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Proust inachevé: le dossier 'Albertine disparue' (review)

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French Studies: A Quarterly Review, Volume 60, Number 3, July 2006,
pp. 409-410 (Review)

Published by Oxford University Press



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meanings coincide in Albertine's 'demolition' of her ice-cream in *La Prisonnière*: her pastiche of the narrator, or 'theft' of his 'langue', marks a symbolic extension of her erotic power over him. Being stripped of the power of language and the illusion of power *over* language is, argues Pierron, a necessary step if the narrator is to adopt a revolutionary attitude to it and so realize his vocation to write. The study thus comes full circle to the Symbolist–Classicist debate with which it opened. Pierron's concluding discussion of Proust's linguistic experimentation persuasively argues that the true audaciousness and the true aesthetic tension of Proust's enterprise can be found in its transposition of Symbolist poetic experimentation onto a novelistic scale. This valuable study is of interest as a systematic 'reference guide' for those working on specific elements of language usage, as well as making a significant contribution to our understanding of the role of language in the narrator's evolution to creation.

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doi:10.1093/fs/knl095

Proust inachevé: le dossier 'Albertine disparue'. By NATHALIE MAURIAC DYER. (Recherches proustiennes, 6). Paris, Champion, 2005. 405 pp. Hb €70.00.

Combining painstaking detective work with creative speculation, Nathalie Mauriac Dyer's study marks a bold engagement with the structural, thematic and editorial problems posed by the discovery, in 1986, of the *Albertine disparue* typescript. For Mauriac Dyer, this typescript, which Proust was revising just before his death, reveals the degree of structural incompleteness that posthumous editors of Proust's novel have masked by creating a 'finished' seven-volume novel despite evidence that Proust envisaged a symmetrical eight-volume work. This study explores, in exhaustive detail, the wide-ranging implications of the typescript. More broadly, it challenges future editors to recognize the unresolved plurality of a novel whose legacy is now sufficiently strong to resist the threat of oblivion that early editors feared would be its fate were it not rendered unified and 'complete'. The study begins by charting the gradual development of the series, in four (or more) parts, that Proust planned, under the title *Sodome et Gomorrhe I–IV*, as the largest part of the second 'panel' in the diptych of illusion and revelation that would structure the novel (*Swann*, *Guermites*|*Sodome*, *Temps retrouvé*). Drawing extensively on Proust's correspondence, Mauriac Dyer meticulously crashing sets out the chronology of revisions to both text and 'tomaison' and offers engaging hypotheses as to how the arrangement of volumes might have been further developed, had Proust survived, to enhance symmetries and tighten composition. This is followed by a detailed scrutiny of all of the work undertaken by Proust in 1922, notably his revisions to the thousand-odd pages that were to bear the title *Sodome et Gomorrhe III* (*La Prisonnière*, *Albertine disparue*) and a possible *Sodome et Gomorrhe IV*. The interplay of external and internal impulses, commercial and creative tensions, here allows for a fascinating reconstruction of the hesitations and *volte-face* that mark Proust's choice of titles and arrangement of volumes. The possibility of a proliferation of coexistent revisions is also opened up by such factors as Proust's near-concurrent editing of manuscript versions of the novel and the typed copies of these same manuscripts that were requested by Gallimard from

Sodome et Gomorrhe I onwards. Subsequent chapters address the literary interest of the 1986 typescript as an accessible source of authorial intentions that may contradict other *avant-textes* to reveal a succession of ‘repentirs’ and ‘bifurcations’ (p. 126). For instance, the version, dating from the war years, of the telegram announcing Albertine’s death reveals an identical structural and narrative pattern of expectation followed by reversal to that found in the 1986 typescript, but an opposing outcome in terms of establishing Albertine’s guilt or innocence. The co-existence of two mutually exclusive genetic stages destabilizes the text with which readers are most familiar today. The history of the posthumous volumes of Proust’s novel is marked by a tension between completion and incompleteness, stability and instability, unity and plurality. Mauriac Dyer’s study, which is complemented by valuable annexes detailing many of Proust’s revisions, persuasively calls for a validation of the latter in future editing and scholarship without proposing an effacement of the former.

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doi:10.1093/fs/ksn096

Physique de Colette. By JACQUES DUPONT. Toulouse, Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2003. 232 pp. Pb €24.00.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, criticism on Colette has taken a special interest in her representation of the body. Her feminized men and virile woman, and her abiding fascination with the figure of the androgyne, have provoked a significant reappraisal of her work, which is now recognized as subversive and complex in its gender politics. Dupont’s text takes this trend to the limit, focusing exclusively on what he calls the micro-events of the body, detailed lovingly and exhaustively by Colette and creating a rich, coherent theory of the interplay between subjectivity and its materiality. His approach is phenomenological with an element of psychoanalysis; hence the theorists to whom he appeals are Merleau-Ponty and Didier Anzieu, but this is by no means a text dominated by its theoretical framework. Dupont’s intention is not to draw overarching conclusions from Colette’s *œuvre*, nor to explore any particular critical concept in relation to the Colettian body. Instead we find an analysis that is dominated by Colette’s voice, by the myriad examples of blood circulating, muscles straining, complexions altering, appetites sharpening and pulses quickening. The Colettian body is porous and passive, responding to the slightest external stimuli. The barely audible but insidious messages of the body determine the subject’s sensual and sexual orientation in the spaces it occupies and become indistinguishable from the experience of happiness and suffering. Colette’s images of the body draw repeatedly on concepts of plenitude and lack, beauty and health associated with lascivious qualities of tautness or roundness, old age and illness tending towards the slack and the shrivelled. The question of appetite and consumption is explored in depth, with Dupont proposing its fundamental relationship to the erotic in Colette’s work. It is unfortunate that, as Dupont himself notes in his introduction, Kristeva’s analysis of Colette came too late for his own publication, as there are intriguing parallels to be explored in his exposition of the world and the sexual body as edible for Colette’s protagonists. The erotic is only ever a step away from the cannibalistic in her texts, as Dupont suggests that: ‘Consommer un homme [...] c’est s’approprier sa substance, le vampiriser, le