingenious persons to behold; That in a dark Chamber by white sheets objected, one may see as clearly and perspicuously, as if they were before his eyes, Huntsings, Banquets, Armies of Enemies, Plays, and all things else that one desireth’ (della Porta, 364). He goes on to elaborate the capacity of this application of the camera obscura to inspire fear: ‘In a tempestuous night the Image of anything may be represented hanging in the middle of the Chamber, that will terrifie the beholders. […] The spectators that see not the sheet, will see the Image hanging in the middle of the Air, very clear, not without fear and terror, especially if the Artificer be ingenious’ (della Porta, 365). In The Magician and the Cinema, Erik Barnouw notes the popularity of the magic lantern for the production of similar effects in late eighteenth-century theatrical productions called Phantasmagoria.
photographic film. She has no other essential identity than that which has been visually apprehended by him throughout the summer.

In reviewing the three stages of his relationship with Albertine up to this point in his life, Marcel draws attention to her inaccessibility both before their introduction and after it through references to theatrical tableaux vivants — ‘le tableau magique’. Photography and the tableau vivant were clearly linked through the development of the industry of photographic portraiture in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As an element of a tableau vivant, Albertine functions as a visual object of desire while remaining beyond Marcel’s reach and thus impervious to him. The artificially imposed spatio-temporal immobility of Albertine as an object of Marcel’s visual perception is thus immediately evoked, while at the same time the extended period of time involved is suggested throughout this passage by such phrases as ‘d’abord’, ‘puis’, ‘et voici’ and ‘si longtemps’. Consequently, there is a juxtaposition of lived temporal continuity and the spatio-temporal stasis which characterises Marcel’s process of perception. Immobility is further underlined through the notion of Albertine’s detachment, after she and Marcel become acquainted, from the particular spatial location in which Marcel first encountered her: the phrase ‘la femme vraie s’était détachée du faisceau lumineux’ suggests the severance of the girl from her original spatio-temporal environment on the beach at Balbec in summer. Despite the fact that ‘elle était venue à moi’, social and consequently physical rapprochement serves merely to underline her elusiveness as love object. Increased proximity following their introduction fails to narrow the gap between them: her inaccessibility in the real world — in Marcel’s social circle — is thus as insurmountable as ever.

62 Tableaux vivants date back to classical antiquity. In the catalogue for an exhibition in 2002 at the Kunsthalle Wien in Vienna entitled ‘Tableaux Vivants – Living Pictures and Attitudes in Photography, Film, and Video’, Sabine Folie observes that from the late eighteenth century onwards ‘tableaux vivants and their related form, referred to as “attitudes”, became, as physical representations or re-enactments of artworks and their specific atmospheres, a popular party game in private circles. Since the nineteenth century they have become a point of interest to photographers. Members of bourgeois society and artists alike enjoyed having their photos taken in the well-known postures and with the props shown in the masterpieces of art history, e.g. in works by Raphael, Guido Reni, or Nicolas Poussin. In contrast to these almost official tableaux vivants the artistic ones were more private, more experimental. This is a development which can be clearly traced in the history of photography’ (Folie, 2002: 20).
The third stage of Marcel’s relationship with Albertine is described as presenting her image on a new plane. The notion of a planar representation of Albertine implies Marcel’s projection of her image onto a flat surface: thus is space once again shown to be paramount in his perception of the same girl at different moments in time and space. Each of the three spatio-temporal planes on which Marcel has encountered Albertine is available to him in this passage as he recollects the first two, and then compares and contrasts them with his impressions in the present. In preparing to kiss Albertine in his room in Paris, he anticipates the possession of the entire beloved Balbec beach with which she is inextricably linked in his memory. Memory images of the girl he first saw and fell in love with on the beach at Balbec are juxtaposed with images of both the unavailable playfellow she became after their introduction to one another and with his present impressions of her new, unfamiliar physical being. The proliferation of past images in Marcel’s mind, which are retained on two different planes of memory as he approaches Albertine, creates an effect of juxtaposition of images recorded at different spatio-temporal and emotional points-of-view on the same girl. The whole period of his acquaintance with Albertine seems to be contained in, and capable of being visually reviewed during, the few moments which pass before he moves, with care and minute attention, towards her. Instead of the kiss enabling him to attain an absolute knowledge of Albertine’s existence, however, Marcel’s physical movement towards her results in a disconcerting and wholly unexpected perceptual experience: his progress through space is matched by a simultaneous and progressive alteration in her appearance:

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53 A distinctive characteristic of the photographic image is the projection of three-dimensional space at a particular moment in time onto a flat surface in order to create a two-dimensional image. Wegner affirms that ‘flatness […] is especially conspicuous in the roman d’Albertine but evident throughout the novel. People are generally flat. […] Albertine “is” the result of varying projections onto different surfaces. Albertine, in other words, may be experienced only in the flatness of images’ (Wegner, 2003: 46).

54 The later narrator affirms that ‘Albertine tenait, liées autour d’elle, toutes les impressions d’une série maritime qui m’était particulièrement chère. Il me semblait que j’aurais pu, sur les deux joues de la jeune fille, embrasser toute la plage de Balbec’ (Proust: III, 352). The phrase ‘liées autour d’elle’ precludes a horizontal linear distribution of the Balbec beach memory image series in favour of a circular or rounded layout: all of the images gathered throughout the long summer months are juxtaposed with each other around her face and body, and most particularly around her cheeks.

55 Against Wegner’s notion of a serialisation of the images of Albertine, my thesis argues that the juxtaposition of retained memory images of her, at the moment of Marcel’s uncanny experience of the kiss, is not governed by temporal continuity. Rather it suggests a hallucinatory multiplicity of spatio-temporal points-of-view on the girl which all vie for attention and which are understood by Marcel to be equally valid — or possibly invalid.
D’abord au fur et à mesure que ma bouche commença à s’approcher des joues que mes regards lui avaient proposé d’embrasser, ceux-ci se déplaçant virent des joues nouvelles; le cou, aperçu de plus près et comme à la loupe, montra, dans ses gros grains, une robustesse qui modifia le caractère de la figure. (Proust: III, 354 – my italics)

Marcel’s physical motion towards his long-held object of love, and now simply of desire, brings him into visual contact with previously-unsuspected aspects of Albertine’s face and body. She is described in this passage in terms of a profusion of progressively more enlarged photographic images — the phrase ‘gros grains’ suggests the grain of the paper on which a photographic image is printed. Barthes remarks with regard to the enlargement of photographic images that ‘hélàs, j’ai beau scruter, je ne découvre rien: si j’agrandis, ce n’est rien d’autre que le grain du papier: je défais l’image au profit de sa matière […]’ (Barthes, 1980: 156).

Instead of moving towards the successful and total appropriation of Albertine and of all of the scenes at Balbec with which she is associated in Marcel’s memory, Marcel instead finds himself approaching a disintegrating, fragmented and profoundly strange physical being. The use of the verb ‘montrer’ with regard to the altered appearance of Albertine’s neck suggests an active process of modification on the part of the immobile girl: although it is Marcel who is in motion, the changes in his perception of her neck and face are attributed to Albertine herself rather than to his own action. Thus the representation of Marcel’s movement through space is paradoxically characterised by passivity: the effects of his physical movement are ascribed to the object of his perception rather than to himself. Photography is evoked in the efforts of the later narrator to describe this perceptual experience which is marked by the immobilisation, by Marcel’s eyes, of different images of Albertine as he moves through space towards her:

Les dernières applications de la photographie […] je ne vois que cela qui puisse, autant que le baiser, faire surgir de ce que nous croyions une chose à aspect défini, les cent autres choses qu’elle est tout aussi bien, puisque chacune est relative à une perspective non moins légitime. (Proust: III, 354 – my italics)

66 Cf. Dubois’s remarks on page 156 concerning the nature of the photographic image.
67 The comparison made between his perception of Albertine’s neck and the magnifying glass reinforces the notion of immobility on the part of Marcel: the magnifying glass functions as an artificial means of bringing the object of study closer to the observer. It results in an illusory sense of proximity to the object under scrutiny, while actually keeping it at a distance. In the case of Marcel’s perception of Albertine’s neck, the startling modification of her face which is brought about by his exhaustive observation implies his sense of alienation from this absolutely unfamiliar and unrecognisable girl.
In repositioning himself in relation to Albertine, Marcel discovers unexpected and yet absolutely legitimate aspects of her, with the result that no single image of Albertine can be regarded by him as being definitive. Before his lips even touch her cheek, his attempt to get hold of her essential self has already failed. In effect, it is not the act of kissing Albertine which evokes the bewildering multiplicity of aspects of her being. Rather it is the act of displacing his body so as to close the distance between them. Poulet observes that, in this scene:

Le déplacement des éléments composants n’a pas pour effet d’en réduire le nombre ou d’en simplifier les aspects. Une multiplicité stupéfiante s’y révèle. Loin d’aboutir à un échec, l’expérience a pour conséquence un excès de richesse. Néanmoins, il est clair que le résultat de l’opération n’est plus [...] une synthétisation du réel, mais au contraire, une sorte d’éclatement de celui-ci en une multitude d’aspects, dont chacun attire également le regard. (Poulet, 1982: 108-109)

The use by the later narrator of the active phrasal verb ‘faire surgir’ is another example of the shifting of responsibility for the transformations witnessed by Marcel-in-motion to the object of his perception: the blame rests firmly with that object, rather than with his own moving eyes. Despite his active state, Marcel is represented in this sentence as an immobile centre faced with proliferating and yet undeniable Albertines, each one more unfamiliar than the last. His sense of her strangeness only increases as he nears her:

Bref, de même qu’à Balbec, Albertine m’avait souvent paru différente, maintenant, comme si, en accélérant prodigieusement la rapidité des changements de perspective et des changements de coloration que nous offre une personne dans nos diverses rencontres avec elle, j’avais voulu les faire tenir toutes en quelques secondes pour recréer expérimentalement le phénomène qui diversifie l’individualité d’un être et tirer les uns des autres, comme d’un étui, toutes les possibilités qu’il enferme, dans ce court trajet de mes lèvres vers sa joue, c’est *dix Albertines que je vis;* cette seule jeune fille étant comme une déesse à plusieurs têtes, *celle que j’avais vue en dernier, si je tentais de m’approcher d’elle, faisait place à une autre.* (Proust: III. 354 – my italics)

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68 Wegner affirms that ‘vision is no longer subordinated to an exterior image of the true or the right. The eye is no longer what predicates a “real world”. In other words, the device which is supposed to illustrate a hermeneutics of depth displays some characteristic features that rather lay stress not only on the impossibility of depth but also on the dubious nature of reality as a whole. This end of a stable referentiality is the beginning of hallucination’ (Wegner, 2003: 69).
In this passage, a comparison is drawn by the later narrator between the diversity of images which characterised Marcel’s visual appropriation of Albertine over the long months spent at Balbec, which he recollects during the pause which precedes his movement towards her, and the plurality of new images which is condensed into the time it takes him to move to kiss her. Marcel travels through both space and time — the latter represented in the multiple two-dimensional images of her which jostle together both in his memory and before his eyes — to reach Albertine’s cheek. The immense significance for Marcel of the small motion of leaning in to kiss Albertine’s cheek is conveyed through the use of the phrase ‘court trajet’ which suggests a journey or expedition into uncharted territory. Once again a verb of action (offrir) is ascribed to Albertine, who is understood by Marcel to have offered different aspects of herself to him over the course of their relationship. His persistent perceptual passivity up to this stage in their acquaintance is thus pointed up. Essentially, Marcel has functioned and continues in this scene to function as an immobile camera, recording static images of people and things which are themselves — as he unwittingly is — caught up in temporal flux.

The idea that his movement actually accelerates the speed of the changes of point-of-view (or ‘perspective’ — a word heavy with pictorial connotations) which take place during the development of a relationship with another person, so as to contain them all — and by extension the whole person — in the space of a few seconds, suggests Marcel’s new, active attempt visually to appropriate Albertine in her entirety both throughout the past and in the present moment. In contrast with his habitual immobility, he stirs himself for the first time so as to appropriate the object of his desire through direct physical contact. However, his increasing physical proximity to her serves only to affirm the

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69 Poulet affirms that ‘l’on dirait qu’ainsi qu’il est arrivé plus d’une fois dans l’histoire des hommes, l’explorateur de l’espace a découvert un monde fabuleusement riche, mais qui n’est précisément pas celui qu’il voulait découvrir’ (Poulet, 1982: 109).
70 Instead of possessing Albertine through his lips, Marcel suffers the anti-climax of failing even to kiss the face he intended to when he began to move towards her. Instead, he presses his mouth against a profoundly unfamiliar surface, while simultaneously suffering temporary blindness and inability to savour her perfume. Bal observes that ‘what seems to me to be important here, in the confusing whirl created by perspective, is the fundamental instability of the subject that classical perspective is intended precisely to control. In the case of La recherche, this instability is made more serious because the subject projects himself outward in a heteropathic identification in order to press up against the object. But the latter is no more stable than the former, and thus — running the risk of madness — the “I” and the “other” are set adrift in the form of the
breach between them, by underlining her difference and strangeness and thus the impossibility of truly possessing or knowing her. From the girl he once loved and now merely desires physically, Albertine has been transformed into a many-headed and elusive goddess. Poulet affirms that:

Or voici que dans l’acte même par lequel les êtres se rapprochent, ils se dédoublent, se décuplent [...]. Dans la mesure même où les êtres révèlent l’inépuisable diversité d’aspects qui est en eux, ils se soustraient au regard. À force de se révéler, ils se dérobent. Albertine décuplée, multipliée, c’est déjà Albertine disparue. L’image vraie se perd au milieu d’une foule de masques. Y a-t-il même une image vraie? Incapable de choisir entre tant d’incarnations, toutes à la fois si vraies et si trompeuses, l’esprit se trouve assailli par une pluralité folle qu’il a lui-même déchainée, et, — ironie particulière —, déchainée à la suite d’une action qui, il l’espérait, allait le conduire, tout au contraire, à l’unité. (Poulet, 1982: 109-110)

Marcel’s reduction of the physical distance between Albertine and himself is matched by a temporal condensation or contraction which results in an explosion of images of Albertine, both in Marcel’s memory and in his visual perception of her in the present. These juxtaposed images undermine Marcel’s confidence both in his perceptual ability and in the world with which he comes into contact. The resulting confusion encourages stasis and inaction rather than stimulating Marcel actively to pursue his goals in love. Inaction threatens to become a distinctive characteristic of Marcel’s life due to the disappointment and disorientation which result from his attempts to possess the objects of his desire through visual and physical means which require physical movement from him.

photograph and its referent, those double surfaces which are pressed together to make up the two-sided image’ (Bal, 1996: 222).
IV. Striving for Synthesis

Image Superimposition: Composite Photography and Radiography Motifs in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*

The dual narratological structure of Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* which facilitates the juxtaposition of diverse spatio-temporal points-of-view on the objects of Marcel’s perception, also contributes to the superimposition of multiple images of a single object of Marcel’s perception.¹ Some research has been carried out in relation to the magic lantern and the stereoscope as models for the superimposition of past and present images in Proust’s novel. Howard Moss’s *The Magic Lantern of Marcel Proust*; Robert Fraser’s *Proust and the Victorians: The Lamp of Memory; La Lanterne magique: pratiques et mises en écriture* from the series ‘Cahiers d’histoire culturelle’ at the Université de Tours; these works deal with the role of the magic lantern in Proust’s work. The use of the stereoscope as a model for Marcel’s perceptual endeavours is explored in Wegner’s doctoral thesis, in Shattuck’s *Proust’s Binoculars* and in Roxanne Hanney’s *The Invisible Middle Term in Proust’s ‘À la recherche du temps perdu’*. Hanney observes that:

Superimposition is a coincidence of forms at one point in space. It involves the partial or total obscurement of one form by another version of the same form. It is thus a stratification of sorts, although the layers need not continue in depth, but rather en surface to form a global image with all of its variations taking part at once. (Hanney, 1990: 92)

Hanney’s affirmation of the simultaneous existence of stratified versions of a single form will inform the work of this section of my thesis. However, my thesis supports the notion that the stratification of images in Proust’s novel serves to create an effect of spatial and

¹ In an article entitled ‘The Absent Narrator of Proust’s *Recherche’*, Gene M. Moore affirms that ‘the function of [...] transparent lens is served in Proust’s *Recherche* by the first-person narrator/protagonist whose reverie generates and organises the entire work. Yet this omnipresent — and omnivorously possessive — narrative je is essentially without a fixed character, and his own subjectivity is indistinguishable from the process of objective analysis that informs the entire *Recherche*. In effect, the narrator’s ‘transparency’ is the result of a double absence: he possesses neither a fixed personal character nor an established social identity; in the place of both, we are presented with an epic process of epistemological and sociological research’ (Moore, 1984: 607). Transparency is a significant element of the analysis of composite and radiographic images in this section of my thesis.
temporal depth and thereby to point up the inexorable passage of time and its tangible effects on human beings: facts of which the later narrator is aware but which are unknown to Marcel as he interacts with the world. Poulet’s belief that image superimposition in *À la recherche du temps perdu* involves the disappearance of previously-recorded impressions in favour of those recorded at the present moment does not take into account the effects of spatial and temporal depth which result from the superimposition of images throughout the Proustian narrative. Poulet observes that:

> Superposer les images successives des êtres, c’est donc agir comme le fait le temps; c’est ensevelir ce qui n’est plus, pour faire place à ce qui vient à être. La superposition est l’acte par lequel, en s’étalant, en occupant toute la surface, en faisant disparaître sous sa masse les images antérieures, le moment actuel consomme sa victoire sur le passé; et, du même coup, celui par lequel, en se laissant enterrer, le passé reconnaît sa défaite. (Poulet, 1982: 113-114)

In regarding the superimposition of images of a single being over a period of time as a process necessitating the disappearance or concealment of the past beneath the present, Poulet dismisses image superimposition as a stylistic feature of the Proustian narrative:

> Il faut avouer qu’il n’y a rien qui ressemble moins à l’expérience proustienne du réel. L’expérience de Proust n’est aucunement celle d’un ensevelissement du passé sous le présent; bien au contraire, c’est celle d’un resurgissement du passé, en dépit du présent. Aussi Proust rêve-t-il d’une espèce de superposition périodiquement ou irrégulièrement rompue par un phénomène inverse de soulevement. Il conçoit une superposition de type géologique et pluonien, sorte de stratification instable [...]. (Poulet, 1982: 114-115)

Poulet describes the Proustian narrative as being characterised by an unstable geological stratification of past and present which is occasionally ruptured by the resurgence of the past in the experience of involuntary memory. His emphasis on intermittent involuntary memory as the only means of destabilising the systematic burial of the past beneath the present disregards the fact that image superimposition also characterises the representation of the world as it is perceived visually by both Marcel and the later narrator. The dual narratological structure of *À la recherche du temps perdu* means that

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2 Poulet affirms that ‘la juxtaposition suppose la simultanéité des réalités conjointes, tandis que la superposition requiert la disparition de l’une pour qu’ait lieu l’apparition de l’autre’ (Poulet, 1982: 112). His insistence on the elimination of past images precludes the possibility of depth perception in time and space which results from the retention and perusal of initial and subsequent images of a single object.

3 In *Proust et Broch: Les Frontières du temps, les frontières de la mémoire*, Ioana Vultur also explores image superimposition in Proust’s novel within the context of memory images; however, the importance of
the description of Marcel’s process of visual perception is always informed by the point-of-view of the later narrator, who is situated at a point in time and space which is far removed from that of Marcel.4 The processes of perception and memory are constantly interwoven through the alternation of the narrating voices of Marcel and the later narrator. Memory is therefore not wholly distinguishable from perception in the Proustian narrative.5

Poulet sees the theme of the magic lantern as a fitting means of expressing ‘un paradoxe sur lequel se fondera le roman proustien: la simultanéité du successif, la présence, dans le présent, d’un autre présent: le passé’ (Poulet, 1982: 117). This section of my thesis will explore the extent to which the photographic system of image production serves this purpose, most notably through the evocation of composite photographic images and radiographic images. Composite photography involves the superimposition of multiple transparent photographic images of a person or persons. Radiographic images represent aspects of physical matter which are invisible to visual perception of objects in the world: thus a duality of surface and depth is a fundamental characteristic of this application of the photographic system of image production, which results in the representation of both the transparent outer envelope of flesh and the underlying opaque skeletal structure. This section will argue that these two applications of the photographic system of image production, where appropriated for the metaphoric representation of Marcel’s perception and memory processes, point up the connections between past and present, while also underlining the projection of past and present into the future which is as yet unknown to Marcel, though not to the later narrator. Mortality — the spatio-temporal finitude of

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4 In Albertine disparue, the later narrator affirms that ‘notre moi est fait de la superposition de nos états successifs. Mais cette superposition n’est pas immuable comme la stratification d’une montagne. Perpétuellement des soulevements font affleurer à la surface des couches anciennes’ (Proust: VI, 126 – my italics). The emphasis on the self as a synthesis of superimposed selves, in which no hierarchy based on temporal duration is respected, suggests the composite photographic image.

5 After Albertine’s death, Marcel’s memory images of her belie her current lifeless state and lead the later narrator to observe that ‘ce n’était pas Albertine seule qui n’était qu’une succession de moments, c’était aussi moi-même. […] Je n’étais pas un seul homme, mais le défilé heure par heure d’une armée composite où il y avait selon le moment des passionnés, des indifférents, des jaloux — des jaloux dont pas un n’était jaloux de la même femme’ (Proust: VI, 71).
individual corporeal existence — is the essential and irrevocable truth communicated through the evocation of composite photographic and radiographic images. Fundamental differences in the unique relationship between surface and depth in composite photographic images and radiographic images which are appropriated by Proust in the representation of Marcel’s apprehension of the world will be underlined here so as to reassess the significance of these applications of photography as sources of metaphor and analogy in the Proustian narrative.

In relation to Proust’s style of writing, it is interesting to explore the notion of essence — the visual representation of which was the fundamental goal of composite photography as conceived by Francis Galton and used by other late-nineteenth century photographers and scientists. According to the later narrator in *Le Temps retrouvé*, literary style is indistinguishable from the creation of fresh and meaningful metaphor by the writer (Proust: VII, 196), through which his unique apprehension of the world can be communicated to others. Metaphor must convey the essence common to two previously disparate elements of Marcel’s world. Jean-Pierre Richard explains that in *À la recherche du temps perdu* the figure of metaphor:

[...] amène en effet deux termes différents à se rapprocher et se superposer (mentalement), afin de faire apparaître entre eux, mais en eux tout aussi bien la présence d’une notion commune. L’unification métaphorique se présente dans la théorie proustienne comme extraction d’un même à partir de deux autres conjugués. (Richard, 1974: 283)

In ‘Proust palimpseste’, an essay in *Figures I*, Gérard Genette poses several pertinent questions in relation to the functioning of metaphor within the Proustian narrative. With regard to Proust’s own definition in *Le Temps retrouvé*, Genette qualifies the relationship between two elements of an original metaphor in *À la recherche du temps perdu* as one of resistance and tension:

Mais qu’est-ce qu’une essence commune, sinon une abstraction, c’est-à-dire ce que Proust veut éviter à tout prix, et comment une description fondée sur le ‘rapport’ de deux objets ne risquerait-elle pas plutôt de faire s’évanouir l’essence de chacun d’eux? S’il y a dans toute métaphore à la fois la mise en œuvre d’une ressemblance et celle d’une différence, une tentative d’‘assimilation’ et une résistance à cette assimilation, faute de quoi il n’y aurait qu’une stérile tautologie, l’essence n’est-elle pas davantage du côté qui diffère et qui résiste, du côté irréductible et réfractaire des choses? (Genette, 1966: 46)
According to Genette, essences are more likely to be discernible in the differences or tensions between the two elements of a metaphor, rather than in their shared characteristics. The linking of two disparate elements of Marcel’s world in the creation of a unique metaphor constitutes a superimposition which renders the familiar somewhat strange through the new association. Composite photography and radiographic images are two applications of the photographic system of image production which seek to represent essential characteristics of social groups, in the case of the former, or of an individual with regard to the latter. Both of these kinds of photographic image are characterised, in diverse ways, by the simultaneous representation of familiar surfaces and uncanny depths and hence by tensions between them. Each in its own fashion illustrates in visual terms the struggle which Genette identifies as inherent in Proustian metaphor. The distinctive semiotic status of the photographic image as indexical icon and its pragmatic flexibility mean that it is characterised by unique spatio-temporal tensions and ambiguities which influence profoundly the relationship between the photographed object and the observer of the image (Schaeffer, 1987). An exploration of composite photography and radiographic images and of their evocation in *À la recherche du temps perdu* will point up their significance as means of establishing irrefutable, retrospectively discerned connections between disparate and even conflicting elements of Marcel’s lived experience, and of presaging the uncertain but ultimately fatal future.

**Ghostly Transparency**

It is necessary clearly to distinguish composite photographic images from radiographic images. The former is concerned with the establishment of previously invisible typologies of the living face, drawn from the superimposition of multiple images of different people. The latter type of photographic image serves to render flesh transparent

6 Daniel Grojnowski affirms that ‘[...] dès ses premières opérations, la photographie est dotée d’un remarquable pouvoir. Si elle donne du monde une image d’une absolue fidélité, elle en révèle également les éléments insoupçonnés, inaccessibles à l’œil nu. Autrement dit, elle ne se contente pas de refléter et d’enregistrer, elle est également apte à explorer un au-delà des réalités immédiates. Elle appréhende l’invisible’ (Grojnowski, 2002: 246). Composite photography and radiography are extreme appropriations of the unique capacity of the photographic system of image production with regard to the exposition of the invisible.
so as to expose the underlying skeletal structure of the body, which itself remains invisible throughout life. Before the development of radiography, death and decomposition were the only means by which the unique but profoundly strange osteological framework of a body became visually accessible to the living.

