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Shared Spaces, Lifted Boundaries: The Genetics of the Artificial Body of Decadence

Το άρθρο αυτό αφιερώνεται στην καθηγήτριά μου κ. Φρ. Αρπατζοπούλου, η οποία με μύησε στην ιδέα της συσχέτισης της λογοτεχνίας με την ιατρική μέσα από το σεμινάριό της για την Πολιτισμική Εικονολογία με θέμα την Εικόνα της Νόσου.

Science in nineteenth century declares a powerful presence best defended by Literature. Naturalism is the Literary Movement that lifts the boundary between Literature and Science to allow an eclectic affinity develop between them. Émile Zola in *Le roman expérimental* (1879) welcomes Science in the domain of Literature, establishes the identity of the novelist as a scientist and views novel as a science lab. Drawing from Sciences like Physics and Chemistry at a starting point Zola coordinates them efficiently to refer directly to Physiology and Psychology and finally converge on Medicine as the vital area of Literature. Activating medical spaces on literary grounds entails a conception of the writer as a physician or chemist then transformed into a physiologist and psychologist ending as a literary analyst. The naturalist writer elaborates on his characters as the doctor or biologist work on bodies; analysis and observation constitute the basic function in a structure that conveys the positivist model of Natural Sciences. If Science can gain access to laws that determine human existence then Literature can also determine the outcome of human life by adopting similar techniques and methods. Determinism is the major term that readjusts physical to literary geography and Body is the major field where the term is applied:

Dès ce jour, la science entre donc dans notre domaine, à nous romanciers, qui sommes à cette heure des analystes de l'homme, dans son action individuelle et sociale. Nous continuons, par nos observations et nos expériences, la besogne du physiologiste, qui a continué celle du physicien et du chimiste. Nous faisons en quelque sorte de la psychologie scientifique pour compléter la physiologie scientifique; et nous n'avons, pour achever l'évolution, qu'à apporter dans nos études de la nature et de l'homme l'outil décisif de la méthode expérimentale. En un mot, nous devons opérer sur les caractères, sur les passions, sur les faits humains et sociaux, comme le chimiste et le physicien opèrent sur les corps bruts, comme le physiologiste opère sur les corps vivants. Le déterminisme domine tout (Zola, *Le roman expérimental*, 16).

Experimental Novel then as proposed by Zola is an experimental structure that introduces Positivism in Literature or realizes Literature in scientific terms. Literature is now conducted as a scientific experiment in the chambers of a laboratory called novel. Within the walls of this laboratory the writer operates on the character –as an individual but more often as a piece of society– dissecting like a surgeon. Speaking of *Germinie Lacerteux*, heroine of the Naturalist novel with the same title, Zola chooses the procedure of a dissection to talk about the analysis of a temperament. In reality he simulates a lesson of anatomy during which the writer throws the woman on the stone of an amphitheatre, dissects her patiently, shows every muscle, juggles with the nerves and defines cause and effect:

Le romancier jette une femme sur la pierre de l’amphithéâtre, la première femme venue [...] il la dissèque patiemment, montre chaque muscle, fait jouer les nerfs, cherche les causes et raconte les effets [...] (Zola, *Les romanciers naturalistes*, 244).

As the writer becomes the doctor, the character becomes the Body on which the writer operates. Most importantly Literature becomes the Body on which the writer operates to forge a new identity, the scientific identity. Image represents the literary as a scientific event. The act of Literature lasts as long as a fact of Physiology –the dissection–, an equation that brings down the barrier between Literature and Medicine and vindicates Naturalism as a “mouvement scientifique” (Zola, *Les romanciers naturalistes*, 191).

