photograph which shows men and women long since dead. They move about in their accustomed surroundings, they wear their accustomed clothes and show their accustomed faces—but to their own world in their own time, not to my world and my time. I have been given the chance to peek at them from another dimension in time. Atget, because of his ability to photograph a scene without any trickery, and yet from a standpoint which no ordinary observer would have noticed, provides here in these few examples of the enormous canon of his work the very essence of the world Proust recaptured in his writing.

As for the physical quality of Atget's work, I am not knowledgeable enough about the technicalities of photography to be able to say just why his photographs (like so many taken during those early days of the art) are so perfect and yet so subtle. It may be their size—they were taken with a camera old-fashioned even then, a large awkward view camera "with a rapid rectilinear lens of unknown focal length." His pictures were printed on albumen or gelatino-chloride printing-out paper, and toned brown with gold chloride. This sepia tint, which characterizes photographs of the nineteenth century, has always seemed to me much more subtle and at the same time truer to texture and color (leaving color photography aside) than contemporary prints.

Whatever magic he used, it came from a man who worked from before dawn every day taking series of related photographs which have become among the most renowned records of a period.

As for the accompanying Proust selections, I am most of the time indifferent to or at war with the choice. Somehow this combination doesn't succeed as it should. I treasure the complexities of Proust; the details of the life he recorded never cease to fascinate me. And the photographs reproduced here are all that I have described them as being. But the photographs are complete in themselves. The snippets from Proust remain just that — they are not, regrettably, illuminated, or in any way extended, by the photographs.

Also, the section entitled "The Dimensions of Art" fails for me because it consists of church architecture, of statuary in parks, of various bits and pieces (such as some wrought-iron work) which have nothing to do with art. Church architecture, when dealt with in a matter-of-fact way as it is here, rarely achieves anything more than a pompous and self-conscious air. The text is not concerned with art either. It is Proustian analysis of a dead time and as such exists as art. Even the one excerpt which speaks directly of the work of art remains out of context, having here not much more force than that of an extended aphorism.

The section on "The Fabric of Nature," which consists of many views of the Bois de Boulogne, succeeds as well as do the scenes of the city itself. It contains some of the best photography in the book and the text for natural scenery is easier to choose and can actually be a true supplement for the photographs. I know there will be opposition to any suggestion that Proust's prose should be considered supplemental to anything, but in this book such a result is inevitable. The photographs are complete. The text is presented out of context.

But the total impact of the book is nevertheless profound, produced by a mixture of technical achievement, sensitive selection of prose and picture, and that all-pervasive feeling of moving bodily into those realms of imagination in which one becomes lost when reading Proust. This book is an exercise in the modification of time.

Morning Purpose

Rising gate
with disappearing locks.
Thin tingling wind. Sun engines
picking up their whirr, starlings wheeling
across oil and pulling it into clouds. Turning
as a last measure, to scream. But too far away. The control
is what lifts me. The sky is not open, but curves, in blue sinking tones
to send us back in the deep flesh of our own places. Whip shaped,
to deal with romance.

LeRoi Jones

RECORDS

Benjamin Boretz

The notoriety of Wagner's grandiose schemes and dogmas, and the boldness with which he employed them in his operas, has fixed the attention of most listeners and performers on these extraneous qualities as the principal bases for perceiving and evaluating his accomplishment. On such terms, Wagner can be admired only by those who equate pure self-importance and aggrandization with mastery, and must necessarily be despised by those who don't. Fortunately, there is far more to hear and discover in his works than either the merely presumptive awareness of big ideas such as "synthesis of the arts," or the sensuous ecstasies of cleverly manipulated masses of sound (and flesh, usually) over hypnotically long time spans. For the continuously absorbing focal point in Wagner's late works is the extraordinary translation of loose and arbitrary literary "programs" for music drama into musical and dramatic functions that redefine every aspect of traditional procedures and elements in all the perceptual realms of opera in

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