The transparency which is an essential feature of composite photography and radiography is interesting because typically it marks an intermediate stage in the production of a single photographic image in the darkroom; yet in the case of composite photography and radiography, transparency is fundamental to the end result. In *Le Verre et les objets de verre dans l’univers imaginaire de Marcel Proust*, David Mendelson observes with regard to Proust’s style that:

Nous savons en effet que selon Proust le style est ‘une question non de technique, mais de vision.’ Or nous concevons fort mal une vision qui serait métaphorique, c’est-à-dire qui appréhenderait dans le même champ des éléments dissociés dans la réalité. A moins, évidemment, que ces éléments soient doués d’*une certaine transparence* qui permettrait à l’observateur de les superposer. (Mendelson, 1968: 29 – my italics)

The ‘certaine transparence’ which is posited here by Mendelson is understood in this section of my thesis to constitute a shadowy and uneven translucence in the objects of perception of Marcel and the later narrator. Impressions which are superimposed in Proust’s novel frequently display a patchy and inconsistent density or opacity. Within the context of the photographic system of image production, transparency has distinctive

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7 In *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, Proust observes that ‘la matière de nos livres, la substance de nos phrases doit être immatérielle, non pas prise telle quelle dans la réalité, mais nos phrases elles-mêmes et les épisodes aussi doivent être faits de la substance transparente de nos minutes les meilleures, où nous sommes hors de la réalité et du présent. C’est de ces gouttes de lumière cimentées que sont faits le style et la fable d’un livre’ (Proust, 1954: 303). Proust’s references to transparency, immateriality and bonded drops of light as the substance of literary style together suggest the photographic system of image production and composite and radiographic photography in particular.

8 Mendelson explores glass and glass objects as stylistic models for Proust’s literary writing. He underlines the importance of the metaphoric role played by glass objects in Marcel’s appreciation of beauty in everyday objects, and notes that ‘le verre n’a-t-il pas le privilège d’atteindre à la transparence des pure idées? […] Le verre réunit dans une large mesure les qualités spécifiques de l’Air (la transparence) […]’ (Mendelson, 1968: 19-24). While glass preoccupies Mendelson, the transparency which is a fundamental characteristic of it is a constituent element of the composite photographic and the radiographic image also.

9 Wegner affirms that ‘Proust’s “perception des vérités” relies on some kind of transparent lens, or a set of lenses. The function of this optical arrangement is fulfilled in the *Recherche* by the authority of a first-person narrator and protagonist’ (Wegner, 2003: 70).
It suggests an inherent lack of completeness: there is a sense in which the composite photograph is an unfinished work, due to the fact that it features a transitional phase in the production of a single photographic image. The transparency of human flesh in the radiographic image points up the fragility of individual existence and exposes the skeletal framework to which the body must inevitably be reduced. With regard to Marcel’s creative vocation, a feeling of urgency as to the swift passage of time and his own mortality, contributes to the anxiety of the later narrator who has engaged with his literary vocation, but fears for the fate of the incomplete work. Transparency in photographic images conveys the impression of ghostly incorporeality, where the body yields to the destructive effects of the passage of time. The complex relationship between transparency and opacity in composite photographic and radiographic images is appropriated throughout the Proustian narrative in the metaphoric representation of the tensions between surface and depth which preoccupy Marcel in his interaction with other people and in his search for essential truths. Opacity suggests a concrete reality with which the observer comes into contact — in resisting ocular penetration, dense physical

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10 Richard notes the transparency which frequently characterizes physical matter in *À la recherche du temps perdu* and affirms that ‘à observer pourtant d’un peu près le paysage proustien on y voit opérer en même temps une tendance […]: un mouvement tout aussi fort y vise à coaguler les fluides, affermir les transparences, épaisir les lumières’ (Richard, 1974: 147). Richard defines three modes of densification of transparent matter: *épaississements, cristallisations et coagulations*. All three of these are relevant in the analysis of the composite photographic image and the radiographic image.

11 Tisseron notes with regard to the incomplete mental assimilation of lived experience that the desire for or hope of future assimilation guides the recording of that experience in the mental ‘darkroom’: ‘c’est notamment pourquoi le désir de photographier un lieu ou une situation est d’autant plus viv que la rencontre avec lui a été vécu comme trop rapide. En effet, les sensations et les émotions qui y ont été éprouvées n’ont pas pu alors s’y développer suffisamment pour y être reconnues et nommées’ (Tisseron, 1996: 30). In relation to Marcel’s perception and memory processes, the transparency of superimposed images suggests his efforts to synthesize impressions snatched from the flow of time and held in suspension in his memory, without being fully developed or assimilated, through a lack of temporal investment on Marcel’s part.

12 Following the series of involuntary memories recounted in *Le Temps retrouvé*, which motivates Marcel to commit to the creation of a literary work, the later narrator observes that ‘dans ces grands livres-là, il y a des parties qui n’ont eu le temps que d’être esquissées, et qui ne seront sans doute jamais finies, à cause de l’ampleur même du plan de l’architecte. Combien de grandes cathédrales restent inachevées!’ (Proust: VII, 338). The notion of the *esquisse* evokes faint material outlines which must be filled in.

13 In a section of *Photographie et langage: fictions, illustrations, informations, visions, théories*, Grojnowski explores the phenomenon of spirit photography in the nineteenth century. He affirms that ‘[…] la photographie est dotée d’un remarquable pouvoir. […] Elle appréhende l’invisible’ (Grojnowski, 2002: 246). Spirit photography was concerned with the recording and thereby the affirmation of the existence of ‘des “périsprits” (de péri: “autour” et spiritus: “esprit”). Entités ordinairement indiscernables, intermédiaires entre les corps matériels périssables et les esprits ou des Ames désincarnées, ils composent des enveloppes semi-matérielles — des corps “fluidiques” ou “astraux” — qui participent de l’ether cosmique […]’ (Grojnowski, 2002: 251).
matter affirms its autonomy and, at the same time, its mysterious obscurity. Opacity resists, while transparency yields to, the eye of the observer.

**Composite Photographs: ‘Images of the Invisible’**

While the magic lantern superimposes a single image on its surrounding environment, without obscuring that environment, late nineteenth century developments in photography facilitated the superimposition of multiple images within a single print, called a composite photograph. Composite photography was invented by the biological scientist Francis Galton in 1877. Francis Galton was a cousin of Charles Darwin and was ‘fascinated by questions of heredity and the human type’ (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 95) and his work ‘employed photographic techniques to serve a theory about human degeneration’ (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 95). In *The Beautiful and the Damned: The Creation of Identity in Nineteenth Century Photography*, Peter Hamilton and Roger Hargreaves note that:

> The discovery of ‘composite’ photography enabled Galton to devise grandiose experiments in order to compile a huge amount of data to support his theories about degeneration. The composite image, made by taking very short multiple shots, would offer a method of synthesising the characteristic physiognomies from numerous individuals of a particular class or race: criminals, consumptives, the insane, public schoolboys, Jews, were among his chosen subjects. (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 97-98 – my italics)

Thus a single photographic print could represent the superimposed images of different people, recorded at different times but under rigorously controlled conditions. The technique of taking very short multiple shots parallels the discontinuous nature of Marcel’s visual perception in *À la recherche du temps perdu*; the notion of the synthesis of multiple images into a single frame calls to mind Marcel’s repeated attempts to acquire vast quantities of information regarding the people who fascinate him and to fuse it all

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14 (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 99)

15 Francis Galton’s invention and use of composite photography in support of his theories of human degeneration and eugenics envisaged the identification and classification of ‘the “residuum” (that portion of the working class which, through mental and physical weakness, could fulfil no useful function) […]’ (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 98). This portion of the population was to be separated out from society and cared for but above all prevented from procreating. Thus composite photography was to Francis Galton a tool which would facilitate the development of an improved future condition of the human race.
into a coherent and definitive character analysis. The interest in heredity and physiognomic types which motivated Francis Galton is evident in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, where image superimposition is evoked repeatedly with regard to the women loved by Marcel, to his friend Bloch and to the families — including his own — who intrigue Marcel throughout his life. Examples include the famous ‘Bal des têtes’ which closes the novel (Proust: VII, 224-353); Marcel’s contemplation of Mme de Surgis and her sons (Proust: IV, 85-94); of his friend Bloch (Proust: III, 183); of Saint-Loup and his aunt, the duchesse de Guermantes (Proust: III, 73); of Albertine, particularly in relation to the Montjouvin scene (Proust: IV, 499-514). Several of these episodes will be explored in this section of my thesis in order to ascertain the extent to which motifs drawn from composite photography and radiography are used to represent the idiosyncrasies of Marcel’s perceptual process.

Within the context of Marcel’s creative vocation, motifs drawn from composite photography suggest the themes of lineage and the struggle for identity: in becoming a writer, Marcel is a product of his family background and of his upbringing. The influence of the family is paramount in the long-drawn-out process of self-determination which culminates in the decision of the childless Marcel to devote his life to the creation of a literary work which will survive him. His fascination with heredity and shared family characteristics also serves to point up what he comes to regard as the inexorable process

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16 Albertine provides the most striking example of Marcel’s efforts to resolve the many and diverse aspects of her character and her physical person into a single whole. Though repeatedly frustrated by the transformative effects of the passage of time in his attempts accurately to classify his acquaintance, Marcel nonetheless continues in his endeavours; it is the later narrator who recognises the folly of the exercise.

17 Marcel is the physical and emotional creation of his parents and of his close relatives and friends — most particularly of his mother and grandmother, although his aunt Léonie plays a significant role in his early life also. Thus Marcel is the inheritor of the character traits which he discerns in those closest to him. Early in *Du côté de chez Swann* the physical resemblance between Marcel and his mother is underlined when he pays an unexpected visit to his uncle Adolphe’s apartment. The *dame en rose*, later understood to be Odette de Crécy, the future Mme Swann, notes the similarities between Marcel and his mother in the photographs which stand on uncle Adolphe’s desk (Proust: I, 75). It is her desire to compare the living Marcel to the photographic portraits and to her fleeting impression of his mother (as glimpsed once in the stairwell) which leads to their introduction and therefore to the misunderstanding which causes a rift between the two families which is not resolved before uncle Adolphe’s death. The physical resemblance between Marcel’s mother and grandmother after the death of the latter is also underlined (Proust: IV, 513).
of conformity of the younger generation of a family or social group to principles and modes of conduct manifested by the older generation.\textsuperscript{18}

In a composite photograph, discrete transparent images of a group of individuals are combined to produce a general ‘type’ whose authenticity is purportedly affirmed by the semiotic specificity of the products of the photographic system of image production.\textsuperscript{19}

The individual is sublimated into the general effect produced by the superimposed layers of images.\textsuperscript{20} Late nineteenth century composite photography was used in order to attempt to display the \textit{essential} physical characteristics of a particular family, social or ethnic group.\textsuperscript{21}

The fact of superimposing multiple transparent photographic images, each distinct and yet sharing certain features with the other images which are combined to produce a single composite photograph, results in an image characterised by unique effects of transparency and opacity. The tension between transparency and opacity on the surface of

\textsuperscript{18} It is interesting to note that subterfuge and concealment are no impediment to the manifestation of certain traits: homosexuality in the case of males of the Guermantes family; love in the case of Marcel’s own family. Marcel’s mother’s obfuscation of her love for her son as a child is explored in chapter three of my thesis in relation to the \textit{baiser du soir} incident. The absolute reversal which Marcel comes to appreciate between the behaviour of those around him and their true motivations or feelings, suggests the negative/positive duality which characterises the photographic system of image production.

\textsuperscript{19} Arthur Batut (1846-1918), a French photographer who was interested in new techniques, published in 1887 a treatise entitled \textit{La photographie appliquée à la recherche et à la reproduction du type d’une famille, d’une tribu ou d’une race}, which further developed Francis Galton’s composite methodology. Hamilton and Hargreaves note that ‘one of Batut’s principal interests seems to have been in using his technique to demonstrate physical characteristics, and he expressly states that his composite portraits are a form of \textit{virtual reality} or “images of the invisible”, and that they are designed to reveal physical, non-intellectual, analogies’ (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 99). However, the developing interest in phrenology and physiognomy in the latter half of the nineteenth century meant that composite photographs came to be used ‘to make direct, physiognomical connections between physical characteristics and mentality’ (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 99). It is the latter tenuous connection between outward appearance and the inner emotional and mental life which is underlined in the Proustian narrative in the evocation of superimposed images of a single person with whom Marcel is fascinated and whose essential nature he attempts to grasp.

\textsuperscript{20} In his correspondence, Proust noted with regard to the models for the characters in \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} that ‘il n’y a pas de clefs pour les personnages de ce livre; ou bien il y en a huit ou dix pour un seul […]’ (Proust: \textit{Correspondance}, vol. XVII, 189). In the same way that a single composite photograph consists of images of more than one person, each character in the Proustian narrative is described by Proust as the amalgamation of multiple individuals who together form an independent fictional entity.

\textsuperscript{21} One popular use of the composite photographic image was in the synthesis of the faces of a newly married couple for the purpose of predicting the physiognomic features of their future children. Thus while indexically linked to the past, the composite photograph also served as a means to project into the as yet unseen potential of the future. See illustrations \textit{i.}, \textit{ii.} and \textit{iii.}
a composite photographic image creates an awareness of both spatial and temporal depth in the viewer. The perception of spatio-temporal depth is dependent upon the retention of each transparent image, and upon the overlaying of images so as to create a synthesised impression of shared physiognomic characteristics. While common characteristics are clearly outlined in a composite photograph and their manifestation constitutes the principal goal of this kind of photography, features specific to each discrete image are also evident: though the overall effect of the composite photograph is to suggest a 'type' rather than an individual, yet the faint visible traces of disparity in items of clothing, or in the position of the arms and hands or the arrangement of the hair, serve to underline the individuality of each contributor to the composite photograph. Thus the composite photograph constitutes a record of both the shared and the individual physical features of a family or ethnic group. The eyes, which form the central point of the composite photograph, are opaque and therefore clearly visible, as in a developed portrait of a single individual. Temporal flux is palpable in the blurred or indistinct outlines of the face and body which suggest the physical movement of a unique subject: a falsehood perpetrated by the indisputably indexical nature of the photographic image.

22 While no evidence exists of composite photographs of an individual, photographed at different points in time, such an exploitation of the technique of composite photography is suggested in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The creation of composite photographic images of an individual is evoked most particularly in the representation of Marcel's perception of Albertine. In the case of a composite photograph of one person, the passage of time is marked by the fact of superimposing images recorded at different stages of their life. The changes wrought by time on the appearance of the individual are apparent in the faint lines which trace the sartorial and corporeal features peculiar to one particular period of their life. The permanence of certain elements of an individual's physiognomy is therefore underlined by the ephemeral nature of the changes in their poses and modes of dress over a period of time. In relation to Albertine and also Marcel himself, image superimposition underlines the shock of unexpected modifications in the character of each (Proust: IV, 499); (Proust: V, 60); (Proust: V, 335); (Proust: VI, 126).

23 The importance of the eyes in the Proustian narrative with regard to identity formation and communication is underlined through the appropriation of the photographic system of image production, as when the lady in pink observes that Marcel has his mother's beautiful eyes; when Marcel sees his sickly grandmother; when Morel unexpectedly finds the photograph of the baron de Charlus in a room where he means to be unfaithful to him; when Mlle Vinteuil desecrates the photograph of her dead father which shows the blue eyes that they both possess. As the only feature of the human face which does not change throughout life, the eyes are both consistent and inscrutable, and thus inexhaustibly fascinating to Marcel.

24 See Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 70, 74 and 75 for examples of composite photographs of members of particular families, taken by Francis Galton and Arthur Batut.
The composite photographic image privileges the general over the particular in its pursuit of essential characteristics. In so doing it affirms the existence of an artificially exposed ‘invisible’ and living essence drawn from the photographed group. Yet the multiplicity of contributors to such an image, built up from transparent impressions, precludes any sense of concrete contact with a unique individual, which nonetheless is suggested by the status of the photographic image as indexical icon. Such opacity and fixity of line in the facial features as is represented in a composite photograph of a particular group of people is ultimately illusory — no single individual can be credited with it with any degree of certainty. The transparency of the individual layers of the composite photograph suggests the intangibility and elusiveness of the subjects, each of whose identities are as insubstantial and uncertain as their outline on the photographic print. The partial transparency of the composite photographic image as a whole renders it a ghostly and somewhat haunting image which points up the inevitability of death. By representing the faint outlines of numerous individuals in a single photographic print, the composite photograph exploits the indexicality of the photographic image to its fullest extent, in the creation of a predominantly iconic image. The superimposition of layers of spatio-temporally specific images ensures the elusiveness of each particular layer, even as the

25 Hamilton and Hargreaves show that, in 1877, Francis Galton noted how composite photographs of criminals softened the appearance of individual prisoners: ‘the resulting images, he found, seemed more attractive than any of the individual portraits: “The special villainous irregularities in the latter have disappeared, and the common humanity that underlies them has prevailed. They represent, not the criminal, but the man who is liable to fall into crime”’ (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 97).

26 Schaeffer states that ‘puisque la photographic est une empreinte à distance, elle est située d’entrée de jeu dans une tension spatiale qui implique l’absence de tout contact direct entre l’imprègnant et l’empreinte. Autrement dit, avant d’être éventuellement une affaire de miroir, l’image photographique est toujours une affaire de distance: elle est le résultat d’une distension spatiale’ (Schaeffer, 1987: 17). The absence of contact between photographed object and image extends to the relationship between image and observer.

27 In 1882, Francis Galton developed a system of weighting the images which went to make up a composite photograph: ‘by assigning statistically derived “weights” (calculated from his analyses of hereditary “laws”) to the amount of exposure each relative was allotted in the composite image (and in consequence the influence their image would have on the subsequent composite), Galton claimed that he could produce an “Ideal family likeness”’ (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 98). Thus in the production of a composite photograph the photographer has ultimate control over the potential choice of a print which may dominate in the resulting image. In Galton’s case, his choice was dictated by the desire to gauge the inheritance of natural characteristics; similar principles are evoked in the representation of Marcel’s perception of important people in his life whose identity he attempts to fix, through a process which is akin to the production of a composite photographic image.

28 Hamilton and Hargreaves affirm with regard to Arthur Batut’s composite photographs that ‘although this photographic innovator’s work was widely hailed as a method that parents could use to find out what features their children would have, Batut’s interests seem to have been less “anthropological” and more artistic in scope. He was fascinated by the ways in which the “type-portrait” revealed common aspects of the features of different groups of people’ (Hamilton and Hargreaves, 2001: 75).
indexicality of the photographic image guarantees their individual referentiality to precise moments in time and space in the past. The result is an image characterised by depth in terms of both space and time. Discrete constituent parts make up a whole which represents, on a single print within a single frame, a visually discernible multiplicity of spatio-temporal fragments.\(^{29}\) These fragments coalesce into a disorienting and haunting image whose lack of foundation in a unique individual is belied by its origins in the photographic system of image production. The contemplation of a composite photograph is therefore inevitably characterised by doubt and hesitancy, which vie with the certainty — albeit narrow — conferred by the semiotic specificity of the photographic image as indexical icon.

Composite photography is suggested in Proust’s novel particularly in relation to the women who serve as love objects for Marcel’s visual contemplation. Marcel’s habitual manner of perceiving individuals within a strictly circumscribed spatial context is noted by Poulet, who observes that:

_Ainsi, pour Proust, les êtres humains apparaissent, placés dans certains lieux qui leur servent de support et de cadre, et qui déterminent la perspective selon laquelle il est permis de les voir. [...] A ce premier cadre d’autres viendront s’ajouter ou se substituer par la suite. [...] Bref, les seules images d’eux-mêmes qu’il soit permis aux personnages proustiens de nous offrir, sont semblables à ces photographies d’une même personne, dont nos albums sont pleins. [...] Chacune de ces ‘photos’ est rigoureusement déterminée par son cadre; l’ensemble reste discontinu._ (Poulet, 1982: 38-40 — my italics)

Poulet’s evocation of a photographic album filled with disparate images of an individual evokes image juxtaposition; however, the addition of subsequent prints to an original photographic image which is posited in this passage is also a distinctive feature of

\(^{29}\) Before the publication of _À la recherche du temps perdu_, the idea of image superimposition in visual perception had already been evoked. In _Les Paradis artificiels_, published in 1860, Charles Baudelaire describes the human brain as a kind of sensitised photographic film, recording images which are superimposed on each other over time: ‘Qu’est-ce que le cerveau humain, sinon un palimpseste immense et naturel? Mon cerveau est un palimpseste et le votre aussi lecteur. Des couches innombrables d’idées, d’images, de sentiments sont tombées successivement sur votre cerveau, aussi doucement que la lumière’ (Baudelaire, 1975: 505 — my italics). The reference to light as a significant means of transmitting ideas, images and feelings from the outside world into the mind of the essentially passive observer, suggests the photographic recording of impressions on the light-sensitive film in the photographic camera. The verb ‘tomber’ is attributed to the gentle but enduring action of feelings and images on the brain, which receives and retains all of these experiences in superimposed layers.
composite photography. The careful enframing of the image implies the control exercised by the observer who visually records it: the frame delineates the screen or backdrop against which the object of perception is to be viewed. The finite screen, which is enclosed within a limited frame, marks out the spatio-temporal discontinuity which Poulet regards as characteristic of the representation of an individual character throughout the Proustian narrative. Spatio-temporal discontinuity is underlined through the suggestion of composite photography in relation to Marcel’s perception of individual characters in *À la recherche du temps perdu*: the dual narratological viewpoint of the novel means that the layering of original and subsequent impressions of one person casts into relief both their fixed features and the differences, whether physical or temperamental, which emerge thanks to the passage of time. The same process of layering impressions of different members of a particular family or group serves to point up the brevity of individual existence in contrast with the endurance of distinctive physiognomic and psychological characteristics of that family throughout the centuries. Thus the inescapable fact of the limits imposed by time on human existence is mirrored in the representation of Marcel’s processes of perception and memory.

**Layers of Loveliness: The petite bande, Past, Present and Future**

Composite photography serves to illustrate several aspects of Marcel’s fascination with the petite bande at Balbec: their youth and the physical and temperamental alterations concomitant with adolescence (Proust: II, 388-389); their mesmerising power as a group and the emergence of their distinctive individual looks (Proust: II, 356-359; II, 504-505); and their inheritance of physiognomic features characteristic of each of their families (Proust: II, 505). In *À l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, the passage of the young girls of

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30 With regard to Marcel’s varied impressions of Albertine at Balbec, Beckett affirms that ‘thus is established the *pictorial* multiplicity of Albertine that will duly evolve into a *plastic* and moral multiplicity, no longer a mere shifting superificies and an effect of the observer’s angle of approach rather than the expression of an inward and active variety, but a multiplicity in depth [...]’ (Beckett, 1931: 47).

31 In a chapter of *Photographic Vision in Proust* entitled ‘Proustian Photoghosts’, Infantino notes that ‘the imposition of photographic borders functions as a device to detach the object from its living environment. The excommunicated exists in mechanical-chemical suspended animation, *en image*. This residual visual form may portray a collection of photo-subjects (or of a single object) all of whom have been reduced to ghostly, two-dimensional masks, designated as targets by a process of appropriation that “shoots” them alive’ (Infantino, 1992: 30).
the petite bande from child- to girlhood is manifested in the gradually increasing definition in the lines of their facial features, as evidenced for the later narrator by the contrast between the girls Marcel sees and comes to know and the old photographic image of them which is subsequently acquired by him. Before his attention becomes trained primarily on Albertine, Marcel’s collective love and indiscriminate desire for the multiple members of the petite bande is conveyed through his fascination with the diversity and mutability of their looks, notwithstanding the similarities of their features. The later narrator notes that:

[Mon désir] errait entre elles d’autant plus voluptueusement que sur ces visages mobiles, une fixation relative des traits était suffisamment commencée pour qu’on en pût distinguer, dût-elle changer encore, la malléable et flottante effigie. Aux différences qu’il y avait entre eux, étaient bien loin de correspondre sans doute des différences égales dans la longueur et la largeur des traits, lesquels, de l’une à l’autre de ses jeunes filles, et si dissemblables qu’elles parussent, eussent peut-être été presque superposables. (Proust: II, 504-505 – my italics)

While the shared characteristics of the faces of the young girls are noted here by Marcel through the evocation of image superimposition, their emerging difference and individuality at this transitional and transformative point in their lives prove equally fascinating to him in this passage. Marcel’s remark that the physical features of the girls’ faces vary so little as to be capable of superimposition or transfer from one to another evokes the capacity of composite photography to facilitate both the comparison and contrasting of individual physical features in relation to those of other members of the

32 The exact point when Marcel is given this photograph is never made clear: ‘plus tard une photographie m’expliqua pourquoi’ (Proust: II, 388 – my italics) is the first reference to its existence. The contrast between the fixed physical traits of young adulthood and their fluid latency in childhood is underlined in relation to the petite bande through contemplation of this old photograph, taken when they were small children. It points up the rapidity of the changes undergone by the girls in a few short years: ‘dans une photographie ancienne qu’elles devaient me donner un jour, et que j’ai gardée, […] on ne peut les y reconnaître individuellement que par le raisonnement, en laissant le champ libre à toutes les transformations possibles pendant la jeunesse jusqu’à la limite où ces formes reconstituées empêteraient sur une autre individualité qu’il faut identifier aussi […] ; et la distance parcourue en peu de temps par les caractères physiques de chacune de ces jeunes filles faisant d’eux un critérium fort vague, et d’autre part ce qu’elles avaient de commun et comme de collectif étant dès lors fort marqué, il arrivait parfois à leurs meilleures amies de les prendre l’une pour l’autre sur cette photographie […]’ (Proust: II, 388-389 – my italics). Time is spatialised in Marcel’s observation regarding the modifications in the appearance of the girls. Marcel’s perception of the small girls in the photograph as a general collection of indistinguishable features, coupled with the difficulty in accurately identifying the individuals in it, point up the tangible effects of time on flesh: the evocation of an old photograph against which Marcel compares the young girls suggests the power of composite photography to display the common characteristics of the facial features of groups of individuals, and the physical traces which are left upon them by the passage of time.
same group. The fixedness of certain characteristics of the girls' faces points up the mutability of the whole, as the girls grow and change. The coincidence of increasingly fixed features in their animated faces — their 'visages mobiles' — underlines the power of time whose passage facilitates their development, but which will ultimately curtail the physiognomic flexibility of young faces which currently move blithely through time and space. The paradoxical evocation of relatively fixed features in the as yet unfixed faces of the girls suggests the later narrator's sharp awareness of the passage of time during his recollection of the period spent by Marcel in their youthful presence.

