

Identity Games and Polemics Between the Arts: Marcel Proust and Claude Jutra*



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SYNOPSIS

Take It All (1964) is a remarkable autofiction film in which the Quebec filmmaker Claude Jutra (1930–1986) responds to Proustian theories about the superiority of literature (a ‘pure art’) over cinema and other arts based on ‘direct imitation of reality’. The article first summarizes Proust’s sceptical attitude towards cinema, and then analyzes the way in which Jutra attempts to rehabilitate this art through autofictional procedures. Using Deleuze’s concept of the ‘time-image’ (*l’image-temps*), Jutra proves that cinema, like the Proustian novel, is capable of practicing polyphony, multiplying narrative identities, and finding surprising connections between details of events from different time zones. Despite their diverging views, it is possible to note numerous points of contact between the two authors. Both Proust and Jutra agree on a practice of autofiction (*avant la lettre*, of course) that turns the life of an individual into a kind of interpretive key to the universe and a means of opening the eyes of the reader/viewer.

KEYWORDS

Marcel Proust; Claude Jutra; *In Search of Lost Time*; *Take It All*; polemics between the arts.

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In the 1960s, renowned Canadian filmmaker Claude Jutra (1930–1986) declared his intention to ‘respond’ to some of Marcel Proust’s artistic theories by shooting a rather unusual autofictional film. Before explaining what the Canadian filmmaker meant by ‘responding to Proust’, it is worth recalling a few elements of the general context and explaining the two authors’ relationship to cinema.

Although he himself made a brief appearance in a wedding video in 1904 (*Le Monde* 2017), Proust never set foot in a cinema or any other place where he might

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see the projection of ‘views’ or ‘moving images’, as they were then called. As a result, his name is virtually absent from anthologies of early 20th-century writers who commented on the moving images of their time. In his book *L’Œil cinématographique de Proust (Proust’s Cinematic Eye)*, Thomas Carrier-Lafleur challenges this image of a cinephobic writer by attesting that, at a late stage in his correspondence, Proust regretted ‘never having entered a cinema’ (Carrier-Lafleur 2017, p. 11).

Thanks to Laurent Mannoni’s *Grand Art de la lumière et de l’ombre. Archéologie du cinéma (Grand Art of Light and Shadow: Film Archaeology)*, we also learn that the author of *In Search of Lost Time* had some experience with the inventions that preceded the birth of cinema. Indeed, the Proust family owned the ‘lampascope’, a family device mounted on a domestic lamp (described, for example, by Villiers de l’Isle-Adam in *Tomorrow’s Eve*). This device was a series of six double plates depicting the legend of Genevieve of Brabant.¹ The young Proust would have had the most luxurious model in Lapierre’s collection at his disposal.

In the magic lantern sequence that opens *Swann’s Way*, Proust evokes the ‘jerky step’ (Proust 1913, p. 11) of Golo’s horse and laments the lacunose, elliptical nature of this childhood experience. Laurent Mannoni analyzes the technical inaccuracy of Proust’s remarks: we only see a horse on one of the plates in the series, and this horse is not galloping, but standing still, with the rider beside him. Apparently, the writer couldn’t remember the projected images very well. ‘Did forgetting the details of the Lapierre’s plates prompt Proust to set Golo’s horse in motion, or does writing respond to orders other than those of exactitude?’ wonders Mannoni (1995, p. 121).²

If Proust can’t be considered a passionate spectator of moving images, he’s not cinema friendly either. In *Time Regained*, he repeatedly stresses the profound ‘veracity’ of literature (or at least good literature), which is capable of metaphorically capturing the essence of things, compared to ‘less pure’ arts based more on a direct ‘reproduction’ of the surrounding world, such as cinema:

Ce que nous appelons la réalité est un certain rapport entre ces sensations et ces souvenirs qui nous entourent simultanément — rapport que supprime une simple vision cinématographique, laquelle s’éloigne par-là d’autant plus du vrai qu’elle prétend se borner à lui — rapport unique que l’écrivain doit retrouver pour en enchaîner à jamais dans sa phrase les deux termes différents. On peut faire se succéder indéfiniment

1 Genevieve, daughter of the Duke of Brabant, marries Lord Siffroy, but soon after the wedding, Siffroy must go to war. Before leaving, he entrusts his kingdom to the butler Golo. Golo tries in vain to seduce Genevieve, and when she refuses, he throws her in prison with a newborn son, accusing her of adultery. Siffroy hears the news and, furious, orders the death of Genevieve and her son. But Golo is unable to kill them and abandons Genevieve and the baby in the forest. Genevieve takes refuge in a cave and feeds her son deer’s milk. One day, while out hunting, Siffroy pursues a doe and finds the cave where Genevieve is hidden. Siffroy understands his mistake and executes Golo. Genevieve and her son return to the palace, where they lead a peaceful life (Leclerc 1992, p. 91).