The surgical metaphor in relation to the literary process makes a stronger appearance in another article Zola wrote on *Germinie Lacerteux* (1866); there he states that he is pleased to consider a work of art as an infant born in the family of human creation, a case to be studied with the scalpel in the hand; as he performs the autopsy of the newly born he satiates the curiosity of a doctor within him and verifies the medical profile of the writer. Referring to the work of art in terms of a human Body, Zola lifts the “boundaries between Body and Text” (Pohland, 236) once more as Body and Text are joined together in representation:

Je me plais à considérer une oeuvre d’art comme un fait isolé qui se produit, à l’étudier comme un cas curieux qui vient de se manifester dans l’intelligence de l’homme. Un enfant de plus est né à la famille des créations humaines; cet enfant a pour moi une physiognomie propre des ressemblances et des traits originaux. Le scalpel à la main, je fais l’autopsie du nouveau-né, et je me sens pris d’une grande joie, lorsque je découvre en lui une créature inconnu, un organisme particulier. [...] J’ai pour lui la curiosité du médecin [...] (Zola, “*Germinie Lacerteux*”, *Mes Haines*, 68).

The autopsy of the Text in accordance with the autopsy of the Body was read by Arielle Meyer as the attempt for a free circulation of knowledge; she reads Body as a closed circuit, as a finite entity that blocks the overall view through skin, frontiers and limits:

[...] ce serait la finitude des corps qui empêcherait de tout voir. Toute peau, toute frontière, toute limite est vécue comme une entrave à la libre circulation du savoir. Or cette libre circulation est ce qui informe le texte naturaliste (Meyer, 214).

Following this thought, the dissection of the Body means the opening of a closed circuit; the uncovering of the Body, according to Meyer, answers the request for a transparent Body or “la maison de verre” (“the house of glass”) – a term used by Zola himself. The notion of the transparent Body, the open Body or the open circuit points directly to the extrovert factor of Naturalist Movement.

The incisions are effected deftly for the Body of Literature to experience the expansion of Materialism inherent in the scientific world. In his article “La Littérature et la Gymnastique” (1866) Zola sees Body as made of nerves and cerebral material:

Le corps [...] ce sont les nerfs, la matière cérébrale.
(Zola, “La Littérature et la Gymnastique”, *Mes Haines*, 57).

The tendency to materialise is a priority that connects Literature to Science where “vice and virtue are products like vitriol and sugar”:

[...] le vice et la vertu sont des produits comme le vitriol et le sucre (Taine, vol. I, 15).

Science as the beneficial energy that exerted a transforming influence on social life becomes identical to material life. Naturalist Literature assuming the scientific system of references assumes automatically material characteristics and utilitarian intentions. Years later, in 1906, the Austrian neurologist Ernst Mach will note the prominent place reserved for the “physical ways of thinking and physical modes of procedure” (Mach, 1) due to the achievements of Physical Science. In 1902 the French doctor Victor Ségalen recognizes in Naturalism the effort to transport in spirit the better aspects of material life, a venture to transfer palpable utility and disinterested impassivity (Ségalen, 17, 21).

Naturalism charters literary activity on the scientific, specifically medical field. The Poetics of Naturalism is formulated as Literature transcribes the medical pattern. The formula denotes the basic appeal: le “document humain” (the “human document”); the “human document” indicates “the exact equivalent of the Fact, the Phenomenon, material elements of every concrete science”:

L’exact équivalent du Fait, du Phénomène, matériaux élémentaires de toute science concrète (Ségalen, 17).

Based on the “human document”, Naturalism seeks its new expression. Ed. de Goncourt in the “Preface” of *La Faustin* states explicitly that he wants to make a

novel built on “human documents”; in a footnote he adds that he claims paternity of the phrase, since the formula defines most expressively the way in which Naturalist School works as the “School of the human document”:

Je veux faire [...] un roman bâti sur des documents humains.

(footnote): Cette expression très blaguée dans le moment, j’en réclame la paternité, la regardant, cette expression, comme la formule définissant le mieux et le plus significativement le mode nouveau de travail de l’école qui a succédé au romantisme: l’école du document humain (Ed. de Goncourt, “Préface”, 2).