On the thematic level, the photographic image of the girls as young children with which, earlier in the narrative, the later narrator describes himself as having compared their adolescent faces, serves to point up the swiftness and extent of the change in their appearance (Proust: II, 388-389). The description, in the passage quoted above, of each of their emergent adult faces as a 'malleable et flottante effigie' is indicative of the inevitable continuity of the process of ageing which is an integral part of life under the yoke of time. The faces of the young girls are works-in-progress which will be completed only on their deaths and decomposition; this fact is implied through the superimposition of past and present images of them, which together serve to suggest the fatal future. The use of the word 'effigie' in Proust's novel is significant within the context of my thesis. Barthes affirms that 'l'inscription sur le cliché fait d'un objet tridimensionnel une effigie bidimensionnelle' (Barthes, 1980: 138). Infantino observes that:

Photos are documents of expiration, historical death certificates. [...] Photography is the past embodied for future viewing in a perpetual present. [...] Photographic images are effigies, light-records of moments past that crop their victims from the spatial continuity of life. These are residual forms, the remains of people captured by a mechanical eye and planted in monochromatic immobility as non-living manifestations of a former self. (Infantino, 1992: 29-30)

It is interesting to note the increasing rigidity or fixity of feature of the characters of A la recherche du temps perdu as they age: at the 'Bal des têtes' in Le Temps retrouvé, Marcel notes how:
In this passage, the physical appearance of those whose lives are almost over is explicitly equated with the photographic image; the girls at Balbec are near the beginning of the journey through time which will lead them to occupy the same state. Though their faces are currently vividly alive — ‘malleable et flottante’ — they will eventually be nothing more than effigies. The composite photograph, which represents a ghostly synthesis of multiple suspended spatio-temporal fragments, is a fitting source for the metaphoric representation of the gradually increasing definition of their facial features as their individual looks and personalities develop, thanks to the passage of time which currently favours their blossoming, but which will ultimately consign them to the same fate as the old men at the Guermantes matinée.

The discontinuous nature of Marcel’s perception of the girls, which results in his multiple impressions of them and consequently his attempts to synthesise those impressions, underlines both the inexorable flow of time and the paradoxical fact that temporal duration is malleable for every individual. In an essay entitled ‘La photographie “…dans le temps” de Proust à Barthes et réciproquement’, Jean-Pierre Montier affirms that:

33 The evocation of rigid facial features among the old suggests rigour mortis — their increasing physiognomic immobility as they approach death implies the steady encroachment of the temporal limits of their lives upon their remaining days. Infantino affirms with regard to this passage that ‘people in photographs do not change. The projected hope of the vieillard who forever strikes a pose is to attain photographic extemporality of the body. The narrator’s scrutinising gaze, however, assigns the opposite value to the wilful resemblance to mechanical portraits: to resemble photo-portraits is to foreshadow death’ (Infantino, 1992: 39).
Montier notes the immobilisation of spatio-temporal instants and regards their serialisation (in a form which recalls chronophotographic images) as an inadequate means of representing temporal duration.\textsuperscript{34} The model of composite photography is more appropriate, particularly in relation to the petite bande at Balbec, in that it spatialises the passage of time on a single photographic print: the discrete images synthesise or crystallise into a unique iconic image which simultaneously enjoys the reassuring status of index. The metaphoric representation of Marcel's perception of the petite bande through the motif of composite photography means that the notion of visual contact with a concrete reality is affirmed, even while the ambiguity and ephemerality of that reality is underlined. The tension between Marcel's perception of the girls as a group and as individuals is pointed up in his struggle to compose a single and definitive image of them from his own impressions and from the old photograph which he guards carefully and continues to contemplate many years later. The inexorable passage of time, which Marcel though not the later narrator fails to appreciate, is the implicit impediment to the success of his endeavours.

Superimposed Sadists: Albertine and the Montjouvain Scene

Image superimposition is evident in the representation of Marcel’s response to the unforeseen attainment of an understanding of what he regards as essential elements of Albertine’s nature, particularly in relation to her sexual orientation.\textsuperscript{35} At the end of Sodome et Gomorrhe, his love for Albertine has been eroded by her constant availability and he resolves to end their relationship so as to begin a new one with Andrée.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} Wegner’s assertion of the importance of chronophotography as a paradigm to elucidate Proust’s atomism is challenged by Montier and also by the model of composite photography which is put forward in my thesis. While Wegner affirms, with regard to Marcel’s perception of Albertine, the existence of ‘a conflict between the verticality of resurrections and the horizontality of a series of projections onto this silhouette’ (Wegner, 2003: 73) this section of my thesis shows that Marcel’s perception of Albertine is repeatedly characterised by spatio-temporal depth.

\textsuperscript{35} While Marcel is convinced of the veracity of Albertine’s declaration regarding her relationship with Mlle Vinteuil and her lover, a subsequent conversation between them casts doubt on it (Proust: V, 323-324).

\textsuperscript{36} Marcel remarks that ‘je n’attendais qu’une occasion pour la rupture définitive. […] Me sentant particulièrement heureux et détaché d’elle, je m’étais décidé […] d’aborder cet entretien’ (Proust: IV, 497). However, the outcome of a conversation with which Marcel intends to hint at the termination of their intimate relationship in fact compels him to attempt to keep Albertine closer to him: thus the result is the
However, Albertine’s unexpected disclosure of an intimate friendship with Mlle Vinteuil’s lesbian lover and therefore with Mlle Vinteuil also, causes a volte-face in his perception of her and in his understanding of her identity. Albertine affirms that:

“Vous vous rappelez que je vous ai parlé d’une amie plus âgée que moi qui m’a servi de mère, de sœur, avec qui j’ai passé à Trieste mes meilleures années […] hé bien! cette amie (oh! pas du tout le genre de femmes que vous pourriez croire!), regardez comme c’est extraordinaire, est justement la meilleure amie de la fille de ce Vinteuil, et je connais presque autant la fille de Vinteuil. Je ne les appelle jamais que mes deux grandes sœurs.” (Proust: IV, 499 – my italics)

The orphan Albertine’s description of Mlle Vinteuil’s lover as mother or sister figure and of the two women as her ‘grandes sœurs’, points up their importance in her early life as role models and nurturers. Albertine is of a younger generation and has grown up under the influence of these two women who are known by Marcel to be homosexual lovers. Her remark that the years she spent in Trieste with this woman were the happiest of her life implies the closeness and affection of their relationship. Given Marcel’s belief in the power of heredity and the inheritance of ideas, his alarm is understandable. The sudden alteration in his knowledge of her past and the assumptions he makes about previously unsuspected aspects of her intimate life are expressed through the superimposition of two images which, up to this point in the narrative, have been incongruous:

Je m’assis près de la fenêtre […]. Je n’avais même pas pensé à fermer les volets […]. Derrière Albertine je ne voyais plus les montagnes bleues de la mer, mais la chambre de Montjouvain où elle tombait dans les bras de Mlle Vinteuil avec ce rire où elle faisait entendre comme le son inconnu de sa jouissance. (Proust: IV, 501-502 – my italics)

inverse of that which he anticipates. His detachment from her proves illusory following the suggestion of her sexual inaccessibility.

37 Marcel has already noted the power of the mother in relation to the development of her children, both with regard to himself throughout the novel, and to the ‘petite bande’ at Balbec. Of the latter he remarks that ‘il suffisait de voir à côté de ces jeunes filles leur mère ou leur tante, pour mesurer les distances que sous l’attraction interne d’un type généralement affreux, ces traits auraient traversées dans moins de trente ans […]. Et peut-être, […] tenons-nous de notre famille, comme les papilionacées la forme de leur graine, aussi bien les idées dont nous vivons que la maladie dont nous mourons’ (Proust: II, 453-454). Marcel sees the physical and mental influence of the mother as a dominant factor in the development of the child.

38 Early in their relationship, Albertine had offered to show Marcel a photograph of the woman she cared for as much as a mother (Proust: II, 445). Although her offer is never again referred to or taken up within the narrative, the information contained in the proffered photograph has the potential to convey the same ambiguous facts to Marcel as Albertine’s words in Sodome et Gomorrhe.

39 Marcel’s conviction that ideas, patterns of speech, mannerisms and morals are passed on from one generation to the next is expressed repeatedly (Proust: II, 453-454); (Proust: II, 470-471); (Proust: II, 504-505).
In discovering the possibility of Albertine’s past (and therefore potentially present) homosexuality, new layers of her existence in the time and in places where she lived before Marcel knew her, become perceptible to him through the superimposition of her image onto his own perceptual experience of female homosexual behaviour. Where previously Albertine had embodied all of Marcel’s impressions of Balbec only, she is now endowed with a past life from which Marcel is utterly excluded but which he can visualise because of his earlier voyeurism. Albertine is represented in this passage as occupying the first plane of Marcel’s perceptual field: his memory of the framework of Balbec in which she appeared formerly is overwhelmed by that of the Montjouvain scene in which he played the role of voyeur — an essentially passive and powerless perceptual role, though active in the sense that it facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge. In effect, Marcel bemoans the knowledge of female homosexual behaviour which he attained in the Montjouvain scene and which now torments and punishes him (Proust: IV, 500). The emergence at Albertine’s words of the memory of the Montjouvain scene is itself described in language which suggests the development of a photographic image:

À ces mots [...] si longtemps après la mort de Vinteuil, une image s’agitait dans mon cœur, une image tenue en réserve pendant tant d’années que, même si j’avais pu deviner en l’emmagasinant jadis qu’elle avait un pouvoir nocif, j’eusse cru qu’à la longue elle l’avait entièrement perdue; conservée vivante au fond de moi [...]; surgissant tout à coup du fond de la nuit où elle semblait à jamais ensevelie et frappant comme un Vengeur [...]. (Proust; IV, 499)

Martin Jay observes that ‘Proust’s involvement with voyeurism [...] exposes its ambiguous links to desire and domination’ (Jay, 1993: 183). It is his sense of impotent helplessness in response to this new knowledge regarding Albertine’s possible homosexuality which torments Marcel.40 However, a sleepless night, throughout which he dwells solely on this matter, enables him to assimilate it to some extent.41 As dawn

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40 Marcel acknowledges that ‘cette autre jalousie, provoquée par Saint-Loup, par un jeune homme quelconque, n’était rien. J’aurais pu dans ce cas craindre tout au plus un rival sur lequel j’eusse essayé de l’emporter. Mais ici le rival n’était pas semblable à moi, ses armes étaient différentes, je ne pouvais pas lutter sur le même terrain, donner à Albertine les mêmes plaisirs, ni même les concevoir exactement’ (Proust: IV, 504-505).
41 See Tisseron with regard to the delayed mental assimilation of sensory experience (Tisseron, 1996: 30).
breaks, Albertine’s new association in Marcel’s mind with both Balbec and the Montjouvain scene is expressed through the superimposition of three images:

Mais derrière la plage de Balbec, la mer, le lever du soleil, que maman me montrait, je voyais, avec des mouvements de désespoir qui ne lui échappaient pas, la chambre de Montjouvain où Albertine, rose, pelotonnée comme une grosse chatte, le nez mutin, avait pris la place de l’amie de Mlle Vinteuil et disait avec des éclats de son rire voluptueux: ‘Hé bien! Si on nous voit, ce n’en sera que meilleur. Moi! Je n’oserais pas cracher sur ce vieux singe?’ C’est cette scène que je voyais derrière celle qui s’étendait dans la fenêtre et qui n’était sur l’autre qu’un voile morne, superposé comme un reflet. (Proust: IV, 513-514 – my italics)

Whereas Marcel’s initial response to the shock of Albertine’s possible homosexuality involved the superimposition of her image onto the Montjouvain scene, several hours later it is the Balbec sunrise which is superimposed onto a Montjouvain scene into which Albertine has become incorporated. The passage of time means that the present auroral scene is superimposed on memory images of a girl and a Combray-based incident which were entirely disparate up until the point when Marcel acquired the knowledge which, throughout the long sleepless night, has caused him to connect them in his mind. The specificity of Albertine as love object for Marcel is subsumed into a specific scene which represents the generality of homosexual behaviour between women for him. Her echoing of the words spoken by Mlle Vinteuil’s lover during the Montjouvain scene points up Marcel’s classification or pigeonholing of her as sadistic lesbian: he reduces the unique girl with whom he has been in love to the role which he witnessed being played by a stranger behind a pane of glass.\(^42\) The fact that Albertine may have played such a role in the erotic rituals favoured by Mlle Vinteuil troubles Marcel because of his intimate knowledge thereof and his simultaneous awareness of his own exclusion from them.\(^43\)

Thus the possibility of homosexuality in Albertine does not renew his love for her, but

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\(^{42}\) The fundamental goodness of Mlle Vinteuil’s lover and the key role which she plays in the preservation and dissemination of M. Vinteuil’s music, which were alluded to by the later narrator after the Montjouvain scene, here temper the negativity of Marcel’s reaction to the possibility of Albertine’s belonging to that world. While Marcel is not yet aware of the critical importance of Mlle Vinteuil’s lover with regard to M. Vinteuil’s artistic legacy, the later narrator is. The parallel drawn here between Albertine and Mlle Vinteuil’s lover prefigures the key role of Albertine as love object in Marcel’s life and in his future literary work.

\(^{43}\) The sadism of Mlle Vinteuil’s lover and of Mlle Vinteuil in the profanation of the photographic image of M. Vinteuil is recalled in Marcel’s tormented hallucination of Albertine’s echoing of the words spoken many years before. The implicit victim of Albertine’s sadism is the powerless Marcel who now visualises the scene at Montjouvain with feelings of personal pain rather than righteous indignation.
rather his jealousy, because in Marcel’s mind it precludes her love for him. The composite image of Montjouvain, Albertine and Balbec which is framed in Marcel’s hotel window points up the fundamental elusiveness of the girl both in the past and in the present — and as time continues to pass, she can only slip further from his control. His consciousness of her inaccessibility renews his spent desire to control and possess her. In underlining the ambiguity of Albertine’s true sexuality, the composite image affirms her connections both with Marcel’s amorous life at Balbec and with the exclusively female rituals which are part of Mlle Vinteuil’s world.

The superimposition in Marcel’s mind of Albertine on Mlle Vinteuil’s lover, in his recollection of the Montjouvain scene, reinforces the notion of the latter as having played a fundamentally important parental role in the life of the young girl. Her potential influence on the behaviour and moral standards of Albertine is expressed through her total sublimation into the physical form of Albertine in Marcel’s mind. While Albertine retains distinctive physical features of her own in this scene — Marcel notes her rosy cheeks and mischievous nose, and she laughs as alluringly as ever — her words and actions echo those of her former role model. Without actually repeating verbatim the ritual phrases used by Mlle Vinteuil’s lover in the Montjouvain scene, Albertine replicates them very closely. Thus it is made clear that she is regarded by Marcel as having assumed the character traits manifested by her mentor: for him, she embodies the next generation of sadistic female homosexuality.

The scene quoted above is hallucinatory in its vividness for Marcel. The lack of any concrete foundation or certainty with regard to Albertine and her assertions about her relationship with Mlle Vinteuil and her lover means that he can never be wholly assured of the truth of her past life. Thus Albertine remains a perennially elusive and desirable object of perception for Marcel; also a source of confusion, disorientation and pain. Just

44 Hence his assertion to his mother of the imperative of marrying Albertine at the earliest opportunity (Proust: IV, 515).
45 The verb ‘replicate’ comes from the Latin verb *replicare* meaning ‘to fold back again’ — in Marcel’s mind, the image of Albertine is superimposed on or folded over that of the woman who appeared in the original Montjouvain scene, without an obscuring of the words and actions carried out by the latter.
46 Wegner affirms that ‘the end of a stable referentiality is the beginning of hallucination’ (Wegner, 2003: 69).
as a composite photograph has no absolute indexical quality in itself but is made up of multiple layers of indexical images, Albertine is for Marcel a personality comprised of the fusion or amalgamation of disparate and incongruous images which nonetheless all originate in his perception of and interaction with the girl and which cannot thus be refuted by him. As Marcel looks back later in the narrative on the development of his relationship with Albertine from their initial meeting at Balbec, superimposed images of her are again evoked:

Entre les deux décors si différents l’un de l’autre de Balbec, il y avait l’intervalle de plusieurs années à Paris sur le long parcours desquelles se plaçaient tant de visites d’Albertine. Je la voyais aux différentes années de ma vie occupant par rapport à moi des positions différentes qui me faisaient sentir la beauté des espaces interflérs, ce long temps révolu, où j’étais resté sans la voir, et sur la diaphane profondeur desquelles la rose personne que j’avais devant moi se modelait avec de mystérieuses ombres et un puissant relief. Il était dû, d’ailleurs, à la superposition non seulement des images successives qu’Albertine avait été pour moi, mais encore des grandes qualités d’intelligence et de cœur […] qu’Albertine, en une germination, une multiplication d’elle-même […] avait ajoutés à une nature jadis à peu près nulle, maintenant difficile à approfondir. (Proust: V, 61 – my italics)

Time is explicitly spatialised in this passage, where images of Albertine which were recorded at different moments over the course of several years are overlaid one on the other, resulting in an effect of depth which is itself directly attributed to the ‘mystérieuses ombres’ cast by the disparate images of the desired girl. His increasing appreciation of the complexity of her personality is conveyed through the description of her as an opaque and mysterious entity: she is now ‘difficile à approfondir’. As in a composite photographic image, the shadows of each individual contributory image are discernible in Marcel’s integrated impressions of Albertine. At the same time, her unchanging features are described as being discernible to him in ‘un puissant relief’ — the latter being a word which simultaneously suggests the clarity of her permanent physiognomic traits and the necessity for depth in space and time in order to facilitate his perception of

47 Infantino affirms that ‘the serial character of Albertine’s recorded reflection signifies her un-doing: as the number of image-fragments multiplies, their aggregate corpus becomes increasingly discontinuous and regenerative, each piece capable of resurrecting a separate being’ (Infantino, 1992: 42).

48 The fact that Marcel dwells on the mysterious nature of these shadows suggests the disorientation which is an inevitable consequence of an inability to attain definitive knowledge of the essential truth of Albertine’s character.
them.\textsuperscript{49} Thus, through contemplation of Albertine, Marcel is made increasingly aware of the passage of time: her disparate encounters with him over a period of several years and the subtle alterations in her physical appearance and her character throughout that time mean that her physical being inadvertently points up the effects of time. Marcel’s appreciation for the ‘espaces interférents’ between their meetings underlines his spatialisation of time within the context of his perusal of Albertine both in the present moment and as he has seen her in the past. Time is rendered visually discernible for Marcel in the overlapping of transparent impressions of her: a transparency which may be due to his lack of satisfaction with and inability wholly to assimilate or develop these divergent images, through the use of his mental faculties.\textsuperscript{50}

Composite photography is suggested more than once within the context of Marcel’s obsession with Albertine’s sexual orientation. In one episode from \textit{La Prisonnière}, during the period when Albertine is a guest in Marcel’s home in Paris following the disclosure of her close relationship with Mlle Vinteuil’s lover, Marcel observes her behaviour in his presence whenever an allusion is made to the subject of homosexuality. Her sudden stillness and inscrutable facial expressions are described in language drawn from the photographic system of image production:

\begin{quote}
Mais la crainte dissipée m’avait ressaisi avec plus de force quand, \textit{au moment où j’avais annoncé à Albertine que j’étais allé chez les Verdurin, j’avais vu se superposer à son visage une apparence d’enigmatique irritation, qui n’y effleurait pas du reste pour la première fois. Je savais bien qu’elle n’était que la cristallisation dans la chair de griefs raisonnés, d’idées claires pour l’être qui les forme et qui les tait, synthèse devenue visible mais non plus rationnelle, et que celui qui en recueille le précieux résidu sur le visage de l’être aimé essaye à son tour, pour comprendre ce qui se passe en celui-ci, de ramener par l’analyse à ses éléments intellectuels. (Proust: V, 334 – my italics)}
\end{quote}

The representation in this passage of Marcel’s perception of Albertine’s reaction to his efforts to acquire knowledge of her intimate life through his leading questions and observations is of interest because it underlines the cycle of lies and mistrust which exists

\textsuperscript{49} Shattuck, Moss and Hanney all attribute to the stereoscope the effect of powerful relief which results from the superimposition of transparent impressions. However, the simultaneity of dual image recording which is required in the production of stereoscopic images is lacking in this passage where the \textit{extended} periods of time between Marcel and Albertine’s multiple rendez-vous are emphasised.

\textsuperscript{50} See Tisseron regarding the delayed assimilation of recorded and stored images of lived experience (Tisseron, 1996: 30).
between them and which perpetuates their relationship, even while it guarantees the impossibility of Marcel's ever coming to understand the true significance of her present feelings and of her past life. The description of this tortuous exchange of ambiguous information suggests the photographic system of image production. The causal link between Marcel’s insinuating words and Albertine’s immediate reaction is made clear in the use of the phrase ‘au moment où’ with regard to their verbal communication: like the action of the photographer who presses the shutter release, Marcel’s words begin a process of nonverbal (mis)communication which continues through his ocular scrutiny of Albertine’s oblique facial expressions. His uncertainty is pointed up in the observation that a semblance of irritation imposes itself on Albertine’s face at his words. At this point in the narrative, even her facial expressions, inasmuch as they may be revelatory of her emotions, are not to be trusted as clear indicators of her profound inner state of being. Marcel is therefore reduced to reading her expressions solely on the surface of her face and to endless and fruitless speculation as to their significance. Thus he sees her irritation as a purely external façade: he is unable to allow himself to believe that he understands its true provenance. He is gallingly aware of his incapacity to attain the depths of her being and thus to comprehend her expression. The ideas which prompt her enigmatic expression are clear only to Albertine; to Marcel they are impenetrable. The reference to the visible signs of Albertine’s annoyance as a cristallisation dans la chair of reasoned grievances recalls the chemical reaction between light and silver oxides in the development and printing of a photographic image. Such a reading of this passage is underlined further in the description of his visual gathering of information in the form of a precious residue left on her face by her transient but telling emotions. In the animated world, her sudden and unnatural stillness, evoked through the use of the word ‘cristallisation’, points up the disparity between her outward appearance and secret inner

51 Just as the photographic image is open to multiple readings unless confined within a specific social context, as shown in Jean-Marie Schaeffer's L'Image précaire: du dispositif photographique, so Albertine's facial expressions prove unreadable to Marcel because he cannot gain access to her thoughts and motivations.

52 Crystallisation is referred to more than once in relation to Marcel’s emotional state with regard to Albertine. During the game of ferret at Balbec there is the first surge of hope that Albertine cares for him: ‘d'un seul coup, une foule d'espoirs jusque-là invisibles à moi-même cristallisèrent […]’ (Proust: II, 482). Richard notes with regard to Proust’s novel ‘la transparence aérienne: qualité de la distance pure, vide absolu de l’intervalle. Or rien n’émue plus l’imagination proustienne […] que le durcissement brusque ou progressif d’un tel milieu’ (Richard, 1974: 150).
life. Her face becomes the immobile repository of an expression which is superimposed upon it and whose precise origins cannot be pinpointed accurately by the anxious observer.\textsuperscript{53} Crystallisation suggests a level of transparency, but in this case it is frustratingly ambiguous, enabling Marcel to witness Albertine’s undoubted annoyance, without enlightening him as to its true cause.\textsuperscript{54}

The temporal discontinuity which is pointed up by the abrupt motionlessness of her face (not witnessed by Marcel for the first time in this passage — a fact which suggests the superimposition of multiple images of Albertine as she repeatedly suffers Marcel’s subtle interrogation) alludes to her possible attachment to past events and relationships of which Marcel is ignorant and which he is desperate to know about. To him, Albertine as she is represented in this passage is all surface and no depth — not because of any lack of mystery or profundity on her part, but because of his incapacity to gain reliable access to the essence of her personality. In this passage, she is a sadist in so far as she refuses to allow him to engage with her present emotions, censoring herself rather than sharing with him: he is shut out as he was previously at Montjouvain, obliged to assume the role of passive and endlessly frustrated voyeur.