2 On the lampascope and Proust’s essentially fictional use of it, see also François Bon in *Proust est une fiction*.

dans une description les objets qui figuraient dans le lieu décrit, 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 qu'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, ou même, ainsi que la vie, quand, en rapprochant une qualité commune à deux sensations, il dégagera leur essence en les réunissant l'une et l'autre, pour les soustraire aux contingences du temps, dans une métaphore, et les enchaînera par le lien indescriptible d'une alliance de mots.³

[...]

La littérature qui se contente de « décrire les choses », de donner un misérable relevé de leurs lignes et de leur surface, est, malgré sa prétention réaliste, la plus éloignée de la réalité, celle qui nous appauvrit et nous attriste le plus, ne parlât-elle que de gloire et de grandeurs, car elle coupe brusquement toute communication de notre moi présent avec le passé, dont les choses gardent l'essence, et l'avenir, où elles nous incitent à le goûter encore.⁴

In 1963, Quebec filmmaker Claude Jutra decided to defy this Proustian conviction by shooting *À tout prendre* (*Take It All*), a kind of experimental autofiction that transposes certain techniques of memory work, typical of *In Search of Lost Time*, to the realm of cinematography. Son of a very rich family consisting of a radiologist father (director of the Quebec College of Physicians), a stay-at-home mother and three children, little Claude had spent an 'exceptionally happy childhood' (Carrière 1993, p. 5) among the actors, painters, sculptors, and musicians who frequented his parents' salon. After studying medicine, he turned to film, radio, and the fledgling television industry. As an actor, screenwriter, and director, Jutra introduced elements inspired by direct cinema and the French New Wave to the Canadian audiovisual landscape. For many years, he was considered the father of Quebec's independent cinema, and many streets, squares, and public institutions were named after him.

3 'What we call reality is a certain relationship between these sensations and memories that surround us simultaneously — a relationship that is suppressed by a simple cinematographic vision, which distances itself all the more from the truth the more it claims to be limited to it — a unique relationship that the writer must rediscover in order to link the two different terms forever in his sentence. In a description, you can have an indefinite succession of objects in the place described, but the truth will only begin to emerge when the writer takes two different objects, posits their relationship, analogous in the world of art to that of the unique relationship of causal law in the world of science, and encloses them in the necessary rings of a beautiful style, or even, as in life, when, by bringing together a quality common to two sensations, he unlocks their essence by bringing them together, to remove them from the contingencies of time, in a metaphor, and binds them together by the indescribable bond of an alliance of words' (Proust 1927, pp. 39–40).

4 'Literature that is content to "describe things", to give a miserable survey of their lines and surfaces, is, despite its claim to realism, the furthest from reality, the one that impoverishes and saddens us the most, even if it only speaks of glory and grandeur, because it abruptly cuts off all communication of our present self with the past, whose essence things retain, and the future, where they encourage us to taste it again' (Proust 1927, p. 40).



Suffering from Alzheimer's disease, Jutra committed suicide in 1986 by jumping from the Jacques Cartier Bridge in Montreal. Thirty years after his death, in February 2016, a biography of the filmmaker was published by critic Yves Lever, who reports that Jutra 'loved boys aged fourteen or fifteen and even younger' (Lévesque 2016, p. 11). As testimonies from the victims (some as young as six at the time of their abuse) multiplied, Quebec experienced a painful 'Jutra affair' that led municipalities to remove the director's name from their place names. In recent years, more nuanced studies have emerged that distinguish between the genius creator Jutra and the paedophile Jutra, while denouncing the hypocrisy of the film world in which 'everyone knew' (Lévesque 2016, p. 11). Yet it is not the scandal, however repugnant, that interests us here, but Jutra's first feature film and his relationship with Proust.