If Naturalist Novel was to be constructed on the basis of “human documents”, then this programmatic declaration endowed the Movement with an infinite variety of choices. V. Ségalen informs us that Naturalist Movement enjoyed the opportunity of many offers scattered among “human documents” that Nature supplied to investigations; however, not all of them had the same significance or expressive value; there existed a category particularly fruitful, “les documents pathologiques” (“the pathological documents”). At this point of understanding, Naturalists extended their relations to the medical world; hospital became their favourite research field and their library opened to clinical treatises:

Parmi le nombre infini de «documents humains» offerts par la nature à leurs investigations, les naturalistes s’aperçurent bientôt que tous n’avaient pas une égale signification ni valeur expressive; qu’il en existait une catégorie particulièrement féconde, les documents pathologiques, et s’y complurent. Volontiers, ils étendirent leurs relations dans le monde médical; l’hôpital devint un de leurs champs favoris d’enquête, et leur bibliothèque s’ouvrit toute grande aux traités cliniques [...] (Ségalen, 18).

Edmond and Jules de Goncourt reaffirm this conviction in the “Preface” of their novel *Germinie Lacerteux* (1864), where they announce it as “la clinique de l’Amour” (“the Clinic of Love”) and name it a “study” (“étude”) (Ed. and J. Goncourt, “Préface”, 3). The statement of the Goncourt brothers communicates the essence of the naturalist experiment; Literature is translated as Medicine and Literary Text is transliterated into a Medical Text, a Study. The dialectic between the Literary and the Medical initiates the Aesthetics of Naturalism. And it is due to this dialectic that modern criticism considered *Germinie Lacerteux* as the inaugural novel of Naturalist Movement (Meyer, 206, and Desan, “Introduction”, *Germinie Lacerteux*, 21).

Naturalist Theory would challenge the response of the scientific community; such an answer came from the French doctor V. Ségalen in 1902 in his dissertation defended before the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy of Bordeaux for

the Doctorate in Medicine. The author defines his dissertation as an “essai de critique médico-littéraire, spécialité nouvelle” (“an essay of medical-literary critique, a new specialty”) (Ségalen, 14). Literature and Medicine are related once again to form something new. The theme of the dissertation is the *Medical Observation in Naturalist Writers* (*L’observation médicale chez les écrivains naturalistes*) and in treating this theme the writer sets the Naturalist Movement under the eye of a doctor.

Ségalen supports that the medical impassivity and the professional insensitivity attributed to Naturalism are false allegations and popular *clichés*. Sensitivity, he says, as a quality inherent in the artist annuls the alleged rigidity of the naturalist writer. Ségalen runs through the naturalist context just to conclude that the tones are set by Emotion; the descriptions are charged with intensive feeling, the sensibility holds strong and the naturalist identity deepens to emotional levels. An example he gives is that the doctor collects all the symptoms and facts to evaluate the state of the patient; he spares no symptom that might lead him to the diagnosis. The naturalist writer on the other hand handles the symptoms not according to their utility on the diagnostic side but according to their effectiveness on the emotional side; this selection shows that Naturalist Literature doesn’t lie in observation, but in elaboration (Ségalen, 21-25).

More importantly, Ségalen proves his point when he juxtaposes two passages, both referring to the same clinical event, a dissection. The first passage which is articulated by the uninitiated vibrates with emotion, while the second passage articulated by the initiated, the surgeon, distances itself from the event assuming a neutral professional attitude which Ségalen defines as “metasensitivity”:

- (1) C’était épouvantable! [...] Il y avait une pauvre femme renversée, la tête très basse, le ventre ouvert; elle râlait continuellement... un moment elle est devenue toute bleue... tous les linges étaient couverts de sang... il en avait sauté sur le front des aides... on lui a enlevé un énorme morceau de chair.
- (2) Je viens d’opérer un fibrome qui m’a donné pas mal de tracas. J’avais mis la malade dans la position de «Trendelenburg». La chloroformisation a été délicate... elle est restée longtemps cyanosée... La tumeur pesait 2.500 grammes..., c’était un fibrome pédiculé (Ségalen, 22).