\textbf{Lineage: Undying Traits and Transient Flesh}

Time is made visibly manifest for Marcel in his contemplation of multiple generations of the families who participate in the social world he inhabits, particularly the Bloch and the Guermantes clans. Each generation reproduces so markedly the physical and behavioural characteristics of its forebears that the permanence of these characteristics is regarded

\textsuperscript{53} Marcel contrasts her usual animation with the stillness which succeeds any reference to homosexuality, noting that ‘[…] dès qu’on faisait allusion à ce genre de choses, elle cessait de prendre part à la conversation, non seulement avec la parole, mais avec l’expression du visage. […] La seule chose qui frappait alors, dans ses traits si mobiles, c’est qu’à partir du moment où on avait effleuré ce sujet, ils avaient témoigné de leur distraction en gardant exactement l’expression qu’ils avaient un instant avant. Et cette immobilité d’une expression même légère pesait comme un silence’ (Proust: V, 335 – my italics). The description of Albertine’s facial expression as having frozen in the attitude of the previous moment evokes the immobility of the expressions recorded in a photographic image.

\textsuperscript{54} Ambiguity coupled with indexical certainty is a unique characteristic of the photographic image, as affirmed by Schaeffer, who notes that ‘[l’image photographique] est sans mémoire, et, pour la traiter, le récepteur doit l’insérer dans son propre univers interprétatif, puisque c’est dans cet univers seulement qu’elle peut être transformée en témoignage d’une situation complexe’ (Schaeffer, 1987: 86).
ultimately by Marcel as a defeat of the passage of time. It is important to note however that what survives is the ‘type’ rather than any individual repository of those characteristics. The baron de Charlus’s triumphant roll-call of the dead in *Le Temps retrouvé* (Proust: VII, 169) underlines the indisputable power of time and hence, inevitably, death with regard to the individual. In *Le Temps retrouvé*, composite photography is suggested in Marcel’s reflections on the new awareness of time which he has attained through his experience in the Guermantes library of a series of involuntary memories, coupled with the immediately subsequent revelation of the advancing age of his contemporaries:

De même qu’en écoutant parler Cottard, Brichot, tant d’autres, j’avais senti que, par la culture et la mode, *une seule ondulation propagate dans toute l’étendue de l’espace les mêmes manières de dire, de penser*, de même dans toute la durée du temps de grandes lames de fond soulevent, des profondeurs des âges, les mêmes colères, les mêmes tristesses, les mêmes bravoure, les mêmes manies *à travers les générations superposées*, chaque section prise à plusieurs d’une même série offrant la répétition, comme des ombres sur des écrans successifs, d’un tableau aussi identique, quoique souvent moins insignifiant, que celui qui mettait aux prises de la même façon Bloch et son beau-père, M. Bloch père et M. Nissim Bernard, et d’autres que je n’avais pas connus. (Proust: VII, 245 – my italics)

The consistency and immutability of certain modes of feeling and expression which is perceptible to Marcel through — ‘à travers’ — two generations of the Bloch family in this passage and which he projects still further backward in time and through the whole of society, is equated directly with the spatial propagation in society of patterns of speech and thought due to the transient dictates of culture and fashion. Thus the fixed and the fleeting are linked directly here. Time and space are the limitless conduits in which waves of shared characteristics — both cultural and genetic — are made manifest repeatedly in human flesh. The contrast between infinite time and endless space and the finitude of individual existence is reinforced in the metaphor of the unchanging image or ‘tableau’ which is projected on successive screens due to the shadows thrown by superimposed generations, through which sections may be cut. The evocation of superimposed generations of a single family and of the possibility of analysing the

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55 Hanney argues that ‘here it is not a question of changes occurring over time in a single being, but rather of several individuals aligned to reveal an identical feature’ (Hanney, 1990: 94).

56 Implicit in Marcel’s recognition of consistency in familial and societal patterns of behaviour in the past is his projection of the same unchanging state of affairs into the future: thus Bloch and his father-in-law must die and be replaced by the next generation.
repeated traits which characterise that family, calls to mind the composite photographic techniques employed in the development of the pseudo-sciences of phrenology and physiognomy in the latter half of the nineteenth century: in this passage, Marcel employs visual imagery metaphorically to represent fixed aspects of personality. The individual is understood by him to be merely a vessel through which inherited family characteristics of appearance and temperament are expressed: each is a shadow thrown upon the delimited screen of the discrete period of time during which a life may be lived. Thus time is spatialised in this episode both in the form of the individual body and in the specific and necessarily limited period during which that body moves through the world. Each of the multiple screens evoked here frames both the spatial and temporal duration of individual existence.

The allusion to shadows in the passage quoted above invokes their source: the interaction of light and dense matter against the backdrop of a screen or other surface onto which the shadow is projected, but which is not itself obscured by the shadow. The shadow of a person is a two-dimensional visually perceived sign, unique to its cause, yet simultaneously very difficult to identify. It is intangible and elusive, and is an indexical sign affirming the physical existence of its source. As previously stated, the composite photographic image is constituted of superimposed layers of transparent images, which can themselves each be regarded as the immobilised shadow of the individual whom they represent.

The physical appearance of members of the Guermantes family and the distinctive features shared by many of them are remarked upon repeatedly in the Proustian narrative (Proust: I, 172; III, 401-2). Photographic images of the duchesse de Guermantes and of

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57 Cf. note 19 regarding the nineteenth-century pseudo-scientific links between physical appearance and moral condition.
58 The role of shadows in the development of the relationship between Swann and Odette is significant (Proust: I, 222).
59 The carefully regulated frame of each of the impressions which go to make up a composite photographic image functions as a means of delimiting and thus controlling the representation of that individual: it dictates the dimensions of the spatial screen upon which their face will be recorded. Spatial limits are implicitly accompanied by temporal limits — thus is conveyed the notion of the finitude of individual existence and the inevitability of death.
the baron de Charlus play important thematic roles in the novel, in episodes which relate particularly to sexual desire and jealousy (Proust: III, 73, 92; IV, 467). At Balbec, Marcel’s burgeoning friendship with Saint-Loup is motivated on the part of the former by his wish to become more closely acquainted with the aunt of the latter. Composite photography is suggested in his contemplation, both in the photograph of the aunt and in the nephew with whom he interacts directly, of the Guermantes facial features which inspire Marcel’s admiration:

Je regardais la photographie de sa tante [...]. Plus tard, en regardant Robert, je m’aperçus que lui aussi était un peu comme une photographie de sa tante, et par un mystère presque aussi émouvant pour moi puisque, si sa figure à lui n’avait pas été directement produite par sa figure à elle, toutes deux avaient cependant une origine commune. Les traits de la duchesse qui étaient épinglés dans ma vision de Combray, le nez en bec de faucon, les yeux perçants, semblaient avoir servi aussi à découper — dans un autre exemplaire analogue et mince d’une peau trop fine — la figure de Robert presque superposable à celle de sa tante. Je regardais sur lui avec envie ces traits caractéristiques des Guermantes, de cette race restée si particulière au milieu du monde, où elle ne se perd pas et où elle est restée isolée dans sa gloire divinement ornithologique […]. (Proust: III, 73 – my italics)

Looking at Saint-Loup, the flesh-and-blood man in his presence, leads Marcel to trace and affirm a resemblance between him and the photographic image which serves as a substitute for the living woman who fascinates him and who, for the moment, lives beyond his social reach.\(^6^0\) So to Marcel, Saint-Loup is not like his aunt, but is like a photograph of her. Notwithstanding the fact that the duchesse is not actually Saint-Loup’s mother, their common origin in the distant, mythological past and their shared physical characteristics mean that, in consciously appreciating the nephew, Marcel is brought closer to the absent object of his desire. His observation that Saint-Loup’s face is almost capable of superimposition onto that of his aunt points up the closeness of the blood relationship; simultaneously it underlines the subtle differences between them. The tension generated by the blurring of the outlines of their superimposed physiognomies evokes the distinctive outlines of composite photography. The fact that it is Saint-Loup’s face which could be superimposed on that of his aunt underlines his youth. She is of an

\(^6^0\) Marcel fails even in his attempt to possess the photographic image of the duchess: when he requests it, Saint-Loup refuses to give it to him as a gift. Thus is the elusiveness and inaccessibility of the duchess reinforced.
older generation and the natural order — as dictated by fleeting time — decrees that she be destined for burial, both literal and figurative, before her nephew.

Of course it is ironic that Saint-Loup’s premature death means that he precedes his aunt into the grave, against the natural order. Her childlessness is counterbalanced by the existence of his daughter, who survives him and who, at the Guermantes matinée, serves for Marcel as the living embodiment of the fusion of Swann’s Way and the Guermantes Way. The fact of her existence assures Marcel of the survival into the future of the physical and temperamental traits peculiar to the two families who, aside from his own blood relations, proved most significant with regard to his education and thus to the conception and ultimate realisation of his creative vocation.

**Radiographic Images: Deceptive Surfaces and Concealed Depths**

The superimposition of surfaces and their underlying depths which characterises the radiographic image means that it provides a rich source of visual imagery for the metaphoric representation of complex and frequently unexpected relationships between initially disparate elements of Marcel’s experience of the world around him. Motifs drawn from radiography in *À la recherche du temps perdu* serve to underline Marcel’s pursuit of hidden but essential truths beneath the surface or external appearance of things. Radiography is also evoked more than once in the representation of Marcel’s sudden and usually involuntary discoveries of unsuspected truths concerning himself or those close to him. Francoise’s hidden, negative feelings towards her daughter’s husband, which are discerned by Marcel’s mother in *Du côté de chez Swann*, are the first indication of the metaphoric role which will be played in the Proustian narrative by radiography: ‘et Françoise disait en riant: “Madame sait tout; Madame est pire que les rayons X [...] qu’on a fait venir pour Mme Octave et qui voient ce que vous avez dans le coeur”’ (Proust: I, 53). Uses of radiography in metaphor and analogy convey the need, which is
recognised by the later narrator, for the contextualisation of experience in order accurately to ascertain its significance.\textsuperscript{61}

The relationship between transparency and opacity which characterises the radiographic image is of interest because it constitutes a reversal of the norms of photographic representation of an individual: surfaces and depths are rendered transparent, though not evenly; and the opacity of the image is derived from the osteological framework of the body which remains hidden throughout life. Thus the indexicality of the radiographic image underlines the certainty of eventual death and decay of the represented individual, while blurring, without completely eradicating, the distinctive physical characteristics which make up their identity as living beings.

With regard to the appropriation of radiography for the establishment of connections between incongruent elements of Marcel’s lived experience, the magic lantern fulfils a similar function in \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu}. Poulet affirms that:

Le phénomène de la lanterne magique offre l’exemple inattendu, bouleversant, et néanmoins fascinant, d’une \textit{superposition juxtaposante}. En projetant une image sur un mur, la lanterne recouvre le mur, mais elle ne le voile pas; si bien que l’image et le mur apparaissent simultanément l’un au-dessous de l’autre. Le corps de Golo ne cache pas le bouton de la porte. De même, ne serait-il pas possible d’imaginer un monde, où l’opacité ordinaire des êtres, des lieux, des moments, aurait fait place à une certaine transparence, en sorte qu’en plongeant le regard dans la profondeur de sa propre existence, on pourrait voir les diverses époques de celle-ci s’étager comme les alvéoles dans une ruche d’abeilles? (Poulet, 1982: 116)

Unlike magic lantern images, which are invitations to fantasy and imaginative escape from one’s immediate surroundings, radiographic images belong to the realm of scientific and medical inquiry.\textsuperscript{62} They are invested with the indisputable semiotic status of indexical sign: \textit{ça a été}. Thus they have connotations of certainty which are not enjoyed

\textsuperscript{61} Hanney affirms with regard to the field of X-ray and the notion of self-perception and the perception of others that ‘here it is a question not only of a negative picture but of one that depicts more than surface reality. The picture may be nearly unrecognisable, yet it bears a certain stamp of truth according to Proust’ (Hanney, 1990: 79).

\textsuperscript{62} In \textit{A History of X-Rays and Radium}, Richard F. Mould affirms that following the discovery of X-rays by Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen in November 1895, the first clinical radiographs were made in January 1896 (Mould, 1980: 1). See illustration iv: for an early example of a radiographic image of the entire body of a clothed woman, made as a result of a single exposure in 1897.
by magic lantern images. Yet the irrefutable aspects of the depths of the physical self which are represented in the radiographic image are intensely strange to that individual. In its two-dimensional representation on a single print of both external and internal parts of the body, the radiographic image privileges the hidden and the invisible. In a reversal of the norms of photographic representation, it is the concealed skeleton which constitutes the most sharply defined element of a radiographic image; while features of the surface of the body lose their definition and fade to quasi-transparent shadows. A sense of alienation from the self as represented in the radiographic image is a likely consequence of perception of such an image; at the same time, it is impossible to reject such an image as untrue or untrustworthy, due to its indexical nature. Thus the individual is obliged to attempt to assimilate an image of the physical self which diverges radically from that held as a result of self-awareness based solely on external appearance and sensory experience.

Evocations of radiographic imagery in the metaphoric representation of Marcel's apprehension of the world convey an almost clinical self-assurance or confidence in his opinion on the part of the observer. Gilles Deleuze observes that in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, metaphor '[consiste à] réunir deux objets différents dont la sélection et le rapport sont entièrement déterminés par une essence qui s'incarne dans un milieu ductile ou transparent [...]' (Deleuze, 1964: 80). The notion of essence made flesh in a transparent medium recalls the strangely unfamiliar yet incontrovertible relationship between bone and flesh which is laid bare in the radiographic image. Julia Kristeva states with regard to the understanding of metaphor which is expressed in *Le Temps retrouvé* (Proust: VII, 196) and which retrospectively imposes structural coherence on the multiplicity of discontinuous images which constitutes the novel, that:

Le 'rapport' rassemble des objets en vertu de ressemblances que le narrateur leur découvre. Il les surimpose, il les surprime, il contracte des différences; à la place des unités, il crée des 'anneaux'. Enchaînement de cercles, l'analogie a pour effet d'ouvrir la surface des signes vers la profondeur: créateur de figures, le métaphoriste ressemble à un géomètre; mais, plus essentiellement, il est radiologue et chirurgien. (Julia Kristeva, 1994: 265)
Kristeva’s recognition of the importance, in metaphoric representation through language, of image superimposition and the penetration of the surfaces of objects so as to reach their previously unplumbed depths, is made clear in her description of the creator of new metaphor as a radiologist. The assurance with which the later narrator asserts the existence of links between disparate elements of his world is pointed up through the use of radiography as a source of metaphor and analogy. The metaphoric representation of instances of Marcel’s processes of perception and memory in the Proustian narrative as superimposed and simultaneously perceptible images draws on motifs from the field of radiographic imagery in order to underline the undeniable veracity of aspects of the world or of experience which he has previously failed to appreciate but now accepts willingly as true. One such instance occurs in a passage from *Le Côté de Guermantes* when Marcel discovers the negative opinion of him which is held and expressed by M. de Norpois. The later narrator observes that:

[...] L’image que les autres se font de nos faits et gestes ne ressemble pas plus à celle que nous nous en faisons nous-même qu’à un dessin quelque décalque raté où tantôt au trait noir correspondrait un espace vide, et à un blanc un contour inexplicable. Il peut du reste arriver que ce qui n’a pas été transcrit soit quelque trait irréel que nous ne voyons que par complaisance, et que ce qui nous semble ajouté nous appartienne au contraire, mais si essentiellement que cela nous échappe. De sorte que cette étrange épreuve qui nous semble si peu ressemblante a quelquefois le genre de vérité, peu flatteur certes mais profond et utile, d’une photographie par les rayons X. (Proust: III, 262-263 – my italics)

The disparity between self-image and the image of oneself which is held by others is represented in spatial terms in this passage. The photographic negative is suggested in the initial lines where there is a reversal of the expected image and the actual one; however, radiography provides the most fitting model for the dual aspects of this experience of a profound dislocation between Marcel’s image of himself and that which is held by M. de

63 In a passage from *Le Temps retrouvé*, the later narrator describes himself as a surgeon who takes ocular X-rays of the people with whom he interacts socially: ‘aussi le charme apparent, copiable, des êtres m’échappait parce que je n’avais pas la faculté de m’arrêter à lui, comme un chirurgien qui, sous le poli d’un ventre de femme, verrait le mal interne qui le ronge. J’avais beau dîner en ville, je ne voyais pas les convives, parce que, quand je croyais les regarder, je les radiographiais’ (Proust: VII, 24-25). The evocation of hidden, malignant disease and the role of radiography in detecting it together suggest the purificatory and therapeutic merits of Marcel’s manner of perceiving those around him. Negativity and death are nonetheless suggested through the parallel drawn between social interaction and the minute medical exploration of a hidden malady.
Noqjois. The disappearance or blurring of distinctive and esteemed features of external appearance is juxtaposed with the emergence of surprising but valid traits which were previously not appreciated by the individual. The appearance of unsuspected physical traits in the image held by others of a particular individual is described as the revelation of an indisputable essence, while empty spaces or blanks in the image correspond to physical attributes mistakenly believed by that individual to be an integral part of their physical being. The radiographic image, which shows in a single print the unique and yet unrecognisable skeletal structure underpinning the blurred and translucent fleshly envelope of an individual, is a two-dimensional representation of both durable and transient corporeality: the skeleton will prevail long after the flesh has withered away. The reversal which is described in this passage as taking place in one’s self-appraisal as a result of learning what others think of one, underlines the simultaneity of the discovery of both lacunae within and additional aspects of the self. The emphasis placed on the profundity and usefulness of the strange print of oneself which is communicated through the opinion of another evokes the pragmatic importance of the radiographic image in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. Implicit in such a notion is the suggestion that the recognition of disparity between self-image and that of others constitutes an interstitial space where errors of perception can be acknowledged, for the benefit of the individual concerned. The possibility of attaining a more accurate awareness of oneself is raised through the later narrator’s affirmation of the future utility of the information he has acquired through this uncomfortable experience. The later narrator notes that:

Plus tard cet écart entre notre image selon qu’elle est dessinée par nous-mêmes, ou par autrui, je devais m’en rendre compte pour d’autres que moi, vivant béatement au milieu d’une collection de photographies qu’ils avaient tirées d’eux-mêmes tandis qu’alentours

64 In the pages which directly precede the passage quoted above, Marcel learns from Mme Swann that M. de Norpois has described him as 'un flatteur à moitié hysterique' (Proust: III, 262). While the shock of this discovery is fresh for Marcel, the later narrator’s philosophical acceptance of it may be motivated by his appreciation of the profligate wasting of time and energy which characterised Marcel’s youth before his decision to devote himself to his literary vocation. The later narrator sees the veracity of M. de Norpois’s assessment of Marcel and his employment of radiographic imagery in response to the experience underlines his recognition and acceptance of that assessment — however difficult it was to understand it at the time.

65 With regard to the passage explored above, Shattuck affirms that "its underlying theme of the inaccuracy of perception furnishes us with the first clue to the significance of all this optical imagery. The science of optics forever shows the errors of our vision, the distortions from accuracy, deviations from the straight line, reductions in point of view and perspective. Error establishes itself as one persistent principle of Proust’s universe, error in both social and subjective domains" (Shattuck, 2000: 107).
Within the overarching context of the conception and realisation of Marcel’s creative vocation, recognition of his obsequious and society-obsessed life is an important step towards its rejection in favour of its literary recreation in self-imposed isolation. At the same time however, the later narrator acknowledges the struggle involved in the recognition of oneself in an image which diverges significantly from the self-image:

The semiotic status of the photographic image as indexical icon means that, though unrecognisable to himself, the radiographic image of the handsome man which underlines the framework of bone on which hangs his flesh and to which he will one day be reduced by death and decay, is indisputably accurate. Doubt, though understandable, is not accommodated. The disorientation attendant upon such a revelation stems from the failure to identify the self as an inherently perishable entity. The later narrator emphasises the fact that it is the ‘chapelet osseux’, the most clearly defined element of the radiographic image, which alienates the man from the radiographic image of his body. The vital flesh and handsome features in which he glories are reduced to a faint and indistinguishable shadow on the radiographic print.

Time’s relentless melt and the inevitability of death are underlined in the reduction which is operated on the superficial, external self in its representation through radiographic imagery. Yet at the same time, the living and active flesh is not eliminated outright in such an image: rather its pragmatic power or potential is diminished due to its transparency. The essential finitude of organic human existence and the powerlessness of the individual before death which are evoked in the radiographic image, contribute to a sense of urgency regarding the need to communicate through literary art the truth as it is understood by the later narrator: he must endeavour to clear up the misunderstanding.
between himself and M. de Norpois, by proving himself to be other than the unflattering image conveyed in the latter's opinion of him.

Genette affirms that:

L'écriture proustienne se fait ainsi, entre ses intentions conscientes et son accomplissement réel, la proie d'un singulier renversement: partie pour dégager des essences, elle en vient à constituer, ou restituer, des mirages; destinée à rejoindre, par la profondeur substantielle du texte, la substance profonde des choses, elle aboutit à un effet de surimpression fantasmagorique où les profondeurs s'annulent l'une par l'autre, où les substances s'entredévorent. (Genette, 1966: 52 – my italics)

While Genette concludes that optical illusion is the unintended result of Proustian writing, my thesis argues that the appropriation of photography in metaphor functions as a means of pinning down an otherwise vertiginous and utterly elusive reality. The evocation of photography in the metaphoric representation of Marcel’s processes of perception and memory ensures that, although profoundly troubling and alienating, the world as apprehended by him is nonetheless founded in a concrete visual reality. However, the indexicality of the photographic image implies its inherently ambiguous and therefore dangerous pragmatic flexibility — it can be employed to comfort Marcel, by reassuring him of the veracity of his vision; it may also serve to torment him, by pointing up the undeniable truth of unpalatable aspects of the world around him.

66 Martin Jay affirms that ‘read against the grain, Proust’s seemingly triumphant stereoscopic integration of spatiality and temporality, vision and the word, appears far less secure [...]. As in the case of other modernist successors to a discredited Cartesian perspectivalism, his experiments in a new visual order could not really provide a way to tame the bewildering “frenzy of the visible” that led to the antiocular discourse of the twentieth century’ (Jay, 1993: 186).
Clandestine Sexualities and Photography: Intrigues, Contradictions and Concealments

The circulation of photographic images in *À la recherche du temps perdu* is important within the context of the movement or transition of characters between social worlds which are initially considered by Marcel to be mutually exclusive. A particularly pertinent example of such social mobility is provided in the representation in the Proustian narrative of the unanticipated connections between the worlds of heterosexuality and bisexuality and/or homosexuality. Kadivar states that:

*L’approche du phénomène de l’homosexualité dans la Recherche pose d’emblée la question de sa représentation, car on y accède seulement par les formes sous lesquelles elle se laisse représenter et dans les espaces où cette représentation est possible […].* (Kadivar, 2004: 273)

The first explicit recognition of male homosexuality occurs at the beginning of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* when Marcel witnesses the meeting of the baron de Charlus and the tailor Jupien. As pinnacle of the social order and connoisseur of art, the baron de Charlus is an important role model for Marcel. In *Le Temps retrouvé*, the later narrator points up the significance of Charlus as amatory role model for Marcel. He affirms that:

*Mes rencontres avec M. de Charlus, par exemple, ne m’avaient-elles pas […] permis, mieux encore que mon amour pour Mme de Guermantes ou pour Albertine, […] de me convaincre combien la matière est indifférente et que tout peut y être mis par la pensée; vérité que le phénomène si mal compris, si inutilement blâmé, de l’inversion sexuelle grandit plus encore que celui, déjà si instructif, de l’amour.* (Proust: VII, 217)

Thus Charlus as homosexual serves to instruct Marcel most profoundly as to the fundamental importance of individual perception in the designation of a love object — and ultimately in creative endeavour. Marcel’s response to the discovery of Charlus’s homosexuality underlines the invisibility, to the unsuspecting observer, of latent elements

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1 In this episode at the beginning of *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, Marcel as voyeur discovers the baron de Charlus’s homosexuality when from an upstairs window he observes the meeting between Charlus and Jupien in the courtyard of his home in Paris. Marcel then moves deliberately to a concealed position from which, immobile, he can spy on their encounter in a closed-off room (Proust: IV, 1-17).
of the life of an individual. The notion that the homosexuality of the widower baron de Charlus is a concealed aspect of his nature as perceived by Marcel, points up the infinite fallibility of visual apprehension of the world and its inhabitants — before the Paris courtyard scene, Marcel has after all been a witness to female homosexual behaviour at Montjouvain; yet up to this point in the narrative, he has failed to appreciate a truth with regard to the baron de Charlus which is now made clearly apparent.

Homosexual desire forms the basis of the relationship between Charles Morel and the baron de Charlus; the possibility of Albertine’s lesbianism torments Marcel. In the case of the former relationship, on the thematic level photography serves as an inadvertent means of control of the behaviour of the beloved. With regard to the latter love affair, photography is appropriated in the attempts made by the lover to obtain information concerning the amorous affairs, real or imagined, of the beloved. Secrecy and obfuscation characterise communication between ‘invisible’ members of what the later narrator terms the race of ‘les invertis’ (Proust: IV, 23), as witnessed by Marcel throughout the Proustian narrative. The darkened room is an explicitly photographic motif which is evoked repeatedly in the representation of the pursuit of sexual satisfaction by homosexuals, as it is perceived by Marcel as voyeur.

2 Marcel observes that ‘dès le début de cette scène une révolution, pour mes yeux dessillés, s’était opérée en M. de Charlus, aussi complète, aussi immédiate que s’il avait été touché par une baguette magique. Jusqu’là, parce que je n’avais pas compris, je n’avais pas vu. Le vice (on parle ainsi pour la commodité du langage), le vice de chacun I’accompagne à la façon de ce génie qui était invisible pour les hommes tant qu’ils ignoraient sa présence’ (Proust: IV, 15 — my italics). The idea of invisibility which characterises Marcel’s perception of the baron before the courtyard episode suggests the latency of the photographic impression which holds in suspension every element of a recorded image until the time of its development, fixing and printing in the photographic darkroom — with an understanding of the baron’s sexuality comes the retrospective awareness of the significance of his behaviour at other moments in the past.