Take It All turns out to be a strange autofiction *avant la lettre*. In 1956, Jutra was asking himself many questions about his homosexuality and, at the same time, began a love affair with Johanne Harrelle, a young mixed-race model who was married at the time but living apart from her partner. Although very attached to him, Harrelle did not confess to Jutra certain secrets of her own life: in fact, she was not Haitian as she claimed in public, the spelling of her name (originally Joan Harrell) had been changed, her foreign accent simulated, etc. In reality, she was 'the bastard daughter' of a white Franco-Canadian and an English-speaking black father, who together ran a pitiful laundry business on the Plateau Mont-Royal. After her parents separated, she even spent several years in an orphanage. At the age of eighteen, Harrelle 'fixed things' (Jutras 2014) by building an exotic Haitian identity from scratch and launching a successful show-business career.

It was this 'exotic mystery' (much more than the woman herself) that Jutra fell in love with, going so far as to propose to Harrelle that she divorce her husband and marry him, all the more so given the young woman was already carrying Jutra's child. By this time, however, Jutra's bourgeois Catholic family had gotten wise to the situation and, with the help of the filmmaker's confessor, eventually persuaded the young filmmaker to break up with this woman of 'questionable morals'. Jutra sent her a break-up letter and shortly afterward, Harrelle suffered a miscarriage. The scandalous relationship between a white man from a wealthy Catholic family and a poor Métis orphan seemed to have come to an end, and the story was over (Gervais 2021, p. 137).

Seven years after the breakup, Claude Jutra was shooting *Take It All*, a film version of his relationship with Harrelle and his uncertainties at the time about his identity. Jutra's shooting method was quite revolutionary, blurring the notions of fiction and documentary by adhering to 'controlled improvisation' (Jutras 20014) by the actors.

There was no written script or pre-established technical outline; Jutra simply wanted to 're-live on screen a slice of his life' shared with Harrelle and other friends several years earlier. The film's technical sheet is instructive in this respect: Claude Jutra plays in the role of Claude Jutra, Johanne Harrelle plays as Johanne Harrelle, Monique Joly as Monique Joly, and so on. Only the director's mother, his confessor, and a few other characters are played by actors. Those who play themselves speak and act from memory, trying to recall what they actually said or did seven years earlier. Scenes take place in Claude's apartment (rue Mackay) — where Harrelle was also living at the time —, at his parents' home (rue Sainte-Famille), at Michel Brault's

home (Saint-Hilaire), at the hospital where his brother-in-law Guy Duckett worked, at Jean-Claude Labrecque's home for a sequence with Guy Hoffmann, and so on.

In a letter to the organizers of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, Jutra sums up the originality of his approach in a few sentences:

Le scénario ne fut pas écrit à l'avance, ni une seule ligne de dialogue. Les acteurs l'improvisaient au fur et à mesure, après s'être concertés avant de tourner chaque scène. Le son a toujours été enregistré en direct. Pour les cadrages, le caméraman devait également improviser dans une très large mesure. C'est dire qu'une grande part de création était reportée au stade du montage. C'est à ce stade que fut écrit et enregistré le commentaire subjectif qui souligne l'action.⁵

It should be added that the majority of scenes were shot in multiple versions, which enabled Jutra to build up a sort of collection of images and sounds with which to craft his film, 'like a writer working with his own dictionary of words'. In this way, he could develop multiple meanings for each sequence through voice-over commentary or dialogue, quotation, music, sound insertion, onomatopoeia, and so on.

Apart from numerous indirect references, Proust is mentioned explicitly about halfway through the film. Victor, a friend of Jutra's, reads precisely the passage mentioned earlier about the inadequacy of a 'cinematic vision' of things:

Ce que nous appelons la réalité est un certain rapport entre ces sensations et ces souvenirs qui nous entourent simultanément — rapport que supprime une simple vision cinématographique, laquelle s'éloigne par-là d'autant plus du vrai qu'elle prétend se borner à lui.⁶

Jutra's film can therefore be seen as a kind of polemic, a 'response to Proust' (Carrier-Lafleur 2010a, p. 20) aimed at rehabilitating the power of cinema and proving its ability to translate a 'stream of consciousness' just as well as literature.