The difference between the two texts is the language they use. The language of the first passage participates in the image by means of an expressive vocabulary while the language of the second passage distances itself from the image by means of a neutral medical vocabulary. The first passage may contain words like “flesh” and “blood” that concern Body but don’t belong to the medical vocabulary,

therefore they can't make a Medical Text. Ségalen is very accurate in the examples where he replaces ordinary words with specific medical terms giving "laparotomy" for "open belly", "sixth degree burn" for "burnt limb" and "communitive fracture of the tibia and fibula" for "broken leg" (Ségalen, 23). His point is that Naturalist Literature in the attempt to depict medical action fails the medical technicalities; what it really does is transform "emotional reverberations in intellectual notions, change automatically concrete images in abstract diagnostic elements" (Ségalen, 22). And he is right to assume that Naturalist Novel structured as it is with no recourse to medical terminology does not transliterate a medical document. Since Naturalist Aesthetics does not incorporate Medical in Literary Texts it does not reproduce the Literary through the Medical genre of speech; the Medical-Literary dialectic does not reach the level of genre and keeps literary substance intact of transmutations.

This transmutation on the level of genre, however, is achieved in another novel, *À Rebours* (1884), a moment that marks the passage of the Belgian writer Joris-Karl Huysmans, from Naturalism to Aestheticism or Decadence. The novel disposes of the convention of a plot and extends as long as an experience, the internal adventure of its central character, the Duc Floressas des Esseintes. Exhausted by a weakening presence in the world Des Esseintes retires in his tower in a suburb of Paris to retrieve existential power; and regaining lost power means to him restoring the acuteness of the senses. Des Esseintes explains his feeble Body as the result of mundane abuse, of the pernicious influence of habit that wears the senses down to the obtuse. To cancel this effect he withdraws in solitude where he works in the direction of strengthening loose connections of the self to the senses.

The inward perspective registered in the theme of isolation is sure to turn Huysmans away from the outward orientation of Naturalism. In 1887 Anatole Baju, founder of the magazine *Le Décadent* and theoretic of the Decadent Movement, locates in isolation the potential of abstraction from material things, while solitude, also rendered as mental space-time, spreads in a synthetic contemplation (Baju, 8). From this point of view, the isolation of Des Esseintes appears as an attempt to distance himself from the materiality of the outer world and proceed to an inner level where analysis is replaced by synthesis. If dissection as the leitmotiv of Naturalism translates a scattered focus on bodily parts the focus now deepens to a unifying concept of the Body, the web of the five senses. The Material Body now becomes the Body of the Senses, the Sensational Body, a Body that opens not to the scalpel but to Sensation. Body is no more an open

system of scientific analysis; it withdraws to a closed circuit of response to sensations. As the whole idea recovers from the Naturalist affinities of materialism and analysis it assumes its proper dimension in the context of the Decadent Movement or Aestheticism.

Revival of the senses is projected as a constant desideratum in Des Esseintes' consciousness. To give his senses their lost vigour, to keep them alert and ready to respond, Des Esseintes provides them with a variety of exterior stimuli, such as smells, colours, tastes, touches and views. In reality he practices a self-training where he exercises the senses to respond to given stimuli; in other words he exercises Body to respond to given sensations. Creating sensations for the Body to respond to, Des Esseintes formulates the new identity of the Body depending on how it interrelates with the sensational elements in the course of formulation.

These interrelations, these "Correspondences" ("Correspondances", *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 1857) were discovered by Charles Baudelaire, "perhaps the first to portray the modern and decadent as someone with an overdeveloped nervous system; but for him the nerves are motors of creative energy, of gigantism, stridency, multiplication, as well as hypersensitive registers of sensation" (Scott, 214). Taking his cue from Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine has come to "relate sensation to a sentient identity [...] breaking the subject down into specific energy filled fragments" adopting a "perspective" where "sensory perception abstracts itself in feeling" (Scott, 215, 218, 219).

Hermann Bahr, the Viennese critic and writer, in his *Studien zur Kritik der Moderne* (Critical Studies of the Modern) (1894), proposes a definition of the "modern" in terms of the "decadent" suggesting as its basic trait the practice of "Nervenkunst" ("the art of the nerves") (Kuna, 122). As German Naturalism comes to its end, the word "Nervenkunst" echoes the "call for literature to concern itself with 'die nackte Seele' ('the naked soul'), the inner and especially the sexual workings of the mind [...] and record not the lower depths of society but the deeper sub-strata of the mind" (McFarlane, 117, 116). And it is a Swedish critic, Ola Hansson, who shifts the interest of the Berlin group of Naturalists from Zola, Ibsen and Tolstoy to Nietzsche and "directs it to a new range of foreign authors and artists—Huysmans, Richepin, Bourget—whom he considered much more rewarding and exciting than the aging old-guard of European naturalism" (McFarlane, 116).