3 In Proust’s Lesbianism, Elisabeth Ladenson explores the representation of lesbianism in A la recherche du temps perdu and underlines the notion that Proust’s lesbians are the only characters in the novel who achieve a plenitude of reciprocated desire.

4 Charlus is enamoured of Morel; Marcel is convinced that his love for Albertine far outweighs her affection for him. It is jealousy rather than love which motivates their employment of photographic images in their efforts to dominate those they love.

5 One example which is explored elsewhere in this thesis concerns Saint-Loup’s attack on the lift-boy in the darkroom at Balbec, while developing and printing photographs of Marcel’s grandmother. Other explicit uses of photographic motifs — in the form of photographic images and concealed rooms — include Montjouvain (Proust: I, 59); the first encounter between Charlus and Jupien (Proust: IV, 6-15); the deliberate display of family photographs by the prince de Guermantes in the rented room where he hopes to seduce Morel (Proust: IV, 467-468) and Marcel’s chance visit to Jupien’s male brothel in Paris during the war (Proust: VII, 117-136). Several of these episodes will be explored in this section of my thesis.
Emphasis in *À la recherche du temps perdu* on invisibility within the context of secret sexualities (Proust: IV, 16; Proust: IV, 299) implies the latent potential for homosexuality and bisexuality among seemingly heterosexual members of society: Marcel must learn to ‘read’ the signs which belie the surface conformity to societal norms of sexuality. Deleuze affirms that ‘la rencontre Chari us-Jupien fait assister le lecteur au plus prodigieux échange de signes. Devenir amoureux, c’est individualiser quelqu’un par les signes qu’il porte ou qu’il émet. C’est devenir sensible à ces signes, en faire l’apprentissage […]’ (Deleuze, 1964: 14). While similar systems of apprenticeship to signs govern the deciphering of both heterosexual and homosexual attraction, the taboo nature of homosexuality in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century mainstream society underlines the ambiguity and uncertainty of interaction between ‘invertis’ within that society.

The notion of homosexuality as inversion which is repeatedly put forward by Proust in *À la recherche du temps perdu* introduces the idea of a reversal or a negative photographic image of the conventional modes of interaction between the sexes.\(^6\) Hanney contends that:

> There is during the photographic process, as in vision itself, a point at which the reflected image is inverted. It is what allows the final ‘copy’ to appear right-side up […]. Homosexual ‘inversion’ as Proust portrays it suggests more than anything else a case of arrested ‘development,’ a halting at the narcissistic stage of maturation in which the young child is fascinated with his own mirror image. *Like* at this stage attracts *like*, but more significantly, like attracts like because its opposite is inherent in its own form. (Hanney, 1990: 76)

With regard to the photographic system of image production, the inversion of the image during the development process is threefold: there is an inversion of the image at the moment of being recorded on the sensitive film in the camera, and its reversal from left to

\(^6\) The use of the term ‘inversion’ in the Proustian narrative begins in *Sodome et Gomorrhe* and refers consistently to homosexuality in both men and women. The later narrator expresses various opinions with regard to the nature of homosexuality. Proust’s evocation of the invert in *Le Temps retrouvé* in relation to the act of reading (Proust: VII, 217) underlines the autonomy of every reader and the introspection attendant upon the deciphering of truths in works of literature. Research into the representation of homosexuality in Proust’s novel, which informs the work of this section of my thesis, has been carried out by Howard Moss (1963), Julia Kristeva (1994), Pedro Kadivar (2004), Michel Erman (1988) and Elisabeth Ladenson (1999).
right and the overturning of the colour spectrum during the processes of image development and printing in the darkroom: what is light in colour in the photographed object appears as relative darkness in the photographic negative. Given the inherence of image inversion in the photographic system of image production, the latter might be regarded as providing a means for the communication in *À la recherche du temps perdu* of ideas concerning hidden or unexpected aspects of the lives of people with whom Marcel comes into contact and who have a significant influence on the development of his ideas about art and creativity. One such aspect of late-nineteenth century social life is the fact of homosexuality and the behaviour of homosexuals in a predominantly heterosexual society. However, sexuality is not the only situation to which the principle of inversion is relevant. Infantino defines the term ‘inversion’ in the Proustian narrative in a broader context than Hanney and observes that:

Traditionally understood as a signifier of sexual inversion (homosexuality), this sole notion limits an interpretation of the term which should also include activity of the imagination and visually oriented modes of self-discourse. The habit of the *inverte* involves a visually manifest inversion of the image/thing relation where ‘image’ becomes the common denominator of experience and takes precedence over reality. The most salient trait of Proustian *inverti* is the search for a tangible means of self-identification and favourable source of self-reflection. (Infantino, 1992: 45)

Thus inversion may be understood as an essential feature of the relationship to reality of an individual, which is characterised by the privileging of an image over the person or object represented in it. Given that ‘the “inversion” of an individual includes but is not limited to a sexual context’ (Infantino, 1992: 45), it is interesting to explore the ways in which some photographic portraits in the Proustian narrative are appropriated as a means to underline the ambiguity of sexuality and, more generally, of the motivations governing human behaviour. The motif of the darkened or artificially-lit room in relation to the

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7 Shattuck affirms that ‘the theme of homosexuality creates far more ambiguities and conflicts for Proust’ (Shattuck, 2000: 46).
8 Infantino regards photographic images as one of the visual resources available to *inverti* in the Proustian narrative for use in the processes of introversion and self-enclosure which he sees as the inevitable result of the attitude which favours pictures of things and of events over the phenomena themselves (Infantino, 1992: 45-46).
9 The suggestion that Swann may have had homosexual affairs, which is discovered by Marcel after Swann’s death, is made in conversation by Charlus (Proust: V, 287), purely as a means to flatter himself in the eyes of his interlocutor, Brichot, by implying his own irresistibility as a young man, even to a man whose sexual predilections were as decidedly heterosexual as those of Swann.
representation of homosexual behaviour is also pertinent because of the connotations of the photographic darkroom as creative space, where recorded instants of spatio-temporal reality may be fixed and manipulated; the enactment of homosexual fantasies in hidden or dark rooms implies the determined though discreet and transient pursuit of pleasure in a society where homosexuality is still taboo. Infantino affirms that 'everpresent in these episodes is the notion of vice as the narrator tends to focus his eye on the enclosed quarters and self-imposed borders of those whose activities remain beyond the limits of socially acceptable behaviour' (Infantino, 1992: 8). The concealed or darkened room functions as a hidden but essentially social space where the mask of heterosexuality can be dropped temporarily in safety.10

Within the context of the conception and realisation of Marcel's creative vocation, the notion of inversion — that is, of reversal or the turning on its head of a given situation — is significant because it points up the possibility of transmuting frivolous personal experience of reality into an important work of art, through a willed withdrawal from social and sentimental life and a devotion to the creative process. Marcel's discovery of the baron's homosexuality and his continued observation of his love affairs serve to underline not only the attempted concealment of homosexual orientation within a particular mode of engagement with the world, but also the pervasive inversion of language in society through the use of lies and insincerity in attempts to achieve one's amorous goals. In *The Sadomasochistic Homotext: Readings in Sade, Balzac, and Proust*, Douglas B. Saylor affirms that:

> [...] Homosexuals everywhere participate in a secret, ritual art form. The manifestation of this art form is the manipulation of language, and the real perversion of the 'perverts' is the perversion of language. [...] The lie is the ultimate vice: it is the inversion of speech where one thing is said and another is meant. [...] Charlus lies continually, but always does so with perfect language. The shock is that language can be elegant, correct, and beautiful — and completely false. This is the scandal of Charlus. He respects grammar, propriety, he is the

10 Jupien's brothel is an example of a space blending in with but in purpose cut off from the mainstream heterosexual world, its true function unknown except to those skilled in deciphering its signs: Marcel assumes that it is a hotel where he might rest and await the end of the blackout (Proust: VII, 117-118). The 'volets clos de chaque fenêtre' (Proust: VII, 117) make of the brothel a collection of rooms entirely disconnected from each other and from the outside world: spaces for the realisation of fantasies long held in suspension in the imagination.
trend-setter of fashion, but it is all a front, an appearance. In reality he is a sadomasochistic homosexual, who respects the veneer of society. (Saylor, 1993: 100-102)

Through observation of the baron’s love affairs, Marcel comes to appreciate the ambiguous and tenuous nature of social power, of human behaviour and of language itself. As the tool of communication which will be essential to the creation of his future literary work, the shifting significations of language are underlined in the representation of homosexuality in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. They are stressed further through the thematic appropriation of photography as a system of visual representation whose semiotic instability and pragmatic flexibility provide a parallel for the ambiguities attributable to language.\(^{11}\)

**Morel and Great-Uncle Adolphe: Family Photographs and Familiarity**

This section of my thesis will explore the way in which photographic images serve to point up the confrontation of strata of society initially considered by Marcel to be utterly disparate. The first appearance in the novel of the violinist Charles Morel occurs as a direct result of the existence of certain photographic images. After great-uncle Adolphe’s death, Morel is charged by his father — great-uncle Adolphe’s former valet — with their delivery to Marcel. This visit is recounted in passing by the later narrator as an adjunct to his description of the salon of Mme de Villeparisis in *Le Côté de Guermantes*. Its evocation follows immediately on the separate entrances of Mme Swann and Charlus to the salon:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Done, quelques jours avant cette visite, j'en avais reçu une à laquelle je ne m'attendais guère, celle de Charles Morel, le fils, inconnu de moi, de l'ancien valet de chambre de mon grand-oncle. Ce grand-oncle (celui chez lequel j'avais vu la dame en rose) était mort, l'année précédente. [...] Le but de sa visite était celui-ci: son père avait, parmi les souvenirs de mon oncle Adolphe, mis de côté certains qu'il avait jugé inconvenant d'envoyer à mes parents mais qui, pensait-il, étaient de nature à intéresser un jeune homme de mon âge. C'étaient les photographies des actrices célèbres, des grandes cocottes que mon oncle avait connues, les dernières images de cette vie de vieux viveur qu'il séparait, par une cloison étanche, de sa vie de famille. (Proust: III, 254-255)
\end{align*}\]

\(^{11}\) Cf. Schaeffer’s *L’Image précaire: du dispositif photographique* as discussed in the first chapter of my thesis which explores the role of photography in relation to Swann and Saint-Loup.
The memory of the child Marcel’s encounter, at his great-uncle’s home, with the lady in pink is explicitly underlined here in the introduction of the character of Charles Morel. The dual narratological structure of *À la recherche du temps perdu* means that the significance of this episode can be subtly pointed up by the later narrator, while Marcel remains the ingenuous recipient of the visit from Morel. As Walter Benjamin observes, ‘the important thing for the remembering author is not what he experienced, but the weaving of his memory, the Penelope work of recollection’ (Benjamin, 198). As affirmed elsewhere in my thesis, photographic images played a significant role in the conversation which took place at that time between the lady in pink and great-uncle Adolphe with regard to Marcel’s good looks and his strong resemblance to his mother. Marcel is astonished at the unexpected disclosure, thanks to great-uncle Adolphe’s photograph of the Miss Sacripant portrait painted by Elstir and Morel’s explanation of her relationship with great-uncle Adolphe, of the fact that the *dame en rose* of the past is now Mme Swann, mother of Gilberte. He observes that: ‘Je pensais à Mme Swann, et je me disais avec étonnement, tant elles étaient séparées et différentes dans mon souvenir, que j’aurais désormais à l’identifier avec la “dame en rose”’ (Proust: III, 257).

The disparity between the *dame en rose* and Mme Swann, which Marcel comes to appreciate as a direct and immediate consequence of Morel’s delivery of great-uncle Adolphe’s photographs, foreshadows the contradictions and ambiguities which consistently characterise Morel’s own behaviour and consequently the opinion held of his character by Marcel. During their first meeting, Marcel perceives his conceit and his professional ambition. Morel’s expensive clothing and his pride in his achievements as a musician are noted by Marcel, who observes that:

[II] avait l’air de tout, excepté d’un valet de chambre. Il tint du reste, dès l’abord, à couper le câble avec la domestique d’où il sortait, en m’apprenant avec un sourire satisfait qu’il était premier prix du Conservatoire. (Proust: III, 255)

The desire to move away from one’s origins which is so manifest in Morel interests Marcel, given his own creative ambition and inertia. The careful social stratification of

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12 Cf. page 171, footnote 17 and page 173, footnote 23 of this thesis.
late nineteenth-century France makes Morel’s social and professional ambition more immediately noticeable; however, the parallels between the two young men are evident, and Morel’s success and self-congratulation — perhaps pardonable in an eighteen-year-old boy — throw into relief Marcel’s own lack of engagement with his literary vocation.

The capacity for strict compartmentalisation of different elements of an individual’s life which was integral to great-uncle Adolphe’s mode of existence (and which was upset by Marcel’s unexpected visit as a child, resulting in the unresolved estrangement between Marcel’s family and his great-uncle) is underlined through the gift of the photographs given to Marcel by the old valet Morel. Charles Morel manifests his failure to respect any such compartmentalisation in his desire for social and professional advancement. His behaviour towards Marcel transgresses the norms which might typically apply to such a meeting, given their respective positions in society and the relationship between their families. Photography, described by Helmut Gernsheim as a democratic art, is the means of bringing together two young men who would not normally interact with one another as social equals; it also gives Morel the opportunity verbally to communicate his social aspirations to Marcel:

Tandis que le jeune Morel me les montrait, je me rendis compte qu’il affectait de me parler comme à un égal. Il avait à dire ‘vous’, et le moins souvent possible ‘monsieur’, le plaisir de quelqu’un dont le père n’avait jamais employé, en s’adressant à mes parents, que la ‘troisième personne’. Presque toutes les photographies portaient une dédicace telle que: ‘À mon meilleur ami’. (Proust: III, 255)

Looking at and discussing the photographs of the actresses and coquettes favoured by the attentions of great-uncle Adolphe enables Charles Morel consciously to distance himself from his father by playing the role of a young bourgeois — Marcel’s social peer. The use of photography as a means of facilitating this exchange is significant, given the fact that the growth and dissemination of the photographic industry in the nineteenth century

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13 An example of the perpetuation of distinct social worlds is provided early in À la recherche du temps perdu in Swann’s marriage to Odette. Marcel’s mother consistently refuses to acknowledge her existence. The world of the Guermantes is the most exclusive of all the social environments encountered by Marcel and, prior to his admittance to it, he describes its members as gods occupying the ocean floor (Proust: III, 33-35). The intimacy in which master and servant coexist does not preclude the maintenance of distinct social and personal lives, which influence profoundly the opinions of the one about the other (Proust: III, 60-61).
meant that, for the first time, images of people and places previously considered wholly inaccessible — whether socially or geographically — could become one's personal property for a small price.\textsuperscript{14} With regard to Morel, the servility of the father, manifested in his language and mode of address, is thus deliberately replaced by a lack of formality in the son's conversation with Marcel.\textsuperscript{15} The illicit intimacy of Morel's way of speaking to Marcel finds a parallel in the falsehoods written by his \textit{demi-mondaines} on the photographic images kept by great-uncle Adolphe.\textsuperscript{16} Just as insincerity and self-interest dictated the behaviour of the photographed women — many of them actresses, that is women whose lives, both onstage and off it, consist in the conscious playing of roles for the delectation of their audience — towards a wealthy benefactor, so Morel uses the opportunity of meeting Marcel to accumulate as much social, personal and professional capital as possible.\textsuperscript{17} His request for an introduction to Jupien's niece, the seamstress, is predicated on the understanding that Marcel will conceal his social origins and present him as one of his peers, and most importantly, as a great artist (Proust: III, 256-257). In choosing a piece of (violently red) velvet for a waistcoat to be made up, Morel establishes

\textsuperscript{14} Many historians of photography support the idea that photography provided an unprecedented means of appropriating images of the exotic and the unattainable. Carte-de-visite photographs of actresses and \textit{demi-mondaines} were extremely popular in the late nineteenth century. Elizabeth Anne McCauley affirms that 'the bourgeoisie's amassing of carte portraits of royalty, actors, or writers may have resulted from an insecure sense of social rank and personal value [...]’ (Elizabeth Anne McCauley, 1985: 222). In \textit{À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs}, the child Marcel buys a photograph of the actress La Berma from a kiosk, while on the same occasion Françoise chooses photographs of the pope and Raspail (Proust: II, 58). This episode points up the diversity of subjects available to the portrait photographer and to the general public.

\textsuperscript{15} The direct opposition established between the speech of Morel and his father serves to underline the ineradicable connection between successive generations of a family: for Marcel in this scene, the rebel son constitutes a negative image of the submissive father. Morel is consciously defining himself against his father, in much the same way that Mlle Vinteuil’s pleasure at Montjouvin depends on the desecration of her father’s image. In both cases, the father acts as a counter-model in the process of identity creation in the child.

\textsuperscript{16} Marcel underlines his certainty of the fact that the notes written on the photographs were lies by implying that he sought confirmation of the relationships between the photographed women and his uncle: ‘Une actrice plus ingrate et plus avisée avait écrit: “Au meilleur des amis”, ce qui lui permettait, \textit{m'a-t-on assuré}, de dire que mon oncle n'était nullement et à beaucoup près son meilleur ami, mais l'ami qui lui avait rendu les plus de petits services, l’ami dont elle se servait, un excellent homme, presque une vieille bête’ (Proust: III, 255). The savagery of the tone in this sentence, which moves from condescension to contempt, points up Marcel's awareness of the disingenuousness of both the photographic image and someone's use of the written word.

\textsuperscript{17} Morel's blatant efforts to make contacts in aristocratic society with a view to furthering his musical career are recounted in a dry tone by the later narrator, who recounts Morel's advances to a successful young poet — hitherto unknown to him and recommended by Marcel in this passage — which are rebuffed due to Morel's indecent haste in pushing his own agenda.
a commercial relationship between the seamstress and himself. His interest in Mlle Jupien and his lively conversation about the women represented in great-uncle Adolphe’s photographs together imply his heterosexuality. However, the recollection of his visit by the later narrator occurs in the narrative immediately after Saint-Loup’s observation of the entrance of his uncle, Charlus: “‘Tiens, voici mon oncle Palamède!’” (Proust: III, 254). While Mme Swann provides the immediately obvious link between Marcel’s presence at the salon and his remembering Morel’s visit, the significant homosexual relationship between Charlus and Morel, which Marcel comes to understand later, is suggested and retrospectively underlined through the juxtaposition by the later narrator of Charlus’s entrance to the salon and Morel’s first appearance in Marcel’s life as photograph-bearer.

Marcel soon observes the futility of Morel’s wish to cut himself off from the social world of his father and thus to reinvent himself. Photography is the means of establishing, on the thematic level, the enduring significance of the relationship between great-uncle Adolphe and Morel’s family:

Le jeune Morel avait beau chercher à s’évader de ses origines, on sentait que l’ombre de mon oncle Adolphe, vénérable et démesurée aux yeux du vieux valet de chambre, n’avait cessé de planer, presque sacrée, sur l’enfance et la jeunesse du fils. Pendant que je regardais les photographies, Charles Morel examinait ma chambre. Et comme je cherchais où je pourrais les insérer: “Mais comment se fait-il, me dit-il (d’un ton où le reproche n’avait pas besoin de s’exprimer tant il était dans les paroles mêmes), que je n’en voie pas une seule de votre oncle dans votre chambre?” Je sentis le rouge me monter au visage, et balbutiai: “Mais je crois que je n’en ai pas. — Comment, vous n’avez pas une seule photographie de votre oncle Adolphe qui vous aimait tant! Je vous en enverrai une que je prendrai dans les quantités qu’à mon

18 The red waistcoat — which Marcel confirms is never worn by Morel, so gaudy is the colour chosen by him — raises the question of the role of clothes in *À la recherche du temps perdu* as a means of communicating social status and sexual orientation. Clive Scott affirms that “clothes help to construct identity, an identity which the wearer then seeks fully to inhabit […]” (Scott, 1999: 132). In *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History*, Valerie Steele affirms that ‘Proust seems to have believed that most homosexuals used fashion simultaneously as a disguise and as a revelation of their inner selves. To the shared language of clothes, they added more or less secret refinements. Like heterosexuals, however, they worked within a context in which dark, stiff clothing signified masculinity, while light or bright colours and ornamentation signified femininity’ (Valerie Steele, 1998: 213). Morel’s choice of bright red velvet for a waistcoat, to be made up by a young woman who has caught his eye, serves to convey the ambiguity of his sexuality.

19 Morel’s bisexuality is confirmed when the later narrator notes his capacity to enjoy relations with both men and women: ‘la façon dont Morel en était — autant que j’ai pu l’apprendre — était qu’il aimait assez les femmes et les hommes pour faire plaisir à chaque sexe à l’aide de ce qu’il avait expérimenté sur l’autre; c’est ce qu’on verra plus tard’ (Proust: IV, 302).
Although Morel strives to project the worldly and sophisticated image of a talented and successful musician, his surprise at the lack of a photographic image of great-uncle Adolphe in Marcel’s room makes manifest the significance of the old gentleman throughout Morel’s life. The evocation of great-uncle Adolphe’s influence as a shadow cast on the Morel family — ‘l’ombre de mon oncle’ — might be regarded as tentatively suggesting the photographic system of image production for which light and shadow constitute the fundamental means of image-making. The fundamental significance of light and shade in photographic image production echoes the total dependence of the Morel family on great-uncle Adolphe as employer. The reproach which Marcel regards as being implicit in the question put to him by Morel concerning this very lack indicates the good opinion in which great-uncle Adolphe was held by his valet and his valet’s family. It also points up the importance of the photograph as a means of honouring the memory of a dead loved one. Marcel fails to grasp this point — or simply evades it in his embarrassment — when he notes that, since he has no photographs of his parents in his room, Morel should not be so very surprised at the absence of a photograph of great-uncle Adolphe (Proust: III, 256). It is death — coupled with the affection of the great-uncle for his grand-nephew, itself physically manifested in Marcel’s room in the form of the furniture bequeathed him — which makes the display of the former’s photographic image an imperative in Morel’s eyes. Benjamin affirms that:

"Cult value does not give way without resistance. It retires into an ultimate retreatment: the human countenance. It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. (Benjamin, 1990: 219)"

The fact that Morel’s father has many photographs of his late employer is a mark of his personal regard for him. This possibility is confirmed by Françoise when she tells Marcel that the old valet cherishes the memory of great-uncle Adolphe and visits his grave frequently (Proust: III, 254-255). The absence of any such photographic image from Marcel’s room and his possession belies, to the amazement and disapproval of Morel, the fact of the emotional detachment of Marcel from a relative whose affection for his grand-
nephew was all too clearly not reciprocated. Thus the absence of a photographic representation of the late great-uncle in this episode underlines an absence of emotional engagement: a dreadful contravention of the norms of nineteenth-century bourgeois veneration of the family.

Just as the shadow of great-uncle Adolphe which was cast over Morel’s childhood and youth due to the esteem in which his father held the former is revealed in the question put to Marcel by Morel, so the influence of the father on the son is and must remain ineradicable. In defining himself against the norms of behaviour instilled in him by his father, Morel is an inverted facsimile of the old valet. In relation to Françoise, Marcel surmises that through employing domestic servants, ‘ce fut par leurs défauts invariablement acquis que j’appris mes défauts naturels et invariables, leur caractère me présenta une sorte d’épreuve négative du mien’ (Proust: III, 58). Occasional metaphors such as this exploit a loose imaginaire of photography, rather than drawing explicitly on the photographic system of image production. If the acquired faults of servants make Marcel aware of his own, opposing or inverse faults, then Morel, the son of a servant, whose assertiveness and over-ambition as a musician strike Marcel so forcefully at their first meeting, serves to underline Marcel’s indolence and passivity with regard to his own creativity.

Morel and Charlus

The relationship between Charles Morel and the baron de Charlus to which an oblique allusion is made in Marcel’s recollection of his first meeting with the former, on the entrance of the latter to Mme de Villeparisis’s salon, is a prolonged and ultimately unhappy affair. It is based initially on the mercenary self-interest of Morel and the infatuation of Charlus with the young, handsome and talented violinist. Christopher Robinson affirms that ‘in that relationship, too, the perfect balance cannot be achieved, and ultimately the relationship is self-destroying’ (Robinson, 1995: 48). However, before

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20 Cf. the first section of this chapter for an exploration of the role of photography in the representation of genealogy and physiognomic characteristics.
their liaison comes to its very public end (Proust: V, 303-305). Morel’s social and professional rise benefits greatly from the connections and influence of his aristocratic older lover and mentor.

Marcel’s discovery of the homosexuality of Charlus is an episode characterised by deliberate voyeurism, as Marcel, having witnessed from his window the momentarily incomprehensible mutual recognition of Jupien and Charlus in the courtyard below, positions himself at an inner window so as to attempt to overlook the concealed room to which they repair.21 Later in the narrative, the concealed identity of the baron as homosexual or invert is evoked by the later narrator on the occasion of Charlus’s first dinner with the Verdurins at La Raspelière in the company of Morel: his behaviour and body language are described as those of a woman dressed in an invisible gown which dictates his movements (Proust: IV, 299).22 The representation of the baron’s homosexuality shows Proust’s understanding and interpretation of the prevailing scientific theories of sexuality in the late nineteenth century.23 Saylor notes that:

In the late nineteenth century, [...] Karl Ulrichs, one of the founders of the movement for homosexual rights, (he was himself homosexual), saw homosexuals as hybrids: homosexual men had women’s souls trapped in their bodies, and lesbians possessed the male soul in a female body. (Saylor, 1993: 13)

21 The voyeurism which characterises Marcel’s apprehension of the interaction of homosexuals in the Paris courtyard also characterises his witnessing of the Montjouvan scene in Du côté de chez Swann; however, the fortuity of his witnessing of the latter scene and his failure fully to grasp the significance of the behaviour of Mlle Vinteuil and her lover at the time contrasts with his immediate understanding of Charlus’s concealed sexuality and his deliberate efforts to conceal himself while observing Jupien and Charlus as much as possible.