A great admirer of Gilles Deleuze, Jutra adhered to the latter's theses on the 'movement-image' as opposed to the 'time-image'. According to the French philosopher, the movement-image is that of classic cinema, the cinema of the pre-World War II era. Its essence exists subordinate to movement, confirming the primacy of action over wandering (*piétiner*). Classical films are highly narrative, informed by a strong belief in history and its finality, and they recount, often chronologically, a succession of events governed by the Logos of an ordered, harmonious world.

5 'Neither the script nor a single line of dialogue was written in advance. The actors improvised as they went along, after consulting each other before shooting each scene. Sound was always recorded live. For framing, the cameraman also had to improvise to a very large extent. In other words, a great deal of creativity was deferred to the editing stage. It was at this stage that the subjective commentary underlining the action was written and recorded' (Jutra 2014).

6 'What we call reality is a certain relationship between these sensations and memories that surround us simultaneously — a relationship that is suppressed by a simple cinematographic vision, which distances itself all the more from the truth the more it claims to be limited to it' (Proust 1927, p. 39).



With Italian Neo-Realism and the New Waves in France, Italy, Germany, Czechoslovakia, etc., new poetics began to emerge, favouring the exploration of time over the narration of history:

Non pas d'atteindre à un réel tel qu'il existerait indépendamment de l'image, mais d'atteindre à un avant et un après tels qu'ils coexistent avec l'image, tels qu'ils sont inséparables de l'image. Ce serait le sens du cinéma direct, au point où il est une composante de tout cinéma : atteindre à la présentation directe du temps.⁷

Very significantly, Deleuze links this new cinema, this new time-image, to Proust, who would have been its predecessor with his famous phrase 'un peu de temps à l'état pur' meaning 'a little pure time' (Deleuze 1985, p. 55).

Proust's phrase appears in the section 'L'adoration perpétuelle' ('Perpetual Adoration'), which takes place before the famous matinée at the home of the new Princess of Guermantes. In the courtyard of the hotel, the narrator stumbles over 'uneven cobblestones', which provokes in him a bliss similar to the madeleine soaked in tea at the beginning of *Swann's Way*. Once in the hotel, new sonic, tactile, and visual sensations arise: the sound of a spoon knocking against a plate, the stiffness of a towel, the sight of *The Country Waif* by George Sand that his mother had read to him during the famous kissing scene, and so on. The narrator has a kind of clairvoyant experience. For several dozen pages, the narrative comes to a complete halt, replaced by reflections, analogies, and extra-temporal digressions:

Tant de fois, au cours de ma vie, la réalité m'avait déçu parce qu'au moment où je la percevais mon 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 — bruit de la fourchette et du marteau, même titre de livre, etc. — 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 par le bruit, le contact du linge, etc. 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. L'être qui était rené en moi quand, avec un tel frémissement de bonheur, j'avais entendu le bruit commun à la fois à la cuiller qui touche l'assiette et au marteau qui frappe sur la roue, à l'inégalité pour les pas des pavés de la cour Guermantes et du baptistère de Saint-Marc, etc., cet être-là ne se nourrit que de l'essence des choses, en elle seulement il trouve sa subsistance, ses délices. [...] Une minute affranchie de l'ordre du temps a recréé en nous pour la sentir l'homme affranchi de l'ordre du temps. Et celui-là, on comprend qu'il soit confiant dans sa joie, même si le simple goût d'une

7 'Not to reach a reality such as would exist independently of the image, but to reach a before and after such as coexist with the image, such as are inseparable from the image. This would be the meaning of direct cinema, to the extent that it is a component of all cinema: to achieve the direct presentation of time' (Deleuze 1985, p. 55).

*madeleine ne semble pas contenir logiquement les raisons de cette joie, on comprend que le mot de « mort » n'ait pas de sens pour lui ; situé hors du temps, que pourrait-il craindre de l'avenir ?*⁸



In fact, what interests Proust and Jutra, and what they are trying to capture through literature or film, is not the past. It is not about reconstructing a childhood spent in Combray or a love affair with Johanne Harrelle. The 'time regained' is not a return to the past, but rather a leap out of time, a desire to link past, present, and future in a kind of epiphany that reveals the essence of things, as well as the narrator's innermost self.