By that time Huysmans had already vindicated expectations of the sort in *À Rebours*. Participating in the appreciation of sensations that Baudelaire and Verlaine postulated Huysmans establishes a discourse on Sensation in the form of

a novel, a novel active in the climate of “Nervenkunst”. When Des Esseintes works on the senses, he works on the nerves. To awaken his senses Des Esseintes brings them in constant interaction with exterior stimuli. How the senses react at the reception of the stimuli is what creates sensations. The sensory receptors where the original response to the stimulus is generated are spots or ramifications of the nervous system, gates of reception through which the original message will be transmitted to the rest of the nerves. In other words, when Des Esseintes stimulates the receptors to provoke sensations he arranges and rearranges correlations of the nerves, he carries out a practice on “Nervenkunst”.

Sensations pass through the Body one after the other, a succession of electric vibes; this chase of the next sensation captures the essence of *À Rebours* as the dialogue of Body with Sensation. This dialogue will eventually produce a Body that is in possession of its means, Sensations. It’s the Sensational Body, the Decadent Body that early in nineteenth century attracted the attention of Desiré Nisard as the “sensitive individual, [...] taken in the state of statue [...] when you give him a nose to render the olfactory sensation”. What he saw in the heroes of Decadent Literature “were sometimes the nose, sometimes the eye, sometimes the palate and yet it was not the nose as the olfactory organ in general, nor the eye as the organ of vision extending on all the exterior world, nor the palate as organ of all sensations of taste; it was the nose restrained to the smell of smoke, the eye to certain families of plants, the palate to the sensation of coffee”:

[...] l’individu sensitif, pris à l’état de la statue [...] quand on lui met un nez pour lui donner la sensation de l’odeur. Les héros des poèmes étaient tantôt le nez, tantôt l’œil, tantôt le palais, et encore ce n’était pas le nez organe de l’odorat en général, ni l’œil organe de la vision s’étendant sur tout le monde extérieur, ni le palais organe de toutes les sensations du goût; c’étaient le nez restreint à l’odeur du tabac, l’œil à quelques familles de plantes, le palais à la sensation du café (Nisard, 166).

Decadent Body is substantiated as the composition of the five senses; the configuration takes place among the landmarks of sensory organs but narrows on particular functions of these organs. The new Body takes form through selected sensations, an abstraction from the material to the sensational, a definite swing away from Naturalism. The consequent abstraction from the typical to the decadent hero has a definite sensational indicator.

Des Esseintes’ Body is a Decadent Body, a Body built on chosen sensations; therefore it is an Artificial Body. The factor of personal choice sees to it. Des Esseintes constructs his Body based on personal selection, *À Rebours*, that is *Against Nature* according to the English translation of the title. He appropriates

the intention of creating a Body, his own self, according to his own will away from the natural course of things. He gives his Body specific stimuli selected to arouse specific sensations. Premeditation ensures complete control on bodily reactions. The outcome is in accordance with the input demolishing Naturalist Determinism: cause and effect are shown in the decadent version, the individual not natural version.

Ego as the artificial result of the coming together of the senses was the obvious aftermath of the era when Naturalism disintegrated in the “Nervenkunst”. In this atmosphere and, as Bahr “stressed the need for modern man to search [...] specifically for the truth of sensations”, he focused on the artificial model, where “the sensations alone are truth [...] the Ego is but construction” (Kuna, 122). The New, Decadent or Modern Era no longer recognizes the predetermined Body. Ego is only liable to construction. Body is a material susceptible to interventions, a genetic area full of possibilities of new combinations where sensations will cross in affinities that will inbreed new genetic structures.

