

'difference' operates at the ideological heart of liberal-bourgeois society." Hardy, in short, is merely an excuse to do this. Hardy is a "socially inferior intellectual" and, therefore, supercilious (151), he fears women "in terms of their threatening upward social mobility" (217), and therefore his works must reveal similar tendencies. Not only is this indifferent psychology, it is appalling critical logic.

The first part of this book should stimulate some lively discussion, but its critical methods leave much to be desired. There is little new in the findings except the emphasis that Widdowson places on the currently fashionable issues of gender and class: the rest is much ado about nothing. Towards the end of chapter one, Widdowson takes a swipe at what he sees as some fundamental contradictions in Donald Davie's critical position: he is perturbingly unconscious of the contradictions inherent in his own approach.

Peter Collier

*PROUST AND VENICE*

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Reviewed by Anthony R. Pugh

Proust's great novel is indeed inexhaustible. No matter from what perspective one approaches it, one can always find patterns which are astonishingly coherent in themselves, while at the same time they illuminate the deep concerns suggested by the text. It is surprising that nobody before Peter Collier has submitted the motif of Venice to the same intense scrutiny that has been applied with success to other themes. Now that we have Collier's study (which first appeared in an Italian translation in 1986), we can no longer neglect the insight that contemplation of things Venetian can bring.

"Things Venetian" because Collier does not restrict himself to the visit to Venice in *La Fugitive*, but follows up all the clues, in paintings, costumes, metaphors. The "séjour" itself is of course crucial; Collier argues that it is as important a stage on Marcel's way as the better-known "privileged moments." He treats this passage in his eighth chapter, and insists on the motif of baptism, which permeates the text at this point. The visit to Saint Mark's, like Christ's visiting the Jordan where John was baptizing, becomes a symbol of the imminent realization the Narrator will have of his artistic vocation. The visit therefore becomes the most important turning point in Marcel's slow journey towards his final revelation. But the Venice episode also (and this is one of Collier's greatest strengths) can be shown to pick up suggestions strewn throughout the earlier parts of the novel. Thus Collier can write that "the whole of Combray is regenerated in Proust's description of Venice . . . and the church [Saint Mark's] becomes a gospel, prefiguring Marcel's own book" (9).

What distinguishes Collier's account is the thoroughness with which he explores all possible associations latent in the text. He has prepared us for this

by his analysis, in the chapters that lead up to this, his final chapter, of the different strands in the Venetian mosaic. The whole of the book is a series of close readings of passages which involve Venice in some way. Starting with a discussion of the real Proust's visit to Venice, and its importance in enabling him to distance himself from Ruskin (chapter 1), and offering next a discussion of the role of the Venice visit in the structure of the novel, where the Narrator distances himself from Albertine (ch. 2), Collier has discussed allusions to or premonitions of the Venice episode in literary references (ch. 3), transpositions of Ruskin (ch. 4), paintings associated with Venice (ch. 5), Fortuny's gowns, which reconstitute Venetian styles (ch. 6), with finally a detailed consideration of one of Fortuny's principal models, Carpaccio (ch. 7), allusions to whom "take on a richness and complexity equalled by no other real painter mentioned in the *Recherche*" (94). (One of them occurs when Marcel visits the Baptistery of Saint Mark's.) In his Conclusion, Collier discusses the *madeleine*, and Marcel's reflections on the *madeleine* and on Venice in *Le Temps retrouvé*.

The associations involve not only what the text provides, but knowledge one may have of the works alluded to: details of the actual painting, details of Ruskin's commentaries. For the most part these risky excursions into erudition are convincing, even fascinating, though occasionally Collier's virtuosity takes him dangerously close to self-parody, as when he sees in the way Carpaccio has written Pax Tibi Marce the possibility of misreading it as Pax Tibi Marcel (133), or when "Maria Regina," reduced to initials and written with a Greek rho, becomes "M P," i.e., Marcel Proust (125).

In all these analyses, the emphasis falls on the familiar notion of the "mise-en-abîme." The dense cluster of motifs which link to Venice are prefigurations not just of what would happen in Venice, but of the greater revelation which Venice itself merely anticipates: the discovery of the power of art to recompose life in a significant form, and the Narrator's own responsibility to do just that. "Reconstituted like a mosaic" is Collier's phrase, first used on the first page of the Introduction (1). He argues in the Introduction that "a Giotto fresco, a Carpaccio painting, a Fortuny dress, a mosaic or a flagstone . . . are motifs whose internal and contextual structuring implies similar structuring in the growing narratorial and textual consciousness enveloping them" (2). The whole of the rest of the book supports this claim.

The book is elegantly produced and elegantly written. Early on there are examples of inconsistent editing, and a few misprints; and the tone jars on the half-dozen occasions when the author uses the first person singular. But this may have been a directive from the publishing house.