22 Kadivar observes that ‘ce qui semble fasciner Proust, et il ne cesse d’y revenir, c’est cet entre-deux dans l’image de l’homosexuel, une apparence en mouvement où apparaît de temps en temps une femme en l’homme qui est là’ (Kadivar, 2004: 276). Hanney notes that ‘the inverts in Proust’s novel embody, in a very real sense, the negative version of their own sexuality. The female within the male body is the negative plate pushed to its most exaggerated form. It is more than a reversal as in a mirror (an externalised projection), it is the existence of complementary features within one being, a literal bisexuality’ (Hanney, 1990: 76-77).

23 In Scandal in the Ink, Christopher Robinson notes that ‘the first phase of gay male writing proper, running from Proust to Genet via Cocteau, reacts to, and is moulded by, the medico-psychological discourse of inadequacy, but seeks to transcend it through reworked images of the artist-pariah and through the parallel lyricisation of the social outcast’ (Robinson, 1995: 44-45). As social and performing artist, the baron de Charlus has considerable skill; his social humiliation at the hands of Mme Verdurin is a direct consequence of his infatuation with Morel (Proust: V, 303-308).
While clearly influenced by Ulrich’s ideas, the representation of individual sexuality as an unfixed and evolving element of each of the important characters in *À la recherche du temps perdu* shows that Proust’s assessment of sexuality was more subtle and pluralist than that suggested by the notion of the homosexual as hybrid. In *Proust in Love*, William C. Carter observes that:

Proust’s answers to a questionnaire in a friend’s keepsake book regarding his preferred qualities in men [...] and women [...] underscore his belief, determined in his youth, that neither sex is complete in itself and that humanity consists of a variety of sexual types, each in search of the ideal partner whose sexual makeup best complements his or her own. The encounter or union of two people whose sexual needs are a perfect match can be seen only as a positive event. When such unions take place between men, they do not represent same-sex couplings — which is why Proust preferred the term invert to homosexual — but a true union of opposite or complementary needs. (Carter, 2006: 24)

A straightforward binary opposition of male/female and heterosexuality/homosexuality therefore proves to be excessively reductive in the context of the representation of sexuality in the Proustian narrative. Initially, Morel and Charlus appear to Marcel to be ill-matched as lovers; theirs seems to be a relationship based solely on sexual attraction on the part of the baron, and self-interest on the part of Morel. It does not appear to

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24 The homosexual as hybrid of female and male characteristics recurs most notably in the representation of Mlle Vinteuil and the baron de Charlus, while traces of this idea can be detected in relation to Saint-Loup. The juxtaposition in one individual of male and female characteristics of both physiognomy and personality suggests, if only vaguely, the process of photographic image superimposition which is discussed in chapter four of this thesis. It is interesting also to note Marcel’s observation with regard to the women loved by a man that ‘une certaine ressemblance existe, tout en évoluant, entre les femmes que nous aimons successivement, ressemblance qui tient à la fixité de notre tempérament parce que c’est lui qui les choisit, éliminant toutes celles qui ne nous seraient pas à la fois opposées et complémentaires, c’est-à-dire propre à satisfaire nos sens et à faire souffrir notre cœur. Elles sont, ces femmes, un produit de notre tempérament, une image, une projection renversée, un ‘négatif’ de notre sensibilité’ (Proust: II, 456). An explicitly photographic metaphor is used here to define the complementariness of the characteristics of a pair of heterosexual lovers; the same applies to homosexual relationships as represented in *À la recherche du temps perdu*.
25 Eve Sedgwick underlines the complexity of the representation of male and female homosexuality in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, describing it as ‘the chalky rag of gender pulled across the blackboard of sexuality, the chalky rag of sexuality across the blackboard of gender: these most [sic.] create a cloudy space from which a hidden voice can be heard to insist, in the words of a contemporaneous manifesto of male homosexual panic, “That is not what I meant at all. That is not it, at all”’ (Sedgwick, 1991: 239).
26 Robinson underlines the importance of class difference as a motivation for Charlus’s homosexual desire: ‘on the basis of his experience of salon life, the realist in Proust leads him [...] to emphasise male homosexual desire as a pursuit of an otherness which can indeed be found in youth — lift-boys and page-boys in the novel are almost universally and often amusingly portrayed as “on for it” — but is more often translated into class difference. Charlus has sex with Jupien, falls in love with Morel (although here, [...] we have the ambiguity of the combination lower-class yob/artist), and is eventually reduced to finding
constitute a happy union of complementary needs. However, although Morel may be many things that the baron is not (young, arriviste, a social climber, bisexual, a creative artist, professionally driven), there are latent aspects of the baron’s character which are displayed only as a result of his relationship with Morel and which point up the harmony of certain traits inherent in the characters of the two men. The most significant of these, within the context of Marcel’s conception and realisation of his creative vocation, is the discovery by Marcel and the Verdurin clan of the baron’s own considerable talent as a musician, when he accompanies Morel on the piano (Proust: IV, 343-344). This episode occurs early in the relationship of the two men, when hope and desire dictate the actions and behaviour of the baron towards Morel and thus towards others who may facilitate that relationship: hence his presence, like Swann before him, among the Verdurin clan — an environment utterly foreign to him and, prior to his falling in love with Morel, beneath his dignity. Robinson notes with regard to the baron’s cult of male virility that:

The ultimate element of that curse, in Proust’s eyes, is that the man-woman by definition must desire a man who has no female element in his make-up, but that such a man will not be an ‘invert’ and therefore cannot love another man. His equation therefore makes homosexual love, or at least the true fulfilment of homosexual love, impossible. The only positive element in this situation is the acknowledgement that where some kind of communication is genuinely established, the result is an exceptionally special relationship: Proust talks about ‘fécondation morale’, spiritual impregnation, and emphasises the value of one individual passing to another ‘his music, his passion or his perfume’. Here, then, is the value of Morel as artist, and of the relationship between Morel as violinist and Charlus as his accompanist. (Robinson, 1995: 48)

Although ultimately destined to end unhappily, the pursuit of Morel by the baron results in the transient moments of fleeting but profound communication between them, such as that witnessed by Marcel and the Verdurin clan at La Raspelière, in an act of creative performance. Marcel attributes the baron’s artistic gifts directly to his homosexuality:

M. de Charlus n’était en somme qu’un Guermantes. Mais il avait suffi que la nature déséquilibré suffisamment en lui le système nerveux pour qu’au lieu d’une femme, comme c’était son frère le duc, il préféré un berger de Virgile ou un élève de Platon, et aussitôt des qualités inconnues au duc de Guermantes et souvent liées à ce déséquilibre, avaient fait de M.

pleasure of a sado-masochistic kind in a brothel with young men who pretend to be hardened criminals in order to increase his thrills’ (Robinson, 1995: 46-47).

27 The parallel between Charlus’s relationship with Morel and that of Swann and Odette is underlined by the association of both pairs of lovers with the Verdurins: the facilitation by the Verdurins of their relationships, in the early days, and their cruelty in seeking later to impede them.
The plurality of the baron’s creative abilities as outlined here by Marcel implies his dilettantism — like Swann, he dabbles in the arts without devoting himself absolutely to any one of them. It is interesting to note in this passage the representation of Charlus’s predilection for men in terms of classical poetry and philosophy: unlike his brother who pursues the women who attract him simply for their beauty (Proust: III, 463-464), Charlus’s love of men is described by Marcel as an appreciation in the modern man of characteristics essential to figures of Virgilian poetry and Platonic discourse. Thus is pointed up a reversal or inversion in the order of appreciation of a person or thing and its image (in this instance, a literary one). Like Swann, whose love for Odette originated in his admiration of Botticelli’s Zipporah, so Charlus as homosexual is described here by Marcel as a connoisseur of a type of masculine beauty which he has first appreciated through its literary representation.

Charlus’s suspicion regarding Morel’s possible infidelity leads him to engage in elaborate voyeuristic games so as to monitor the behaviour of his lover. Photography is suggested in his attempts at visual dominance of his perceptual object, Morel; the suggestion of photography becomes an explicit evocation in a related episode recounted in the pages immediately following. In Sodome et Gomorrhe, Charlus and Jupien arrange to be concealed at the luxury brothel at Maineville in order to discover, by witnessing his suspected assignation, whether Morel is unfaithful with another man. After many delays

28 It is Marcel who notes the resemblance of the duke’s mistresses to the Venus de Milo and the Nike of Samothrace; the duke’s tastes are in no way attributed to any love of art he might have. In Le Côté de Guermantes, the duke’s failure to appreciate Elstir or accurately to identify a Velazquez point up his predominant attitude to art as a means of displaying his wealth.

29 Marcel’s generalisation of the duke’s behaviour as a predatory heterosexual in thrall to ‘une femme’ — by implication any and all women whose beauty appeals to him — is juxtaposed with the specificity of the baron’s appreciation for ‘un berger de Virgile ou un élève de Platon’. The spatio-temporal specificity of the latter (coupled with their origins in works of literature) means that they are inherently inaccessible to the baron: thus his desire for and pursuit of young men is essentially incapable of fulfilment. It is therefore inexhaustible — as noted by Robinson above.

30 Unbeknownst to Charlus, the other man in question is his cousin, the prince de Guermantes. Jupien’s transformation in the episode from lover to facilitator of Charlus’s desires foreshadows his role as principal custodian of Charlus as he ages and progressively develops a taste for sexual vice: he acts as brothel keeper in Paris during the war and procures men likely to satisfy the baron. His loving care for the elderly and
and much prevarication on the part of the madam, the baron and Jupien are led to the spot from which they will be able to see without being seen:

Enfin le baron put voir par l'ouverture de la porte et aussi dans les glaces. Mais une terreur mortelle le força de s'appuyer au mur. C'était bien Morel qu'il avait devant lui, mais comme si les mystères païens et les enchantements existaient encore, c'était plutôt l'ombre de Morel, Morel embaumé, pas même Morel ressuscité comme Lazare, une apparition de Morel, un fantôme de Morel, Morel revenant […] qui était à quelques mètres de lui, de profil. (Proust: IV, 466)

The seven-fold repetition of Morel’s name in this passage emphasises the multiple images of him which are reflected through the brothel mirrors, while simultaneously underlining the spectral aspect of his appearance; the flat image reflected to the baron is an unsatisfactory simulacrum of the flesh-and-blood man with whom the baron is obsessed. Charlus’s plan is unsuccessful because someone tips Morel off; on seeing Morel from his dark-room vantage point, the baron understands immediately that his own machinations have been found out. His voyeurism is not satisfied because he is exposed to the reciprocal gaze of his perceptual object:

Morel avait, comme après la mort, perdu toute couleur; entre ces femmes avec lesquelles il semblait qu'il eût dû s'écarter joyeusement, livide, il restait figé dans une immobilité artificielle […] M. de Chars n'eût qu'un instant d'hésitation, il comprit la vérité et que […] on avait […] placé le pauvre Morel tremblant, paralysé par la stupeur, de telle façon que, si M. de Chars le voyait mal, lui, terrorisé, sans paroles, n'osant pas prendre son verre de peur de le laisser tomber, voyait en plein le baron. (Proust: IV, 467 – my italics)

The confrontation of the homosexually unfaithful Morel and Charlus the would-be voyeur takes place through a system of mirrors which reflects the image of each back to the other: a disorienting experience made all the more so by the great fear they share. The ‘terreur mortelle’ of the baron which causes him to attempt to remove himself bodily from the game of mirrors is the result of his being discovered by his beloved in the role of lover — his possessiveness and lack of confidence in Morel are exposed through his presence in the brothel.31 Yet it is made repeatedly clear that his jealousy does not extend

debilitated Charlus is underlined on Marcel’s meeting with the pair on his way into the final Guermantes matinée in Le Temps retrouvé.

31 The behaviour of Charlus underlines the sentiment expressed in the French proverb which states that ‘dans l’amour, il y a toujours quelqu’un qui embrasse, et quelqu’un qui tend la joue’.

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to women. He sees Morel in profile and his ‘instant d’hésitation’ marks the moment in which he realises the cause of Morel’s malaise. The fact that the baron sees him only in profile, and badly, means that there is no direct reciprocal exchange of gazes between the two; however, Morel plainly has a clear view of Charlus. The tables have been turned and Charlus has become the inadvertent prey of the reluctantly voyeuristic Morel. Charlus therefore seeks immediately to evade Morel’s gaze, while Morel remains fixed in place, like a photographic image of himself, drained of colour and animation. Morel’s silent fear and discomfiture, which are described in terms which evoke the photographic image — ‘l’ombre de Morel’, ‘livide’, ‘figé dans une immobilité artificielle’, ‘sans paroles’ — are not commensurate with the demeanour to be expected of a man who enjoys women and who is surrounded by female prostitutes; his negative (guilt-inspired?) reaction to the discovery of his attempted homosexual infidelity, or perhaps merely of his attempted subterfuge, is made manifest through his body language once he is made aware of the presence of Charlus.

In terms of photography, the baron’s efforts to spy on his beloved Morel through the Maineville brothel mirrors suggest the photographer who tries but fails to efface himself so as to capture portraits which are unstudied and which might therefore be considered more natural and less contrived than those that are self-consciously posed. Having made himself conspicuous, all he can do is retreat and at least temporarily abandon his mission. The perceptual behaviour of the suspicious baron mirrors that of Marcel in Paris when hopelessly infatuated with Gilberte and frustrated by his failure to pin her down, visually or otherwise. It also echoes the experience of Saint-Loup who attempts to exercise control over Rachel through the act of photographing her. His desire for control of Morel

32 On the contrary, Charlus welcomes the possibility of Morel’s marriage to Mlle Jupien, the young seamstress, since ‘la jeune fille était délicieuse, et M. de Charlus, en qui elle satisfaisait tout le goût esthétique qu’il pouvait avoir pour les femmes, aurait voulu avoir d’elle des centaines de photographies’ (Proust: V, 42). His approbation is based on his sense of control over the girl, since he has knowledge of her youthful indiscretions. He is confident that Morel will not be lost to him as a result of such a marriage (Proust: V, 42). Ultimately, and subsequent to the breakdown of relations between Morel and Mlle Jupien, he will adopt the latter as his heir and give her an aristocratic title.
33 Charlus’s sexual voyeurism is interesting when viewed, according to Susan Sontag’s analysis of the parallel between the act of taking photographs and the act of sexual voyeurism, as ‘a way of at least tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging whatever is going on to keep on happening’ (Sontag, 1977: 12).
34 Cf. Marcel regarding Gilberte and the difficulty of fixing her image in his mind (Proust: II, 61).
and for some degree of omniscience regarding Morel’s actions when not with him, motivate the baron in this episode. Yet the situation in which he hopes visually to perceive Morel in the act of betraying him is itself so contrived as to preclude and negate any potential truth which might be revealed through Morel’s behaviour. A brothel is of necessity a place of fantasy and wish-fulfilment: the real or the true have no business there. Thus the baron is denied the sight which, consciously, he both hopes and dreads to encounter. In *L’Œil de Proust: écriture et voyeurisme dans ‘À la recherche du temps perdu’*, Michel Erman observes that:

L’œil du voyeur comme celui du narrateur saisissent une réalité fragmentée, divisée en un ordre géométrique, fenêtres qui sous la plume de l’écrivain deviennent des tableaux. Le plus frappant reste le caractère parcellaire de la vision, comme un œil derrière le trou d’une serrure ne découvre qu’une partie de l’intérieur de la pièce dont il est contraint d’imaginer l’ensemble. Le voyeur est hanté par ce qu’il ne voit pas. (Erman, 1988: 99)

Charlus cannot make Morel out well — ‘le voyait mal’ — from his position in the dark room, though Morel can see him. Instead he must resign himself to the fact that he has grounds for his suspicions with regard to Morel’s infidelity, but will not on this occasion have the satisfaction of concrete proof thereof. Morel’s deathly pallor and confusion point to a terrified state of mind arising from his recent conduct and from the sight of his lover: he cannot know how much Charlus now knows or what exactly he has witnessed. The absence of a male accomplice in no way lessens the baron’s certainty that Morel has been unfaithful to him, or at any rate is prepared to be, should the opportunity present itself. Although physically absent (having been whisked away by the madam), the prince de Guermantes as rival is inherently present in this scene where lover and beloved briefly come, if not face to face, then eye to indirectly reflected eye. In one respect this episode might be regarded as a successful outing to the brothel for Charlus, insofar as it stimulates rather than lessens his desire for Morel: the confirmation and consequent

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35 The later narrator affirms in relation to Morel’s behaviour towards the baron and his secrecy that ‘Morel ne pouvait ainsi s’empêcher de présenter une image de sa vie, mais volontairement, et involontairement aussi, tellement enténébrée que certaines parties seules se laissaient distinguer’ (Proust: IV, 463). Sedgwick affirms that ‘Morel, who is Charlus’s object in the Proustian sense, isn’t presented as an invert (and therefore can be genuinely inscrutable)’ (Sedgwick, 1991: 232).
renewal of suspicion, without the absolute certainty of infidelity, serve to maintain his fascination with and jealous possessiveness towards his protégé.

The suggestion of photography in the description of Morel as observed by the spying baron in the brothel at Maineville becomes explicit in the pages immediately following that episode. Here the result of ocular confrontation between Charlus and Morel, as regards their immediate responses, is the exact opposite of that found in the episode discussed above. Foiled in his attempt to seduce Morel at the Maineville brothel, the prince de Guermantes, whose identity remains concealed from the younger man, arranges for Morel to visit his rented villa the following evening. With a deliberation which parallels Mlle Vinteuil’s careful arrangement of the photograph of her father in the drawing room at Montjouvain before the arrival of her lesbian lover, the drawing room of the villa has been decorated by the prince with many photographic portraits of family members, ‘pour se sentir plus chez soi’ (Proust: IV, 467). Instead of increasing the prince’s pleasure during his assignation with Morel, however, the photographs serve to drive the terrified Morel away, before the entrance of the prince:

Mais quand Morel se trouva seul et voulut regarder dans la glace si sa mèche n’était pas dérangée, ce fut comme une hallucination. Sur la cheminée, les photographies, reconnaissables pour le violoniste, car il les avait vues chez M. de Charlus, de la princesse de Guermantes, de la duchesse de Luxembourg, de Mme de Villeparisis, le pétritèrent d’abord d’effroi. Au même moment il aperçut celle de M. de Charlus, laquelle était un peu en retrait. Le baron semblait immobiliser sur Morel un regard étrange et fixe. (Proust: IV, 468 – my italics)

Rather than be able to indulge in solitary admiration of his own physical beauty as reflected in the mirror above the fireplace, Morel is faced with the photographed gazes of members of Charlus’s family and of Charlus himself. Anticipating recognition of himself in the looking-glass, Morel’s eyes instead come into direct contact or confrontation with those of the Guermantes family and of the baron. Morel’s reaction is that of a man who feels that he is no longer alone in the drawing room: he is rooted to the spot, petrified

36 Thélot affirms that ‘quand le prince de Guermantes veut coucher sans risque avec le même Morel dans une villa qu’il a louée à cet effet, les photographies de toute sa famille qu’il a disposées sur les cheminées sont là pour exciter le désir de s’avilir, pour la jouissance de profaner et de trahir’ (Thélot, 2003: 212).
with fear as he confronts the unwavering photographed stare of his lover and of members of his lover’s family. Barthes observes that:

Le regard, s’il insiste (à plus forte raison s’il dure, traverse, avec la photographie, le Temps), le regard est toujours virtuellement fou: il est à la fois effet de vérité et effet de folie. […] [La photographie] porte l’effigie à ce point fou où l’affect (l’amour, la compassion, le deuil, l’élan, le désir) est garant de l’être. Elle approche alors, effectivement, de la folie, rejoint la “vérité folle”. (Barthes, 1980: 175-176)

The disorientation experienced by Morel in this scene is so strong as to suggest hallucination: the transposition to an anonymous rented villa of photographic images associated solely in Morel’s mind with the surroundings of the baron’s home leads Morel immediately to conclude that he is caught in a trap set by Charlus to test his fidelity.37 His instinct is to flee and thereafter assiduously to avoid the advances of the prince: thus the photographic image of the baron’s direct gaze succeeds in thwarting an infidelity which his physical presence in the Maineville brothel could not. The repeated emphasis placed on words which convey physical stillness, such as ‘pétrifient’, ‘immobiliser’ and ‘fixe’, underlines the contrast between the stasis of the figures represented in the photographic images and Morel’s almost immediate physical response, and his comically hasty and undignified departure from the villa once the initial, Medusa-like, petrifying shock has passed: ‘fou de terreur, Morel […] dégringola quatre à quatre les quelques marches de la villa, se mit à courir à toutes jambes sur la route […]’ (Proust: IV, 468).

Thus the baron as voyeur through the medium of the photographic image proves more successful as a means of controlling — that is, inhibiting — Morel’s sexual behaviour than his actual presence as voyeur in the brothel at Maineville. His impassive direct gaze, recorded in and faithfully represented by the photographic image, suffices to produce on Morel the diametrically opposite effect to his indirectly reflected gaze through the brothel mirrors. The stasis of the photographic image of Charlus as he fixes the guilty Morel to

37 Barthes asserts that ‘la Photographie devient […] pour moi un medium bizarre, une nouvelle forme d’hallucination: fausse au niveau de la perception, vraie au niveau du temps; une hallucination tempérée, en quelque sorte, modeste, partagée (d’un côté “ce n’est pas là”, de l’autre “mais cela a bien été”): image folle, frottée de réel’ (Barthes, 1980: 177). The power of the photographic image to represent the Guermantes family and most importantly Charlus in the anonymous villa means that Morel responds as though they were in fact present.
the spot is clearly distinguished from Charlus’s instinctive recoil from the sight of Morel at Maineville. Due to the fact of Charlus being represented through a photographic image in the drawing room of the villa, he cannot react to the sight of Morel in his cousin’s secret hideaway — hence the repetition of words which point up his immobility. As a direct consequence of the baron’s stillness and steadiness of gaze, the interstice between the violinist’s self-image as handsome and unconstrained individual in pursuit of sexual and financial gratification (which he seeks to affirm in looking at himself in the mirror) and the image of him which is cultivated by Charlus (as beloved, but also economically, socially and professionally vulnerable protégé) is underlined for Morel as he returns the baron’s look: and so there is a projection of his guilt and paranoia onto the photographed baron who ‘semblait immobiliser sur Morel un regard étrange et fixe’ (Proust: IV, 468). The self-conscious pride and confidence of the baron in the photographic image differs in large measure from the uncertain, nervous and jealousy-racked man who, despite his express wishes, could not remain concealed from his perfidious beloved in the brothel and who flinched once aware of his vulnerability to Morel’s gaze. In this episode, the baron is impervious to Morel’s gaze. Thus the photographic image of him succeeds in conveying to Morel the enormity of the risk that he is taking in jeopardising through infidelity his relationship with Charlus.\(^{38}\)

Morel’s fright and flight from the prince de Guermantes’ rented villa point up his renewed awareness of the power which Charlus has over him and which he may choose to wield in the promotion or destruction of his life and career.\(^{39}\) The differing social origins of Charlus and Morel (and in fact of Marcel and Albertine, which will be explored later in this section of my thesis) constitute one of the reasons for the baron’s attraction to Morel and for Morel’s attachment to the baron. Robinson, who notes the depressing

\(^{38}\) Kadivar states that ‘la visialité photographique problématisé la notion de perception en relativisant le regard de l’œil nu comme la seule approche visuelle possible, en révélant le poids interpretatif du regard humain là où la vision photographique peut se définir comme plus neutre, plus objective, ou simplement comme porteuse d’une autre subjectivité’ (Kadivar, 2004: 154).

\(^{39}\) Indeed, long after the end of his relationship with the baron, Morel confides to Marcel with regard to his former lover that he will not go to see him “‘par peur! [...] Mais laissez-moi, ne m’en parlez plus, je vous en supplie, c’est honteux à dire, j’ai peur!”’ (Proust: VII, 111). His fear is justified many years later when after the death of Charlus, Marcel is given a letter written by him ten years previously, in which he confesses his earlier resolution to murder Morel and his present gratitude for the prudence of the latter, which saved him from committing the crime (Proust: VII, 111-113).
negativity of Proust’s representation of homosexuality in *À la recherche du temps perdu* (Robinson, 1995: 45-49), states that ‘all the aristocratic homosexuals mentioned […] have liaisons with their social inferiors’ (Robinson, 1995: 47). He concludes that:

In this respect Proust is in fact producing a homosexual equivalent to the fascination with across-class *heterosexual* relations to be found in the novels of Zola (notably *Nana*) […]. For Proustian characters the *frisson* comes in part from the very existence of the gulf; they have no desire to eliminate it. But fascination with an unobtainable ‘other’ symbolised in class difference is at the same time, on a different level, a frustrated pursuit of a more fundamental otherness. (Robinson, 1995: 47)

It can be stated in response to Robinson’s assertions regarding the across-class homosexual relations in the Proustian narrative that, since aristocrats in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century France constituted the top of the social tree, they had little choice, should they wish to conceal their homosexuality from their social peers, but to pursue homosexual relations with men from other and necessarily inferior social worlds. The allure of the exotic and the unfamiliar is not confined to heterosexuals, however, and it informs Charlus’s attraction to a diverse range of men (including a bus conductor who, in a comic reversal of recognition of social status, is certain that Charlus is a photographer who once took his portrait).