The idea echoes with Ernst Mach’s conviction that Body is an entity subject to relativity, a whole composed of unstable factors: “colours, sounds, temperatures, pressures, spaces, times, and so forth”, he presumes, “are connected with one another in manifold ways; and with them are associated dispositions of mind, feelings and volitions. [...] certain complexes of colours, sounds, pressures and so forth functionally connected in time and space [...] receive special names and are called bodies” (Mach, 2). This universal conception endorses Body as a “complex” of interconnections, a sum-total dependent on unstable elements that will form unstable liaisons between them. Body is made of elements that are likely to change depending on circumstance and are bound to produce a different effect each time they come together, an unpredictable effect, a particular effect. The general fluidity that guides the project resists Determinism and illustrates Body as an unstable unity that escapes suspicions of permanency.

The instability Mach ascribes to the sum-totals called bodies only comes as a conclusion: “Absolutely permanent such complexes are not”, he reassures. In this line of thought he refers to the human “complex” particularly known as “I” or “Ego”: “Further, that complex of memories, moods, and feelings, joined to a particular Body (the human Body), which is called ‘I’ or ‘Ego’, manifests itself as relatively permanent. [...] the ego [...] is only of relative permanency” (Mach, 2, 3). These suppositions sap illusions of permanency related to Body, which now concede to make room for dominant relativities. How these relativities develop affinities on a shared ground defines Body as an adjustment of proportions. The

proportion of each element that will interact with relative proportions of other elements will define Body, the final result which is not fixed from the start.

The interchange of proportions carried out as a sensational interaction produces a Body of provisional qualities, of individual character and of personal choice, the Artificial Body. Science fails to apply its rules here: “Physics”, says the Austrian neurologist, “is unable with its limited intellectual implements, created for limited and special purposes, to exhaust all the subject matter in question” (Mach, 1). To substitute Physical Science he appeals to the Physiology of the Senses where he deposits responsibility of the independent associations that create at demand, that produce artifice – the Body. In view of these beliefs it’s understood why Mach occupied a central part in Austrian Decadence at the beginning of the twentieth century: he proposes the Modern Body, the Decadent Body, the Artificial Body.

The maker working on his own Body can witness the transformation coming out of his own hands. Bringing his Body to dialogue with Sensation Des Esseintes submits it to an adventure that molds the Initiated Body, the Body that *knows*. If Original Sin resounds in the background of this knowledge, it is because pursue of knowledge does not turn away from the forbidden; initiation into sensation does not eliminate secluded areas of the expelled. Here a distinction must be made with the novel *L’Eve future* of Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, where the creation of Andréide, an Electro-Human machine, borders on the divine. Initiation here communicates the transcendental idea of participation in the supernatural mystery (Conyngham).

À Rebours, on the other hand, is validated by the Decadent Aesthetics that means to go to all ends for the sensational quest. Des Esseintes arranges his moves in a wide range of colours, savours the most divergent tastes, tries the most daring and refined combinations of perfumes or enjoys the magnificent effects produced by precious stones. These are only some of the stages scheduled to test the impact that given elements will have on Body and the type of sensations they will diffuse by way of vibrant waves. The rare is always a purpose in perspective. Particular sensation requires particular expression. *À Rebours* indulges in the particular expression deriving from particular vocabularies. Throughout his text Huysmans uses vocabularies that consist of specific words to send off specific sensations. Detailed descriptions of colours, scents, tastes array the variety of stimuli that surround Body; lists that exhaust all technicalities convey the strong sensational aura that stimulates the Body.

The best example of this subtle language is the description of liquors as pleasure permeates Body at their taste, a sensation that flows in Body like music composed of several instruments. The passage is unique as an area where the tasting and

hearing experience meet on a joined effect, synaesthesia; as one sense defines itself in terms of the other, we witness in practice the simultaneous pronunciation of two different vocabularies, one of oenology and the other of musicology:

Du reste, chaque liqueur correspondait, selon lui, comme goût, au son d'un instrument. Le curaçao sec, par exemple, à la clarinette dont le chant est aigret et velouté; le kummel au hautbois dont le timbre sonore nasille; la menthe et l'anisette, à la flûte, tout à la fois sucrée et poivrée, piaulante et douce; tandis que, pour compléter l'orchestre, le kirsch sonne furieusement de la trompette; le gin et le whisky emportent le palais avec leurs stridents éclats de pistons et de trombones, l'eau-de-vie de Marc fulmine avec les assourdissants vacarmes des tubas, pendant que roulent les coups de tonnerre de la cymbale et de la caisse frappés à tour de bras dans la peau de la bouche, par les rakis de Chio et les mastics!