As Thomas Carrière-Lafleur reminds us about Jutra's film:

*L'événement y est à la fois joué, rejoué et revéçu — happening et rehappening —, car le passé et le présent s'agencent pour former un temps pur et direct. [...] L'art — l'œuvre d'art moderne comme instrument ou comme machine — peut faire de nous des êtres extra-temporels, entre la réalité et la fiction, métamorphosant notre vie passée en vita nova.*⁹

Of course, Jutra is no fool. He knows he can't really 're-live on screen a slice of his life' from seven years ago. The Claude and Johanne of 1963 are no longer those of 1956, and memory plays tricks on them, regardless of the fact that they modify and reinterpret

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- 8 'Just a moment from the past? Much more, perhaps; something that, common to both past and present, is far more essential than either of them. So many times in my life, reality had disappointed me because, at the moment I perceived it, my imagination, which was my only organ for enjoying beauty, could not apply itself to it, by virtue of the inevitable law that we can only imagine what is absent. And now, suddenly, the effect of this harsh law had been neutralized, suspended, by a marvelous expedient of nature, which had made a sensation — the sound of fork and hammer, the same title of a book, etc. — shimmer in the past, which I had never experienced before — and in the present, where the actual shaking of my senses by the noise, the touch of the linen, etc. had added to the dreams of the imagination what they usually lack, the idea of existence — and thanks to this subterfuge had enabled my being to obtain, to isolate, to immobilize — the duration of a flash of lightning — what it never apprehends: a little time in its purest state. The being that was reborn in me when, with such a shudder of happiness, I heard the sound common to both the spoon touching the plate and the hammer striking the wheel, to the unevenness of the steps on the paving stones of the Guermantes' courtyard and the Baptistery of St. Mark's, etc., this being feeds only on the essence of things, in it alone it finds its sustenance, its delights. [...] A minute freed from the order of time has recreated in us, to feel it, the man freed from the order of time. And it's understandable that he should be confident in his joy, even if the simple taste of a madeleine doesn't seem to logically contain the reasons for this joy, and it's understandable that the word "death" has no meaning for him; situated outside time, what could he possibly fear of the future?' (Proust 1927, pp. 14–15).
- 9 'The event is at once played out, replayed and relived — happening and rehappening — as past and present come together to form a pure, direct time. [...] Art — the modern work of art as *instrument* or *machine* — can make us extra-temporal beings, between reality and fiction, transforming our past lives into *vita nova*' (Carrier-Lafleur 2010b, p. 140).



certain scenes from the past. Both are rather mythomaniacs, and their respective imaginations don't agree at all on a common version of events, dialogues, or objects. What's more, by shooting these scenes together, the two artists renew certain relationships, including intimate ones, which retrospectively modify their view of their shared past.

For example, it's only during filming that Jutra learned that Harrelle is not in fact Haitian, and he realizes that his own reflections on the exotic mystery of his lover were pure fantasy. Like Proust's Albertine, Johanne now proves to be an elusive being, with blurred contours, changing according to circumstance and discourse. Was she really married when she met him? And was the subsequent child his? Was she cheating on him with other men or women? Did she realize at the time that he was in fact homo- or bisexual? Does she still want to marry him after all these years and break-ups? And does he?

In the same way that the time-image has been opposed to the traditional movement-image since the 1950s, autofiction also stands in stark contrast to classical autobiography. It prefers the telescoping of different variants of the same scene to the smooth, chronological unfolding of a linear story. In contrast to the 'transparent' montage of the movement-image, autofiction is a 'visible' montage, a play of mirrors, a tinkering with identities.

Indeed, Proustian narrators and protagonists, like Jutra's, necessarily double and even multiply themselves, and their experiences are always accompanied by retrospective commentary. The idea is not to recreate the past, as we have seen, but to derive more general principles from individual lives and, ideally, to turn them into a work of art. Roland Barthes summed up the enterprise brilliantly:

L'œuvre proustienne met en scène [...] un « je » (le Narrateur) ; mais ce « je » [...] n'est déjà plus tout à fait un « moi » (sujet et objet de l'autobiographie traditionnelle) : « je » n'est pas celui qui se souvient, se confie, se confesse, il est celui qui énonce ; celui que ce « je » met en scène est un « moi » d'écriture, dont les liens avec le « moi » civil sont incertains, déplacés. [...] Le résultat de cette dialectique est qu'il est vain de se demander si le Narrateur de la Recherche est Proust (au sens civil du patronyme) : c'est simplement un autre Proust, souvent inconnu de lui-même... On le voit, ce qui se passe dans l'œuvre, c'est bien la vie de l'auteur, mais une vie désorientée. [...] Proust a compris (c'est là le génie) qu'il n'avait pas à « raconter » sa vie, mais que sa vie avait cependant la signification d'une œuvre d'art. La postérité donne de plus en plus raison à Proust : son œuvre n'est plus lue seulement comme un monument de la littérature universelle, mais comme l'expression passionnante d'un sujet absolument personnel qui revient sans cesse à sa propre vie, non comme à un curriculum vitae, mais comme à un étoilement de circonstances et de figures.¹⁰

10 "The Proustian work features [...] an "I" (the Narrator); but this "I" [...] is already no longer quite a "me" (the subject and object of traditional autobiography): "I" is not the one who remembers, confides, confesses, it is the one who enunciates; the one this "I" stages is a "me" of writing, whose links with the civil "me" are uncertain, displaced. [...] The result of this dialectic is that it is pointless to ask whether the Narrator of *In Search of Lost Time* is Proust (in the civil sense of the patronymic): he is simply another Proust, often unknown to himself. [...] As we can see, what takes place in the work is indeed the author's

'A disoriented life', 'a starburst of circumstances and figures'... Without uttering the word 'autofiction', Roland Barthes describes this approach with admirable clarity. Serge Doubrovsky would summarize it much later in these words:

*L'écriture autobiographique est celle d'un narrateur parfaitement conscient des moindres nuances de son expérience et qui cherche à les transcrire par les procédés de la syntaxe. Tandis que dans l'autofiction il y a un rapport beaucoup plus immédiat à la brutalité des mots, des scènes, des souvenirs, etc., et c'est cette formalisation-là qui la « fictivise ».*¹¹

To conclude, I propose two hypotheses:

The interest of Jutra's film lies, among other things, in his refutation of the Proustian conviction that cinema is a kind of 'bad literature', because it is too realistic and too imitative to capture the inner self and the truth of the world. Provided it is created on the basis of the time-image, cinema can, like a good Proustian novel, practice polyphony, exhaust different narrative variants, and multiply identities. With some audacity, we might describe *Take It All* as a highly stimulating 1960s Québécois adaptation of *In Search of Lost Time*, shot in the style that Proust himself would have chosen had he been a Canadian director.

Secondly, while each of the two creators takes a different technical route, they both agree on a practice of autofiction (*avant la lettre*, of course) that makes the life of an individual a kind of interpretive key to the universe and a means of opening the eyes of the reader/viewer.

There is a famous quote from *Time Regained* that applies to both Proust and Jutra, in which the narrator sums up the hoped-for impact of *In Search of Lost Time* on future readers:

*Ils ne seraient pas, selon moi, mes lecteurs, mais les propres lecteurs d'eux-mêmes, mon livre n'étant qu'une sorte de ces verres grossissants comme ceux que tendait à un acheteur l'opticien de Combray ; mon livre, grâce auquel je leur fournirais le moyen de lire en eux-mêmes.*¹²

life, but a disoriented life. [...] Proust understood (and this is his genius) that he didn't have to "tell" the story of his life, but that his life nevertheless had the significance of a work of art. Posterity is increasingly proving Proust right: his work is no longer read merely as a monument to universal literature, but as the passionate expression of an utterly personal subject who returns again and again to his own life, not as a curriculum vitae, but as a starburst of circumstances and figures' (Barthes 2002, pp. 463–464).

- 11 'Autobiographical writing is that of a narrator who is perfectly aware of the slightest nuances of his experience, and who seeks to transcribe them through the processes of syntax. In autofiction, on the other hand, there's a much more immediate relationship with the brutality of words, scenes, memories and so on, and it's this formalization that "fictionalizes" it' (Contat 2005, p. 231).
- 12 'They would not, in my opinion, be my readers, but the readers of themselves, my book being only a kind of magnifying glass like the one the Combray optician used to hand to a buyer; my book, thanks to which I would provide them with the means to read within themselves' (Proust 1927, p. 211).



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