‘Trying to Keep the Customer Satisfied’: Peeping Tom in Jupien’s Male Brothel

As the first of Charlus’s homosexual lovers to be recognised as such by Marcel, and the last to care for him when he is old and ill, Jupien plays an important and varied role in the life of the baron. Jupien is also a significant character in Marcel’s early life: it is through his indiscretion that Marcel learns of Françoise’s criticism of him and thereby begins to realise for the first time that there are as many ways of apprehending the world and its inhabitants as there are people in it:

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40 Cf. appendix to *Sodomie et Gomorrhe*, pages 534-541. Choosing to have sexual relations with men from another social milieu increases the sense of strangeness which, according to Gilles Deleuze, feeds the growth of love: ‘l’amour naît et se nourrit d’interprétation silencieuse. L’être aimé apparaît comme un signe, une “âme”: il exprime un monde possible inconnu de nous. L’aimé implique, enveloppe, emprisonne un monde, qu’il faut déchiffrer, c’est-à-dire interpréter’ (Deleuze, 1964: 14).
While Marcel credits Françoise with having furnished him with this knowledge, it is the gossipy Jupien who conveys it to him in repeating the things she had said about Marcel. The notion that the objects of perception are not always as they appear but are instead composed by the observer through the projection of his own preconceptions comes increasingly to inform Marcel's apprehension of the world. As a homosexual whose amorous life is conducted in secret, Jupien is well aware of the dissimulation required of many of his fellow members of society as they endeavour to make contact with one another. His ownership and management of a male brothel in Paris during the First World War is a means to satisfy the baron's appetites, which become progressively more depraved as the narrative advances. Marcel's successful, serialised voyeurism in Jupien's brothel is described repeatedly in language drawn from the photographic system of image production and provides an inverse echo to the voyeurism of the baron at Maîneville. As soon as he enters the brothel, Marcel finds that 'je pus apercevoir sans être vu dans l'obscurité' (Proust: VII, 118) — a happy condition of invisibility which continues throughout his observation of the courageous, manly soldiers discussing their desire to fight the Germans; a casual conversation about a beating with chains; the scene of the chained Charlus's flagellation by the obliging Maurice; the entrance of Jupien; the descent of Charlus from the room where he is tortured; his conversation with the young men and his departure.

The notion of Marcel as photographer or sensitive camera eye which records the scenes so fortuitously witnessed throughout this episode of concealments within already concealed spaces is supported by his repeated acknowledgement of his immobility in the dark as he observes activity in adjoining, lighted rooms (Proust: VII, 118, 122, 130, 136);

41 Marcel's voyeurism in the male brothel enables him to witness the flagellation of Charlus at the hands of a decent young man who struggles to present himself as an evil brute. During this episode Marcel notes the resemblance between the two young men who are chosen by Charlus as his tormentors and Morel. He surmises that either the baron is constantly in search of substitutes for his former lover, or that Morel merely represented one example of the baron's habitual type.
his discovery of an œil-de-boeuf window, whose curtain has not been drawn, overlooking
the room where the baron and Maurice enact the former’s fantasy of abasement (Proust: VII, 122); and Jupien’s order to “Seulement, ne bougez pas” (Proust: VII, 130) when he invites him to hide in a dark ventilator, from which vantage point he may observe and listen to the baron without being seen. Kadivar argues with regard to the scene of the baron’s flagellation that:

> Du coup, il y a une autre forme de théâtralité sans spectateur dont le narrateur peut rendre compte par le hasard de son voyeurisme, une sorte de mise en scène dont jouissent seulement les acteurs comme dans une répétition à huis clos. Cela signifie un jeu théâtral mis en scène par les invertis entre eux. (Kadivar, 2004: 288)

If Charlus is an avid customer of the male brothel and its raison d’être, yet Marcel in this episode may also be regarded as such: in both his absence and his presence, Jupien contrives at all times to facilitate Marcel’s voyeuristic wishes, just as he does the depraved desires of Charlus. Jupien’s exhortation that he remain still echoes nineteenth- and twentieth-century portrait photographers’ cries to their customers as they posed before the exposed lens of the camera. Thus it may be Marcel as client whose impulses are being most completely facilitated by the obliging Jupien in this episode, as the latter strives to create the optimum conditions for his spying.

**The Other Woman?: Albertine and Marcel**

The possibility of Albertine’s lesbianism is first raised by Dr Cottard at Balbec when he watches Albertine and Andree dancing together (Proust: IV, 190-191). Lacking male dance partners (although what of the eternally passive Marcel?), the girls waltz pressed against one another: they function as mirror images reflecting the same sex back to one another instead of the complementariness of man and woman. Dr Cottard’s professional

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42 Here the curtainless window suggests the viewfinder in the photographic camera. The lack of a curtain implies that the lens cap has been inadvertently removed: thus the lighted room connected to the darkened corridor by this window becomes partially visible to Marcel’s voyeuristic eyes.

43 Jupien’s phrase echoes that of A.A.E. Disdéri, who was known to cry ‘N’bougeons plus!’ when photographing clients for his cartes-de-visite.

44 Moss states that ‘in Proust, the window is, psychologically, the voyeur’s picture. Accidental images of other people’s pleasure fulfil a painful need in the viewer. Contributing a power within himself to what he sees, Marcel is the victim of what is to be seen’ (Moss, 1963: 55).
disapproval and his comical assertion — in spite of the fact that he cannot see the girls clearly without his glasses — that the pair must be aroused since "c’est surtout par les seins que les femmes l’éprouvent" (Proust: IV, 191) underlines the misinformation and inaccuracies which form the basis for Marcel’s jealousy and suspicion. The effect of his remarks on Marcel’s state of mind is insidiously destructive. Marcel’s growing suspicions and his jealous desire to attain a sense of certainty with regard to Albertine’s sexual life at present and in the past are described in explicitly photographic terms. Comments from others which he had previously dismissed are now reconsidered; vague unease with regard to certain aspects of her behaviour are retrospectively reassessed and judged to be evidence of carefully concealed homosexual vice. As the season progresses, however, and Albertine makes herself entirely available to Marcel, his interest in and attachment to her wane. Following Albertine’s claim to be intimately acquainted with Mlle Vinteuil’s lover and the consequent transformation in Marcel’s attitude from indifference to abject fascination and jealousy (Proust: IV, 499-515), his increasing obsession leads him to attempt to ascertain the identity of her lesbian lovers.

45 The later narrator affirms that ‘le mal que m’avaient fait ses paroles concernant Albertine et Andrée était profond, mais les pires souffrances n’en furent pas senties par moi immédiatement, comme il arrive pour ces empoisonnements qui n’agissent qu’au bout d’un certain temps’ (Proust: IV, 193). With this remark the later narrator underlines the suspension of suffering with regard to Albertine, until some later point in time: the suggestion is of a temporal hiatus during which the potential effect of Cottard’s words remains latent.

46 Once nascent doubts about her sexual orientation have been aroused, Albertine’s periodic inaccessibility troubles Marcel. See (Proust: V, 326) where his processes of perception and memory in relation to her are described in language drawn from the photographic system of image production.

47 A hint of unexplained antipathy towards Albertine from the head waiter at the Grand Hôtel at Balbec is dropped by the later narrator in Sodome et Gomorrhe when he observes that ‘Aimé, quoique n’ayant pas personnellement de sympathie pour Albertine, était à cause de moi fier de la toilette qu’elle portait […]’ (Proust: IV, 385).

48 One such episode at Balbec involves the use of a mirror as a means of exchanging glances between Albertine, Bloch’s sister and his cousin, unbeknownst to Marcel, who believes that Albertine is engaged in conversation with him (Proust: IV, 198). After the two girls have left, Albertine inadvertently lets slip the fact that her attention was focused entirely on them. The jeu des regards in this episode reinforces Marcel’s uncertainty with regard to Albertine because it shows how unwitting a participant he can be in the intrigues of her sexual life, in which he himself plays only a peripheral and passive role.

49 The first person to whom he turns for assistance in his efforts to find out the truth regarding Albertine’s homosexuality is Aimé, whose oblique criticisms of her Marcel had previously blithely ignored but which now seem to confirm his fears: ‘Brave Aimé! […] Mais il n’aime pas Albertine. […] Ah! il l’avait rencontrée, il lui avait trouvé mauvais genre. À ce moment, abordant le récit d’Aimé par une face autre que celle qu’il m’avait présentée au moment où il me l’avait fait, ma pensée, qui jusqu’ici avait navigué en souriant sur ces eaux bienheureuses éclatait soudain, comme si elle eût heurté une mine invisible et dangereuse, insidieusement posée à ce point de ma mémoire’ (Proust: V, 76 — my italics). In approaching this memory from another angle, Marcel points up in visual terms the eternal nature of the latent communicative potential of language.
Lies and deception are the result both on his own part — he avers that ‘mes paroles ne reflétaient donc nullement mes sentiments’ (Proust: V, 334) — and on that of the sequestered Albertine, now living with him in Paris. Having resolved to speak to Aimé at the earliest opportunity, photography is the means employed by Marcel to confirm, from another and hopefully more disinterested source than Albertine herself, whether or not she had a relationship with Bloch’s cousin, Esther Lévy:

Quelle pouvait être cette jeune fille? il faudrait que j’écrive à Aimé, que je tâche de le voir […]. En attendant, croyant bien que ce devait être la cousine de Bloch, je demandai à celui-ci, qui ne comprit nullement dans quel but, de me montrer seulement une photographie d’elle ou, bien plus, de me faire au besoin rencontrer avec elle. […] Pourtant, quand le lendemain Bloch m'eut envoyé la photographie de sa cousine Esther, je m'empressai de la faire parvenir à Aimé. (Proust: V, 77-78)

Marcel never meets Esther Lévy: instead he uses the photographic image as a substitute for the girl herself, which can be conveniently dispatched for confirmation to Aimé, now deemed the oracle by the increasingly desperate Marcel. As documentary evidence substantiating the existence of Esther, the photographic image is deemed the best possible means of enabling Aimé to ascertain whether she is the girl whom he once saw behaving inappropriately with Albertine. In sending the photograph to Aimé, Marcel hopes to obtain definitive proof of Albertine’s former conduct: implicit in the act is his hope for relief through certainty. Yet the pragmatic flexibility of the photographic image which implies the impossibility of divining accurately its contextual framework precludes the attainment of any such assurance. Schaeffer affirms with regard to the photographic image ‘le caractère protéiforme que prend l’acte de réception individuel’ (Schaeffer, 1987: 105). He goes on to observe that ‘soit le savoir latéral du récepteur sature l’image, soit il la laisse indéterminée. La quantité d’information nouvelle que l’image apporte est bien entendu inversement proportionnelle à sa détermination par le savoir latéral’ (Schaeffer, 1987: 105). At best, Marcel’s Machiavellian appropriation of the photographic image of Esther may enable the fortuitous discovery of information germane to the circumstances of its creation and circulation. This is in effect the deferred

50 ‘Language is perverse, “inverted,” when it does not signify. […] Words conceal as much as they reveal. […] Behind words are meanings that can only be guessed at. Thus the lie is the ultimate perversion’ (Saylor, 1993: 105). In his relationship with Albertine, Marcel hopes to arrive at the truth through lies.

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result of this episode in *À la recherche du temps perdu*: during an argument, Marcel in a moment of recklessness mentions the photograph to Albertine:

Sentant qu’elle était de toute façon fâchée, j’en profitai pour lui parler d’Esther Lévy. ‘Bloch m’a dit (ce qui n’était pas vrai) que vous aviez très bien connu sa cousine Esther. — Je ne la reconnaîtrais même pas’, dit Albertine d’un air vague. ‘J’ai vu sa photographie’, ajoutai-je en colère. Je ne regardais pas Albertine en disant cela, de sorte que je ne vis pas son expression, qui eût été sa seule réponse, car elle ne dit rien. (Proust: V, 102)

Marcel’s failure to look at Albertine as he falsely claims to have had occasion to see ‘sa photographie’ means that he misses the opportunity to glean from her facial expression what information he might about the relationship between her and Esther Lévy. The unintended ambiguity of his words is working in his favour here as he lies to his lover: ‘sa photographie’ can be and is interpreted by Albertine in a way which differs completely from that which Marcel intends. Thus is the pragmatic flexibility of words pointed up through the evocation of the photographic image. Marcel’s limited knowledge of the circulation of photographic images between the two girls means that the truth which he does not suspect — and accurate knowledge of which is implicit in his words to Albertine — is belatedly and ironically conveyed to him thanks to Albertine herself. Later in *La Prisonnière*, in response to Marcel’s mendacious expression of the resolution that they part — and believing that Marcel has seen the photograph of herself which belongs to Esther, and that he is thus already aware of the relative intimacy which must needs have existed between them — Albertine goes some way towards owning up to her insufficiently wary inquisitor:

Mais aussitôt quel mal elle me fit: ‘Je me rappelle très bien que j’ai donné ma photographie à cette Esther parce qu’elle insistait beaucoup et que je voyais que cela lui ferait plaisir, mais quant à avoir eu de l’amitié pour elle ou à avoir envie de la voir, jamais!’ […] Ainsi, quand je lui avais parlé de la photographie d’Esther que m’avait envoyée Bloch (et que je n’avais même pas reçue quand j’en avais parlé à Albertine), mon amie avait compris que Bloch m’avait montré une photographie d’elle, donnée par elle à Esther. Dans mes pires suppositions, je ne m’étais jamais figuré qu’une pareille intimité avait pu exister entre Albertine et Esther. Albertine n’avait rien trouvé à me répondre quand j’avais parlé de photographie. Et maintenant, me croyant, bien à tort, au courant, elle trouvait plus habile d’avouer. J’étais accablé. (Proust: V, 329 — my italics)

Marcel’s distress at the disclosure of the gift of a photograph of herself, willingly given by Albertine to Esther Lévy, is derived less from the fact of Albertine’s previous lies
(Marcel has no moral high ground in this regard), than from the closeness of the relationship between the two girls which can be inferred from such a gift. Albertine’s protestation of indifference to Esther rings hollow given the fact that her freely offered photographic image now forms a part of Esther’s intimate life. Tisseron notes that ‘toute photographie intime peut devenir publique et toute photographie publique peut être utilisée de façon intime’ (Tisseron, 1996: 134-135). Albertine’s gift to Esther of a photographic portrait of herself constitutes an acceptance of the assimilation of her image into the intimate life of the recipient and a willingness to give her pleasure: in the absence of any physical contact between the two girls, the photograph functions as a substitute. The voracious gaze of the covetous observer can instead touch the photographic representation of the photographed object. With regard to the unique relationship between the photographic image and physical touch, Serge Tisseron affirms that:

Avec la photographie, le rapport du regard et du toucher connaît un rebondissement. [...] Il est toujours possible de ‘caresser du regard’ un objet impossible à toucher avec la main. C’est ce que le sens commun appelle joliment ‘toucher avec les yeux’. Avec la photographie, il devient même possible de caresser du regard l’image d’un objet. [...] Dans la photographie [...] il est désir et illusion de toucher, à travers l’image, l’objet qui y est représenté. [...] Celui qui caresse ou embrasse la photographie d’une femme ne pense qu’à son modèle. La photographie établit au sein même du regard qui caresse une distinction entre le toucher de l’objet réel et le toucher de son image. En ce sens, on peut dire que la photographie crée une nouvelle distinction qui s’ajoute à celle qu’organise l’interdit du toucher. (Tisseron, 1996: 132-133)

The prohibition of physical contact or display between homosexuals in public means that other means of satisfying desire must be found — hence the careful concealment practised by many of them throughout the Proustian narrative. In relation to Esther and Albertine, the gift of a photographic portrait may be regarded as a substitution of the photographic image for an object of desire which proves inaccessible in both societal and practical terms. The universal nature of desire, which cannot be satisfied except through possession of its object, must in a homosexual context contrive to overcome the taboos imposed by homophobic society. Tisseron states that:

51 Moss affirms that ‘being secret, [homosexuals] represent the qualities of secrecy. [...] The homosexual becomes a permanent reminder of the unconscious nature of sexuality per se, of the irrationality and power of all sexual attraction. [...] In society, homosexuals form a tenacious underground’ (Moss, 1963: 60).
À l'opposition entre deux possibilités — toucher l'objet avec les mains et le toucher 'avec les yeux', — s'en ajoute une troisième: toucher l'image de l'objet. La photographie se prête d'ailleurs 'physiquement' à de telles manipulations. On peut la transporter sur soi, dans sa poche, sur son cœur ou encore directement sur son corps. (Tisseron, 134)

As jealous lover and insatiable consumer of the world as it is apprehended visually by him, Marcel understands instinctively the power of the photographic portrait as a means of maintaining and nurturing passion and desire. His sense of devastation arises predominantly from the fact that his imagination has failed to prepare him for so dreadful a situation. In a passage which analyses Marcel’s visual contact with the *jeunes filles* at Balbec, Richard affirms that:

 [...] Ces corps convoités, il est socialement interdit d’abord de les toucher, respirer, déguster, c’est-à-dire d’entrer avec eux en rapport d’immédiateté voluptueuse. Le regard, parce que instrument d’une possession distante, permet d’enfreindre ce premier veto: il le fait en reprenant à son compte le projet possessif de tous les autres sens, en se faisant, dit Proust, leur délégué, et en visant avec eux, ou à leur place, les diverses qualités désirées dans le lointain de la chair interdite. (Richard, 1974: 52)

The rapaciousness of Marcel’s desiring eyes at Balbec is transposed by him to the ocular consumption of the photographic image of Albertine by Esther. Albertine’s compliant collusion in this situation confirms for Marcel her lesbianism: Esther’s visual possession of Albertine through the medium of the photographic image is for him indistinguishable from actual physical contact between the two girls. Thus the gift of a photographic portrait constitutes for Marcel an act of homosexual deviance from the heterosexual norm — worse, since the photograph remains in Esther’s possession up to the present, it is proof of Albertine’s current infidelity. Hence his wish, expressed in the passage quoted below, to gain control over the photograph in question: to do so would be effectively to deprive Esther of contact with Albertine and thus to terminate their sexual relationship.

The outcome of his efforts to ascertain the identity of the woman seen with Albertine at Balbec does not meet Marcel’s expectations; sending Aimé the photograph of Esther serves rather to multiply the number of potential lesbian partners that Albertine has had. In spite of Albertine’s present conciliatory and irreproachable behaviour towards him in Paris, Marcel’s anxiety is increased:
Hélas! tout cela ne me tranquillisait pas. Aimé m'avait renvoyé la photographie d'Esther en me disant que ce n'était pas elle. Alors d'autres encore? Qui? je renvoyai cette photographie à Bloch. Celle que j'aurais voulu voir, c'était celle qu'Albertine avait donnée à Esther. Comment y était-elle? Peut-être décolletée: qui sait si elles ne s'étaient pas photographiées ensemble? Mais je n'osais en parler à Albertine car j'aurais eu l'air de ne pas avoir vu la photographie [...] (Proust: V, 351 – my italics)

Marcel’s hope for respite from his jealousy due to some sense of certainty regarding Albertine’s relations with Esther, through the appropriation, scrutiny and positive identification of the photograph of Esther, is transferred to the photograph given to Esther by Albertine: thus is set in train a potentially endless (and endlessly proliferating) cycle of hope and disappointment. In seeking to gain even temporary possession of the photographic images which circulate in the world of Gomorrah which he cannot enter, Marcel wishes for a semblance of control over the lover who, though presently giving no sign of infidelity, he now understands to be increasingly inscrutable. His tormented contemplation of the many possible ways in which Albertine appears in the photographic image, alone or with Esther, underlines his awareness both of the erotic potential of the photographic image for the (possibly) lesbian lovers and, at the same time, of the tantalising promise of release from uncertainty which it constitutes for him. Thus is stressed the multiplicity of uses to which a photographic image may be put by different observers. The distinction between past and present episodes in Albertine’s life becomes blurred throughout this episode where Marcel’s responses are those of a man suspicious of current infidelity. In preserving spatio-temporal instants of the past, the photographic image becomes assimilated into the present life of the observer. Thus knowledge of the fact of Albertine’s photographic portrait, taken at a time when she may well have been sexually involved with Esther Lévy, haunts Marcel because it affirms the existence of (currently latent or deviously expressed — or perhaps outgrown? such a possibility does not seem to occur to him) homosexual tendencies in the girl he loves and wishes to possess absolutely.

The effect of Marcel’s attempts to acquire information regarding Albertine’s past life through the appropriation of photographic images is to point up his exclusion and
isolation from Albertine, real or imagined. Both her present thoughts and her past actions are inaccessible to him. Her potential lesbianism is simply a means through which to underline his sense of his own redundancy in her life. Marcel cannot conceive of female bisexuality in the same way that he can that of men, because of his own automatic exclusion from a sexual context in which he can play no active role beyond that of voyeur, as at Montjouvan. The passivity he displayed in the latter scene is replaced in relation to Albertine with a frenetic series of active attempts to find out, thanks to photographic images, precisely whom she has known. The result is inconclusive and all the more distressing in that it suggests rather a proliferation of potential lesbian Albertines, engaging in deviant sexual behaviour with women innumerable and frustratingly intangible from Marcel’s point of view. Albertine’s successful dissimulation of her sexual preferences means that Marcel can never be absolutely certain of the truth of her actions. Kadivar affirms that:

La où la dissimulation par égard aux conventions sociales semble obstruer la représentation de l’homosexualité, elle finit par créer des espaces parallèles où d’une part elle devient elle-même une représentation de l’homosexualité par les signes de dissimulation qu’émets l’inverti, et d’autre part conduit l’inverti à construire les signes de la représentation de son inversion dans un contre-espace. C’est pourquoi les signes de l’homosexualité sont mouvants, variables, et par conséquent ne sont ni forcément tangibles ni facilement repérables [...]. (Kadivar, 2004: 295)

The thematic and/or narrative appropriation of photographic portraits in relation to Albertine’s suspected lesbianism underlines the frustrating inability of the photographic image to tell the beholder anything: it can only show. In the same way, Marcel’s conflation of Albertine’s possible behaviour in the past with a determined concealment of

52 Certainly when Marcel claims to wish to end his relationship with Albertine on the grounds that she is unhappy with him, she protests that such is not the case and insists repeatedly that he is mistaken and must take full responsibility for the decision to break up with her (Proust: V, 328-330).

53 In Epistemology of the Closet, Sedgwick affirms that ‘thus, both the range of contradictions around homo/heterosexual definition, and the intersection of that with the range of contradictions around gender definition, are mobilised — to the extent that they fail to be interrogated — in the Albertine plot, and in its incommensurability with the presentation of Charlus’ (Sedgwick, 1991: 233).

54 Even after Albertine’s death, Marcel continues to experience intermittent jealousy when he retrospectively speculates on her possible homosexual experience. In La Prisonniere he realises that the people staring in the windows of the hotel dining room at Balbec probably included Albertine, ‘que je ne connaissais pas encore et qui sans doute levait là quelque fillette qu’elle rejoignait quelques minutes plus tard dans la nuit […]’ (Proust: V, 103).
homosexual predilection in the present and his efforts to uncover the truth, result in nothing more concrete and less satisfactory than her decision to leave him.

**Truth and Falsehood: Temperament and Temporal Continuity**

After Albertine’s unexpected departure from Marcel’s home in Paris and before her untimely death, Marcel reflects on the alteration of her character since their first meeting at Balbec. He notes with approval the development of her talents and the discovery of new aspects of her character, during and even thanks to her relationship with him. Marcel remarks that such unforeseen positive changes in Albertine serve to validate insincere statements made by him at the time of their first acquaintance:

Et ainsi, la phrase que je lui avais dite à Balbec: “Je crois que mon amitié vous serait précieuse, que je suis justement la personne qui pourrait vous apporter ce qui vous manque” (je lui avais mis comme dédicace sur une photographie: "Avec la certitude d'être providentiel") cette phrase que je disais sans y croire et uniquement pour lui faire trouver bénéfice à me voir et passer sur l'ennui qu'elle y pouvait trouver, cette phrase se trouvait elle aussi avoir été vraie [...]. (Proust: V, 51 – my italics)

The use of the word ‘providentiel’ in the dedication on the photographic image, with its roots in the Latin ‘providere’ – to foresee, from ‘pro’ – before and ‘videre’ – to see, suggests the predominance of the visual in Marcel’s apprehension of those around him; coupled with the fact of its being written on a photographic image, it also evokes the malleability of language, the significations of which alter through time. Thus the false assertions of the self-centred and unsuspecting Marcel, who in assuring Albertine of his usefulness to her was in fact thinking only of his own wish to have her near him so as to kill off the fantastic love he had constructed around her, finish by coming true. Time — ‘la chimie du Temps’ (Proust: VII, 262) — transmutes the selfish lie of the past into the generous, even altruistic, truth of the present. The evocation of photography as narrative material in this passage suggests firstly that Marcel made a gift of a photograph of himself to Albertine: how else to have had occasion to write such a dedication? It also

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55 This episode parallels that which concerns great-uncle Adolphe’s insincere actresses and demi-mondaines: Marcel plays the same role of flirt in relation to Albertine, to whom he is in thrall and who he hopes to entice into his company.
suggests the existence of a parallel between photography and language as fundamentally malleable tools with which to communicate. Just as a photographic image constitutes a preserved trace of fleeting time at a specific point in space, an indexical icon the reception and manipulation of which are capable of endless variation, so language, which can be employed for the formulation of self-serving falsehoods, also holds in suspension the latent potential to convey profound and long-concealed truths.