Il pensait aussi que l'assimilation pouvait s'étendre que des quatuors d'instruments à cordes pouvaient fonctionner sous la voûte palatine, avec le violon représentant la vieille eau-de-vie, fumeuse et fine, aigüe et frêle; avec l'alto simulé par le rhum plus robuste, plus ronflant, plus sourd; avec le vespéto déchirant et prolongé, mélancolique et caressant comme un violoncelle; avec la contrebasse corsée, solide et noir comme un pur et vieux bitter. On pouvait même, si l'on voulait former un quintette, adjoindre un cinquième instrument, la harpe qu'imitait, par une vraisemblable analogie la saveur vibrante, la note argentine, détachée et grêle du cumin sec (Huysmans, 48).

Exquisite sensation belongs to the exquisite word, the unusual word, the technical term that Huysmans borrows from all sorts of sciences and vocations to insert them in the literary text. This is the style of Decadence that Théophile Gautier displayed in the "Preface" of *Les Fleurs du Mal* of Ch. Baudelaire (1868) as an "ingenious, complicated and learned style, full of nuances and search, that extends the frontiers of language, borrowing from all technical vocabularies, taking colours from all palettes and notes from all keys", a style that sums up the turn of a civilization from the Natural to the Artificial:

[...] le style de décadence [...] style ingénieux, compliqué, savant, plein de nuances et de recherches, reculant toujours les bornes de la langue, empruntant à tous les vocabulaires techniques, prenant des couleurs à toutes les palettes, des notes à tous les claviers [...] l'idiome nécessaire et fatal des peuples et des civilisations où la vie factice a remplacé la vie naturelle [...] (Baudelaire, vol. 1, 16).

Huysmans ascribes the same identity to *À Rebours* in a Preface written twenty years after the novel, where he admits his wish to break the limits and bring in the novel various sectors like art, science, history:

ce besoin que j'éprouvais d'ouvrir les fenêtres, de fuir un milieu où j'étouffais; puis, le désir qui m'appréhendait de secouer les préjugés, de briser les limites du roman, d'y faire

entrer l'art, la science, l'histoire, de ne plus se servir, en un mot, de cette forme que comme d'un cadre pout y insérer de plus sérieux travaux (Huysmans, "Préface", 14, 15).

Huysmans incorporates in the literary text extracts from texts that represent different genres of speech to challenge the obvious, to achieve new sensations, to ensure the value of sensation. This proves that the dialogue of Body with Sensation is in reality the dialogue of Text with Sensation. Des Esseintes submits his nervous system to a continuous interaction between stimuli and senses and Huysmans does the same with his text. He submits his text to the same feedback between stimuli and senses to which Des Esseintes submits his nervous system. He inserts in Literature textual pieces with unknown words to attain unknown sensations. The vibes that shake Des Esseintes' Body shake also the Body of Literature, the Text. Des Esseintes' nervous system is recorded in the Text; Des Esseintes' nervous system becomes the Text. The limit between Body and Text is deconstructed. The textual fates of Literature are written on Body in a valid expression of Modern Thought that takes us all the way to Kafka's *Penal Colony* where the penal judgement is written on the prisoner's Body.

