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Image, Sound and Text in Un homme qui dort by Georges Perec

In my dissertation, I analyze, from a broad intertextual perspective, the interplay of visual representation, aural effects, and textual constraints in *Un homme qui dort* (*A Man Asleep*), the 1967 novel by Georges Perec and the eponymous 1974 film by Georges Perec and Bernard Queysanne. In this study I examine Perec's departure from the sociological approach he adopted in *Les Choses*, his 1965 critique of post-war French consumerism, and his entry into a world of observation of artistic transgressions via visual, literary and aural arts. This observation leads to an ambiance of indifference akin to the philosophical condition theorized by nineteenth century writers such as Baudelaire's concept of "spleen", Rimbaud's notion of "désenchantement", and Huysmans's idea of "l'immense ennui". Thus the observation of life leads to indifference, which is not a fault of the world but of a weakened state of human nature, where the self is estranged. For the man asleep, art and life itself are states of confinement. I examine this state from an artistic perspective, comparing it with the situation of the narrator of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Furthermore, I show that Perec's inventions draw their meaning from the context of existentialist thinkers and artists such as Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. This novel brings forth the age-old question of knowing oneself which was the central theme in the works of modern French writers of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. In classic philosophy human beings have a rational soul, hope and despair, love and hate. Is having no opinion at all a sign of inhumanity? Is indifference conducive to peace of mind or anxiety? Through a set of formal and semantic constraints, Perec engages his reader and spectator in a dialogue about beliefs concerning society, philosophy, and art.

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