56 Cf. the first section of this chapter, which explores composite photography and radiography motifs in the Proustian narrative.
CONCLUSION

One of the first photographic images made using the negative/positive system was a photogenic drawing made of the alphabet by William Henry Fox Talbot, written out in his own hand (see illustration v.). His decision to use the new system of image production which his scientific research had helped to discover, as a means to record in a single image a complete example of a pre-existing set of symbols, provides an early indication of the intricate webs of relations which were to develop between creative literary writing and photography. The Greek origins of the word ‘photography’, phōs, phōt- (light) and graphos (written, writing) corroborate the link between the visual system of image production that is photography and the pre-existing system of writing words in ink on blank paper. In *The Engine of Visualisation: Thinking Through Photography*, Patrick Maynard advocates an understanding of the technological processes of photographic image production before the unique status of photography and the photographic image can be analysed:

We can characterise photography in terms of technologies for accomplishing or guiding the production of images on sensitised surfaces by means of light [...], without necessarily understanding such images as ‘photographs’. Procedures, structures, materials will then be photographic when they have a place in such technology, whether or not they themselves work by light [...]. Putting ‘photography’ before ‘photographs’ in the order of inquiry means that photographs in the ordinary sense are themselves photographic because they are pictorial images produced by such processes. (Maynard, 1997: 19-20)

What has literary writing to gain through the appropriation of this system of image production, which, according to Maynard, distinguishes itself from painting due to the fact that ‘in the case of photography it is the radiation [of light] that forms the image, whereas in painting it is not’ (Maynard, 1997: 20)? With regard to French literary writing in the nineteenth century, Philippe Ortel contends that ‘l’allusion ponctuelle à la photographie dans le texte est généralement l’indice d’une réorganisation plus profonde du texte autour de valeurs qu’il partage, sans l’avouer, avec les nouvelles machines’ (Ortel, 2002: 341). Speculation about the nature of the ‘valeurs’ which Ortel sees as being shared by literature and, in the case of this thesis, photography, is of interest because it may serve — perhaps indirectly — to point up the singular features of each of these two
media of representation — and the significance of the appropriation of the latter of them by the former, specifically, for my thesis, in the case of Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

Ortel writes that modern critical interest in textuality is a corollary of the ‘révolution iconique’ of the nineteenth century, which resulted in a state of affairs where ‘le texte devenait d’autant plus visible, en tant que tel, qu’il était concurrencé par l’image’ (Ortel, 2002: 340). This thesis has explored the thematic and stylistic appropriation of photography — a term which must be understood as ‘the name not of a class of things but of a kind of productive process, which frequently but not always issues in things of diverse use and interest’ (Maynard, 1997: 9) — in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*. It is predicated on an understanding of the dual narratological structure of the Proustian narrative. My study of the use of photographic motifs on the thematic level and in the juxtaposition and superimposition of images in the Proustian narrative underlines the systematic use of the photographic system of image production in the representation of the perception and memory processes of Marcel and the later narrator, as the former struggles towards the decision to assume his creative literary vocation and the latter retrospectively, and seemingly passively, observes Marcel’s frustrated and increasingly dispirited efforts.

Photography is only one of many systems of visual representation exploited by Proust in his search for sources of metaphor and analogy suitable for the communication of Marcel and the later narrator’s divergent vision of the world and of experience. Although systematic in his use of individual photographic motifs in his novel, Proust’s profound understanding of the mechanical, chemical and functional singularities of the photographic system of image perception means that the latter cannot be regarded as having a single, consistent function in *À la recherche du temps perdu* — a novel which, it must be remembered, remained unfinished on the death of its author in 1922. As befits a system of visual representation which is inherently resistant to definitive explanation or contextualisation, photography was appropriated by Proust as a means of subtly pointing up the fundamental ambiguity of the world and its inhabitants under the yoke of time,
even as Marcel continues to attempt visually to fix a fundamental essence of the fleeting moment.¹

In attempting to rehabilitate the much-maligned process of voluntary memory and to qualify the significance accorded to involuntary memory (by Marcel and the later narrator and by much critical opinion), my thesis explores some ways in which photography is used to create connections between two memory processes which on a superficial level the Proustian narrative sets up as incongruous or inconsistent. I hope to have shown that the appropriation of photographic motifs in the representation of both voluntary and involuntary memory processes serves to unify the two, by underlining the need for hard work — mechanical labour of both types of memory and of the writing hand — coupled with exertion of the imaginative powers, for the creation of a literary work of art. The nature of the photographic system of image production as essentially mechanical but also potentially creative is put to use in the representation of Marcel’s processes of perception and both voluntary and involuntary memory; in so doing, the distinctive artistic capacities of photography are themselves retrospectively validated.

Action in the present is fundamental to the realisation of Marcel’s creative vocation, the fulfilment of which he ultimately recognises as being possible through drawing upon his personal history. However, as John Berger writes:

The past is never there waiting to be discovered, to be recognised for exactly what it is. History always constitutes the relation between a present and its past. Consequently fear of the present leads to mystification of the past. The past is not for living in; it is a well of conclusions from which we draw in order to act. (Berger, 1972: 11)

Procrastination and deferral paralyse Marcel’s creative inclinations until Le Temps retrouvé (except for the Maraeville steeples episode). The temporal latency which characterises each element of the photographic system of image production is, perhaps unconsciously, appropriated by Proust, with the result that the uncertain future of the multiple, discontinuous impressions gathered indiscriminately by Marcel throughout his

¹ The difficulties inherent in attempts to conceptualise and theorise photography are shown in critical works such as James Elkins (ed.) Photography Theory (London & New York: Routledge, 2007) in which debate regarding the specificity of photography concludes on a note of despair.
life is underlined repeatedly. While photographic images are used in the representation of voluntary memory, elements of photographic practice are consistently appropriated for that of the involuntary memory process. My thesis suggests the possibility that the need for accurate contextualisation of the latter experience through the introjection, over time, of both mental and physical aspects thereof is, for Proust, broadly analogous to the norms of reception of the photographic image. The significance of verbal introjection of lived experience as discussed by Tisseron provides a model for the tracing, through photographic motifs in the Proustian narrative, of the conception of Marcel’s vocation as writer: the symbolisation of sensory experience in words will ultimately constitute its successful assimilation and communication by the writer. If, as the later narrator observes in *Albertine disparue*, to be human is to be one of ‘ces êtres amphibies qui sont simultanément plongés dans le passé et dans la réalité actuelle’ (Proust: VI, 115), then the act of writing a creative literary work based on his past life might be regarded as the ultimate means to live fully in the present while celebrating the past.

Shadows are evoked by Proust as a device for ‘animating the inanimate’ (Graham, 1966: 22) — easily adapted to this procedure in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, since they are usually associated with people and have movement. The petite bande at Balbec is described as being made up of separate bodies connected by ‘une liaison invisible, mais harmonieuse comme une même ombre chaude’ (Proust: II, 359); Marcel’s joyful drunkenness at Rivebelle and his consequent abandonment to the pleasures of the present moment mean that ‘momentanément éclipsé, mon passé ne projetait plus devant moi cette ombre de lui-même que nous appelons notre avenir’ (Proust: II, 380); while his first experience of uncertainty regarding Françoise’s true feelings for him leads Marcel to understand:

[…]. L’idée qu’une personne n’est pas, comme j’avais cru, claire et immobile devant nous avec ses qualités, […] mais est une ombre où nous ne pouvons jamais pénétrer, […] une ombre où nous pouvons tour à tour imaginer avec autant de vraisemblance que brillent la haine et l’amour. (Proust: III, 61)

The evocation of shadows in *À la recherche du temps perdu* is pertinent within the context of my thesis because of the analogy which can be established between shadows
and photography. From their earliest days, photographs have been thought about in connection with shadows.² Maynard affirms that ‘the linkage of shadows to photography is enduring’ (Maynard, 1997: 36). He goes on to contend that ‘in their twin functions for detection and depiction, shadows have direct analogy to photographic pictures made by their means, or by cameras’ (Maynard, 1997: 162). The somewhat inscrutable nature of shadows, as evoked by Proust above in relation to Françoise and the petite bande, is touched on briefly in my thesis in relation to composite photography and lineage. Maynard distinguishes between cast shadows and attached shadows — an interesting duality which might prove useful in a more systematic exploration of the role of shadows in À la recherche du temps perdu. Marcel’s evocation of his past as a shadow projecting itself constantly over his future, when not eclipsed by the transient effects of alcohol, suggests an ominous and onerous responsibility to fulfil his past dreams of literary endeavour, which threatens persistently to rob his creatively inert present of its joy.

The use of photographic motifs in relation to the theme of lineage and heredity, particularly the motif of composite photography, is touched upon in this thesis and merits further study. The importance of Mlle de Saint-Loup in À la recherche du temps perdu is equal to, if not greater than, that of the involuntary memory series in the Guermantes library. Mlle de Saint-Loup, whom Marcel encounters at the close of the novel, embodies the successful synthesis of the disparate ways of his childhood, and of her unfixable and unfathomable forebears who have proved endlessly alluring — in many and varied ways — to the hero/narrator. Richard describes the intersection and interweaving of disparate elements in the construction of the Proustian narrative:

[...]. Les mêmes éléments répétés, déplacés [...], variés [...], donnent lieu à la construction d’un édifice séril, ou plus simplement peut-être d’un tissage. Chaque variation permet en effet la mise en évidence de ce que Proust nomme un embranchement: un carrefour, un nœud, le lieu d’insertion dans la série première d’une série seconde venant la croiser et l’enrichir. [...] Ce type d’intersection opère avec le plus de puissance, et pour Proust de fascination, dans le jeu héréditaire des ressemblances, dans les combinaisons de lignes familiales (la paternelle, la maternelle), dans la structure en arbre des généalogies, ou sur un autre plan des étymologies. (Richard, 1974: 287-288)

² Cf. the excellent discussion of the relationship between shadows and photography and photo-technology in Patrick Maynard’s The Engine of Visualisation: Thinking Through Photography p.149-190.
My thesis argues that, more than a merely fascinating example of the play of heredity, for Marcel the figure of Mlle de Saint-Loup constitutes rather the triumphant and prophetic fusion in flesh of the incongruent spaces and discontinuous temporal fragments which together make up Marcel's lived experience and hence the latent material for his unrealised literary work. His recognition of her significance for him awakens him to the precariousness of his own vulnerability to the inexorable passage of time and his attendant mortality. The photographic motifs explored in chapter four of my thesis together point up the fundamental ambiguity of experience even as they underline its foundation in a concrete, temporally-charged reality. Schaeffer's definition of the distinctive pragmatic flexibility of the photographic sign underpins this assertion, which is repeated throughout my thesis.

In exploring how the distinctive semiotic instability and pragmatic flexibility of the photographic system of image production provide parallels for the shifting significations of language itself, my thesis suggests that the creation of new metaphor which distinguishes the Proustian narrative is repeatedly and consistently characterised by — perhaps unconscious — appropriations of the metaphoric potential of photography for the communication of a profoundly uncertain, but nonetheless urgently sensorily affirmed, experience of the world and of the self. Kristeva contends that:

> Ce tissage inaugure une dynamique particulière du langage. Ni signe abstrait [...] ni réalisme psychologique ou naturalisme sensoriel [...] Mais conjonction de l'objet et du sujet, du dehors et du dedans, du perçu objectif et du senti subjectif, au sein de cet élément étrange qu'est la phrase proustienne bâtie de métaphores. (Kristeva, 1994: 252)

Richard writes that:

> Le croisement de toutes les séries thématiques évoque pour la rêverie proustienne la forme d’un filet où la matière de l’œuvre serait prise, ou celle d’un réseau, à la fois innervateur et cybernétique, qui nous permettrait de circuler en elle de maille en maille, de nœud en nœud, d’“étoile” en “étoile”, avec la plus entière liberté [...]. Ce serait peut-être alors le cas de dire que cette vie écrite, que cette œuvre peuvent, doivent être traversées, comprises, lues simultanément dans toutes les directions, ou, comme Rimbaud le voulait de ses poèmes, dans tous les sens. (Richard, 1974: 288)
Just as the ‘narrowly selective transparency’ which is the photograph for Sontag is uniquely capable of ‘drift[ing] away into a soft abstract pastness, open to any kind of reading’ (Sontag, 1977: 71), so the Proustian narrative refuses to impose an absolute coherent signification on the discontinuous impressions and experiences which go to make it up. Like elements of the photographic image which are linked within the image frame through the deliberate efforts of the meticulous studio photographer and may be related each to the other in uniquely subjective ways by the wandering gaze of the individual observer, the words from which the Proustian narrative is woven are symbols carefully selected — but inherently charged with the potential for infinite mutability — for the re-creation of an individual life. Marcel’s written life is shown to the reader who must decipher its unity within the context of their own experience. Within the context of what he terms ‘noise’ in the amplification of information content in photographic images and the consequent difficulties in filtering that information, Maynard contends that ‘one of the hardest challenges for any of us as photographers is to control a sea of inchoate ephemera’ (Maynard, 1997: 210). The work of this thesis suggests that Proust understood and utilised photography, both thematically and figuratively, as a system of image production characterised by the careful attention of a studio photographer (or indeed scientist or medical practitioner, in the case of the composite and the radiographic image) who prepares or arranges every element of an image in advance of its inscription on the sensitive film. The question of studio photography versus the casual snapshot as sources of inspiration for Proust’s appropriation of photography may be deserving of further attention beyond this thesis.3

The superimposition of spatio-temporally disparate impressions of Marcel’s perception of objects as he struggles for synthesis and essential truths with regard to them, which is examined in this thesis, points up the significance of composite photography and radiography, which provide models for the ways in which lineage informs identity formation and individual existence within a circumscribed spatio-temporal framework.

3 Maynard provides a fascinating discussion of the parallels which may be considered between the revolutions wrought by photography and writing, focussing on the casual snapshot and the formal posed photograph (Maynard, 1997: 213-215). The snapshot certainly plays a significant role in the Proustian narrative in the representation of Marcel’s perception of visual perception.
Radiography is a fascinating application of photography and its appropriation by Proust could be analysed more systematically than has been the case in this thesis. Ortel notes that:

La présence insistant de la métaphore radiographique à travers toute La Recherche prouve que le romancier reconnait dans cette invention quelque chose de son propre travail. Certes, il ne l’associe pas directement au projet autobiographique, mais il en fait néanmoins une image de l’analyse de soi, puisqu’elle figure, dans la plupart des références, la découverte d’une vérité qu’on s’était cachée à soi-même et que les autres, volontairement ou non, nous révèlent brutalement. (Ortel, 2002: 312)

Within the context of Marcel’s conception and realisation of his creative vocation, composite photography and radiography constitute convincing motifs for the representation of the recognition of unknown truths and the consequent creation of new metaphor, the fundamental element of a writer’s style and the most effective exploitation of language’s power of symbolisation. ‘La chimie du Temps’ (Proust: VII, 262) in which are bathed both the Proustian universe and that of the reader, is made visually manifest in the complex tensions between surface and depth which are traced within a single composite photographic or radiographic image. In a radiographic image, the relationship between light and the object with which it interacts differs fundamentally from that which characterises figurative photography, since X-rays, being capable of passing through many materials opaque to light, pass through rather than reflect off the body before being recorded on a film or screen. X-rays are essentially waves of high energy and very short wavelength, situated on the spectrum between ultraviolet light and gamma rays. Given the fact that the light rays recorded in a radiographic image pass through rather than reflect off the matter depicted in the image, the status of the radiographic image is not, strictly speaking, indexical; however, the X-ray image is temporally poignant — a broken finger, depicted in a radiographic image, will knit together rapidly; a fragile, mineral-depleted skeleton in a time of famine or illness, dangerously translucent to X-rays, may be restored to a health that will be represented through that same skeleton’s opacity in a later radiographic image.

Maynard writes that ‘what a photo depicts and what can be detected from it are far from identical, though significantly overlapping, groups of situations’ (Maynard, 1997: 128).
The detective function of the radiographic image is exploited by Proust in his appropriation of this photographic motif in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, where Marcel struggles with the disparities he senses between surface and depth in the people with whom he interacts, their motivations and the significance of their behaviour. As a technology that enables ‘detection via rapid depiction’ (Maynard, 1997: 140), X-ray images ‘allow medical workers to detect, inspect, locate, identify, and study organs, structures, blockages, growths, warning signs’ (Maynard, 1997: 140 – my italics). Maynard concludes that:

> Whatever the other uses of photography, there can be no question that from their inception photo-technologies have been used to produce depictions by means of which we detect and even see things and events — that is, as amplifications of our powers of visual perception. As amplifiers, they are of course filters, suppressors, of various of our powers. (Maynard, 1997: 143)

The detective function of the radiographic image may be regarded as heightened or amplified — though by no means infallible — as compared with that of the conventional portrait photograph or snapshot resulting from purely surface-reflected light rays. As the son and brother of successful and pioneering doctors, Proust was deeply familiar with many aspects of medical research and practice.

The function of personal correspondence within the Proustian narrative is of interest with regard to my research because of the communicative, detective power of certain letters in the novel, which finds a parallel in the detective function of the radiographic image in particular. The symbolic representation of subjective experience which is communicated through letter-writing constitutes an attempt to impart private information to another; letter-writing is governed by formulaic standards which may be transgressed and manipulated. Adam Watt’s doctoral thesis entitled ‘The Act of Reading in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*’ is an excellent tool for the exploration of this idea.

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1 In *A Night at the Majestic: Proust and the Great Modernist Dinner Party of 1922*, Richard Davenport-Hines notes with regard to Adrien Proust, Marcel Proust’s father, that he ‘became a renowned physician whose research interests and powerful intellect made him conversant with the great scientific trends of his age. [...] His high and honourable medical achievements, his professional contacts, his discussions of his work at home all contributed to the clinical element that pervades *Temps perdu* (sic.)’ (Davenport-Hines, 2006: 52). The invention of radiography in 1895 and its immediate adoption as a clinical tool would, one imagines, have been worthy of being noted in the Proust household.
Photographic motifs may be detectable in Proust’s descriptions of the effect on Marcel of the act of reading a letter written to him by Aimé, after the death of Albertine. A jealous Marcel has sent Aimé to Balbec as detective and recorder of information in an attempt to discover whether his vague suspicions regarding Albertine’s possible homosexual adventures have any foundation — he desires ‘l’éclaircissement de certains soupçons’ (Proust: VI, 95). On receiving a letter detailing the results of Aimé’s research, Marcel realises that the doubts he had previously entertained were never seriously considered by him to be true. The evidence of the letter alters the situation for him, radically and painfully:

C’est ce qui explique que me croyant à tort incertain si Albertine aimait ou non les femmes, et par conséquent qu’un fait coupable à l’actif d’Albertine ne m’apporterait rien que je n’eussé souvent envisagé, j’ai pu éprouver devant les images, insignifiantes pour d’autres, que m’évoquait la lettre d’Aimé, une souffrance inattendue, la plus cruelle que j’eussé ressentie encore, et qui formait avec les images, hélas! d’Albertine elle-même, une sorte de précipité comme on dit en chimie, où tout était indivisible et dont le texte de la lettre d’Aimé, que j’en sépare d’une façon toute conventionnelle, ne peut donner aucunement l’idée, puisque chacun des mots qui la composent était aussitôt transformé, coloré à jamais par la souffrance qu’il venait d’exciter. (Proust: VI, 96 — my italics)

The contents of Aimé’s letter pierce Marcel as X-rays do the physical matter through which they pass, because Marcel reads the letter as a terrible response to his idle questions regarding what he refers to as the essence of Albertine. After quoting the letter in full, Marcel notes that ‘ce qu’atteignait la réponse d’Aimé, […] c’était bien, en Albertine, en moi, les profondeurs’ (Proust: VI, 98). The combination of the images of a promiscuous lesbian Albertine evoked by Aimé’s written words — images which are externalised by Marcel, who suffers before them: devant les images — and the suffering they cause Marcel is described as ‘une sorte de précipité comme on dit en chimie.’ This phrase evokes the precipitation of a typically crystalline substance from a chemical solution, a process which finds a parallel in that of the reaction of silver salts and developer solution on a sheet of photographic paper in the darkroom. Thus words written by Aimé on paper with ink have the capacity fundamentally to alter Marcel’s understanding of Albertine’s essential nature. Aimé’s words are not described as ‘X-raying’ Albertine metaphorically; it is in piercing Marcel and evoking images which then combine with the pain they inspire, that Marcel’s faith in Albertine is profoundly
undiminished by this text. The combination of letter and Marcel is essential to the reaction that results: to the reader of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the later narrator suggests that Aimé’s letter will be of only mildly prurient interest to anyone but Marcel himself. Thus the depictive power of Aimé’s words, in describing Albertine’s experiences with other women, evokes visual images which combine with Marcel’s pain to change completely his understanding of her. The evocation of chemical precipitates is repeated later in the same episode of *Albertine disparue* after the arrival of a second damning letter from Aimé: the insatiable curiosity which follows on the reading of the second letter torments Marcel and leads him to attempt retrospectively to project what he now knows of Albertine’s past behaviour onto her, and further alters his opinion of her essential nature:

Ces goûts niés par elle et qu’elle avait, ces goûts dont la découverte était venue à moi […] ne s’ajoutaient pas seulement à l’image d’Albertine comme s’ajoute au bernard-l’ermite la coquille nouvelle qu’il traîne après lui, mais bien plutôt comme un sel qui entre en contact avec un autre sel en change la couleur, bien plus, par une sorte de précipité, la nature.

(Proust: VI, 108 – my italics)

At no point in this episode is the veracity of Aimé’s words called into question by Marcel: he is remarkably trusting here in his response to the written word, as opposed to the treacherous spoken word, or loaded silence, at other points in his relationship with Albertine. The letter sent from Balbec to Paris conveys new and unwelcome information, whose reception by Marcel is evoked in terms which may be regarded as suggestive of elements of the photographic process of image production. Although necessarily cursory in its exploration in this conclusion, the question of personal correspondence and the representation of the reception of letters through photographic or other visual motifs in *À la recherche du temps perdu* might prove interesting.

The materiality of the photographic image itself is an interesting aspect of this system of image production, which the fourth chapter of this thesis explored briefly in relation to the circulation of photographs among characters of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart affirm that ‘photographs are both images and physical objects that exist in time and space and thus in social and cultural experience’ (Edwards
and Hart, 2004: 1). Maynard advocates the cultivation of ‘an understanding of images and thereby of photography in terms of display functions’ (Maynard, 1997: 27). He goes on to affirm that ‘the most familiar uses of photography are […] as display technologies’ (Maynard, 1997: 79). In exploring the circulation of some photographs in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*, my thesis has focussed on the parallel established in the Proustian narrative between the exchange of photographs and the movement of characters between different social strata or worlds which are, ostensibly, mutually exclusive. Further exploration of this aspect of Proust’s novel might provide an opportunity to extend the analysis of the materiality of the photograph to its display functions and/or its fetishisation by those who interact with it. As a token of intimacy, the photograph enjoys privileged status in *À la recherche du temps perdu* — however, when coveted it can prove as frustratingly elusive as the object of desire represented in it. Beginning with Gilberte, Marcel repeatedly fails to acquire photographic images of women he admires. The exchange and display of photographs within a family unit (however extended) on the one hand, and between friends and acquaintances on the other, and the uses to which photographs as objects are put, might provide material enough for fruitful further study of the function of photographic motifs in *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

In pointing up the significance of elements of photographic practice as well as the photographic image in the Proustian narrative, my thesis provides a guide to ways in which some of these later developments in French fiction and visual art literally bring photography and its practices back into the structure of the literary text. The appropriation of elements of photographic practice and of the photographic image in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, within the context of that most significant of quests which is the conception and realisation of Marcel’s creative vocation, might be regarded as prefiguring the role played by photographic practice and the photographic image in the construction of identity in later twentieth-century fiction and art.5

5 The assimilation of photography into literary culture in the twentieth century following the publication of *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927) resulted in the production of works such as André Breton’s *Nadja* (1928), Claude Simon’s *Le Vent, tentative de restitution d’un retable baroque* (1957) and Elsa Triolet’s *Écoutez-voir* (1968). More recently the work of writers and artists such as Michel Tournier with *Le Roi des Aulnes* (1970) and *La Goutte d’or* (1985), Adolfo Bioy Casarès’s *L’Invention de Morel* (1995), François Bon’s *Mécanique* (2001), Marguerite Duras’s *La Mer écrite* (1996), Anne-Marie Garat’s *La
My thesis points up ways in which photography is thematically and stylistically appropriated in the Proustian narrative so as to draw together elements thereof which on a superficial reading appear to be discrete. Significant among these are the processes of perception and of voluntary and involuntary memory which together constitute the reservoir of sensory impressions upon which Marcel comes ultimately to understand he must rely in order to fulfil his creative literary ambitions. Many critics of Proust’s work have tended to accept without question the overt denigration of photography which characterises _À la recherche du temps perdu_; my thesis underlines the subtle manner in which disparate elements of the photographic system of image production serve to underpin the representation of important themes within the context of the development of Marcel’s creative vocation: chief among them the nature of love and of temporal flux. The net evoked by Richard above in his analysis of ‘la rêverie proustienne’ (Richard, 1974: 288) serves aptly to describe the function of the various photographic motifs which underlie the representation of Marcel’s journey through time and experience towards engagement with his vocation to write: photographic motifs constitute multiple strands of a mesh or lattice of metaphor, which loosely but securely and consistently, circumscribes the tentative conception of that vocation and, upon its realisation, enables the retrospective appreciation of its precarious future.

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**OTHER WORKS CONSULTED**


ENTIRE ADULT BODY AT ONE EXPOSURE

(By WILLIAM J. MORTON, M.D., N.Y.)

PLATE XXX. 1