When Huysmans energizes other genres of speech within the literary genre he shakes the horizon of expectations in relation to literary identity; he questions the sense of literariness itself. What he does is transfer without change in the literary environment indicators of alien environments; he infects the Body of Literature with carriers of alien meanings. At this level the genetic material of Literature is subject to severe transmutation. If text is conceived as a paradigm then many different genres alternate in its axis. This instability in the textual paradigm refers directly to the identity of Literature to undermine or redefine the sense of literariness. As the discourse on Sensation closes upon a dialogue between different genres of speech, the dialogization of M. Bakhtin would suffice as a premature identity of the novel. What is sure though is that the "new genre of writing" ("nouveau genre d'écrire"), that Bajou attributed to Verlaine and Mallarmé (Baju, 2), shows its face in *À Rebours* as Zola himself acknowledges when he reproaches Huysmans for swinging away from Naturalism; Huysmans attests to the fact:

Il me reprocha le livre, disant que je portais un coup terrible au naturalisme, que je faisais dévier l'école, que je brûlais d'ailleurs mes vaisseaux avec un pareil roman, car aucun genre de littérature n'était possible dans ce genre épuisé en un seul tome [...] (Huysmans, "Préface", 14, 15).

Literature as a ground shared with Medicine allows the boundary to be lifted between Body and Text. From Naturalism to Aestheticism Body can be read as a

medical metaphor of the Text, the Body of Literature. Furthermore, Aestheticism deploys a Discourse that defies given identities of Literature while defying the permanent identity of human Body. Body becomes a Space of relative qualities, a Space that denies the Natural, resists the predetermined and the obvious. On this Space, the Poetics of Decadence is spread that dares yield to the individual, the particular and the relative, the Artificial. The Rhetoric of Decadence transcribes itself as the Genetics of Artificial.

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Π Ε Ρ Ι Λ Η Ψ Η

LENA ARAMPATZIDOU: Συμμεριζόμενοι χώροι, καταργημένα όρια: Η γενετική του τεχνητού σώματος της παρακμής

Το άρθρο προέρχεται από ανακοίνωση στο Διεθνές Συνέδριο «Space, Haunting, Discourse» στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Karlstad στη Σουηδία, που πραγματοποιήθηκε στις 15-18 Ιουνίου 2006, στη συνεδρία με τίτλο «Medical Spaces in Art and Literature». Θέτει το ζήτημα του κειμένου ως κοινού χώρου όπου συντελείται η άρση των ορίων ανάμεσα στη λογοτεχνία και την ιατρική, ως κοινού λόγου όπου μετέχουν δύο γλώσσες, η γλώσσα της λογοτεχνίας και η γλώσσα της ιατρικής. Η αντίληψη του κειμένου ως περιοχής που μπορεί να μοιράζεται ισοδύναμα ανάμεσα στη λογοτεχνία και τις φυσικές επιστήμες, γενικότερα, εξετάζεται αρχικά μέσα στο πλαίσιο του νατουραλισμού, για να διευρυνθεί στη συνέχεια στο πλαίσιο του αισθητισμού ως αντίληψη μιας λογοτεχνίας που αναπαράγει λόγο διαφορετικών γενών μέσα στα κείμενά της· αυτή η πολυγλωσσικότητα διερευνάται σε σχέση με την πραγμάτευση του θέματος των αισθήσεων και της δόμησης του τεχνητού σώματος. Η μέθοδος που υιοθετείται στη διερεύνηση είναι η συνανάγνωση κειμένων της λογοτεχνίας με κείμενα της ιατρικής, ιδιαίτερα με κείμενα ιατρικής που διαβάζουν λογοτεχνία. Το συμπέρασμα που συνάγεται είναι ότι η σχετικότητα της έννοιας του σώματος, η οποία προβάλλεται μέσα από ιατρικά κείμενα της εποχής της *Nervenkunst*, βρίσκει το αντίστοιχό της στη σχετικότητα της έννοιας της λογοτεχνίας, όπως αυτή πραγματώνεται μέσα στα συμφραζόμενα της *décadence* της ίδιας εποχής. Η τελική αναγωγή του τεχνητού σώματος, ως δομικής μονάδας του αισθητισμού, σε ιατρική μεταφορά του σώματος της ίδιας της λογοτεχνίας δεν εμποδώνει απλά την άρση των ορίων ανάμεσα στο σώμα και το κείμενο αλλά και την αμφισβήτηση των σταθερών ταυτοτήτων ως ορισμό του αισθητισμού.