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Reading Space: (Un)Mapping Otherness in Nineteenth-Century Paris

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An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Comparative Literature

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Abstract

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Space and Text constitute two of the most important concepts in post-modern theorizations of politics. The current thesis proposes to examine spatial representation and imagination in the nineteenth century as the historical moment where space acquires textual qualities.

Paris, in particular, embodies the archetypal space that is hyper-textualized. Not only is it saturated with endlessly circulating texts and reading thanks to the new printing press technologies, urban space itself metamorphizes into a visual field that beseeches reading. One of Balzac's most cited proclamations in *Ferragus* thus depicts Paris as "la ville aux cent mille romans" ("the city of a hundred thousand novels")—a space itself transformed into text, forever narrativized.

The purpose of this thesis is to interrogate the far-reaching implications of this hyper-textualization of space and its critical role in the production of the modern subject and its politics. In particular, I approach the motif of otherness as a critical concept that, from within, complicates the homogenizing pretension of the space-text. Far from conferring immediately legible identities, I show that the urban representation of space in realist-naturalist literature relies on structural citations of the Other as something that at once compromises their mimetic cartographies and superimposes them with other fantastic topographies. In the first chapter, I examine the structural reliance on Orientalist discourse for both destabilizing and structuring the urban production of meaning and value in Balzac's *La Fille aux yeux d'or*. In the second chapter, I read the representation of women in Zola's *La Curée* and *Nana*, and highlight the underlying appropriation of the feminine other in the textual reading and mapping of urban space behind Zola's naturalist pretension.

The ultimate goal is to dispel the myth of space as a transparent text and unveil its active discursive and social production via the mapping of self and otherness in and through space. On the other hand, it also hints at a possible rereading of the modern subject and its Other as, in essence, spatial categories. This leads to a critical rethinking of space both as a political construct and as the site of possible political praxis.

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Acknowledgements

Completing this thesis never was an easy endeavor. Oftentimes my research led me to more questions than it answered. But I have been told that it is these questions that our inquiries lead to rather than their facile answers that inform our critical thinking. Far from being a conclusive response to pre-established problematics, therefore, I read this thesis as my attempt to ask new questions and to anticipate possible resolutions.

For that, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my adviser and mentor Dr. Elissa Marder for all the encouragement and guidance throughout this project. Her critical insights and knowledge always challenge me to abstain from simple conclusions and to re-evaluate the productive tensions and contradictions in my own thinking. This thesis would not have been possible without her. I would also like to thank my committee member, Dr. Sean Meighoo and Dr. Claire Nouvet, for their time, support, and advice. During my time at Emory, their teaching constitutes one of the most valuable parts of my education and informs the kind of work I do and anticipate to continue doing in the future; I am grateful for their influence. Furthermore, I am also thankful to the department of Comparative Literature for providing me with an unbounded intellectual platform and constantly introducing me to new ways of engaging in critical scholarly work.

At last, this project would not be possible without the unwavering support of my friends and family. I thank my roommate, Yixuan Peng, for standing by me and bearing with me during a period of tremendous stress. I also would like to thank my mother, Yan Qing, and my father, Yi Wang, for supporting my decision to pursue a degree in literature and for being part of this journey. My world—my space and my reading—would not be the same without you.

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Abbreviations

La Fille	*La Fille aux yeux d'or*, all quotations refer to *Ferragus La Fille aux yeux d'or*
Le Père	*Le Père Goriot*
LFE	English edition of *La Fille*, translated as *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*
NNF	*Nana* French edition
NNE	*Nana* English edition, George Holden's translation

Introduction

Space, Text, Otherness, and Paris in the Nineteenth Century

In his celebrated post-structuralist critique of everyday life, Michel de Certeau documents a riveting experience of seeing New York from the summit of the World Trade Center. Such an Icarian view, Certeau relates, materializes an epistemological fantasy that dissociates the viewer from the complexities of urban life in a dream of possessing the metropolis from afar: "it transforms the bewitching world by which one was "possessed" into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it" (Certeau 92). This scopic mania of seeing from a distance is the modern myth of transparent knowledge and the Cartesian subject. It is the crystallization of a semiocratic drive that aspires to flatten the heterogenous world of existence into a homogenous textual field capable of being decoded, represented, and read. Space constitutes one primal object of this textualizing agenda. The desire to achieve a readable knowledge of urban space lies at the center of the modern subject's anxieties to master his spaces from an (aerial) perspective that is not implicated in the mire of urban activities.

But this (historical) metamorphosis of the urban space into a textual field even predates the actual architectural realization of modern skyscrapers that grant the required elevation for the aerial view Certeau registers. Before the materialization of this vision, such an illusion of a textual city had long ago precipitated an oneiric form. I turn to the urban experience of nineteenth-century Paris as one epitome of this modern sublation of city and text—of reading that is spatialized and of space that is textualized. For Walter Benjamin—whose massive *Passagenwerk* (1927-1940) remains one of the main points of reference for contemporary critical studies scholarships on the material and cultural history of nineteenth-century Paris—the

dreamscape of representation is indissociable from a certain phantasmagoric culture of display (of commodities as exchange, but also of signs, symbols, and semiotic values in general). Paris as the capital of modernity embodies an open visual field saturated with display and represented images: from the material instantiations of the arcades to world exhibitions, from panorama and Daguerre type, from panoramic literature to realist-naturalist novels, the cultural imaginaries of the nineteenth-century transcribe the ideological fetishization of a universal and panoptic code that provides a comprehensive representation of reality and urban life.

Such an urban field saturated with signs and images is a space of vibrant textual life. In Paris—as the emblematic space of modernity—all is to be represented, displayed, cited, and, in the end, read. Textual practices undergird all aspects of modern life in Paris. The rise of physiognomic discourses strived at the comprehensive reading of the urban population and its multifarious social types through their faces; modern cartographical projects that aimed at a comprehensive mapping and cataloguing of urban space, likewise, sought to enclose urban spaces in clear legible boundaries and demarcation. Indeed, not only was Paris—as the result of the development of modern printing press technologies and the commercialization of the press—a place saturated with commodified letters, signs, and symbols that circulate, Paris itself becomes a textual space of reading. Paris and the multitude of its social activities materialize a textual field to be read and decoded. One of Balzac's most cited proclamations in *Ferragus*, therefore, depicts Paris as "la ville aux cent mille romans" (*Ferragus* 86) ("the city of a hundred thousand novels"). Paris becomes the space of novels and narratives that had been written—a space that demands a constant transcription into texts and narrativization—and the novelists of modern life assume the role of the tireless labour to excavate its texture and read it to the minutest details.

It is thus this historical moment of a hyper-textualization of urban space that I am, on a broad scale, interested in. On the other hand, this urban text never acquires the transparent status that its panoptic vision aspires for—this urban reading is subjected to constant interruption. I shall thus turn to this question of interruption.

Other in Space: Interrupted Reading

The practical issue with this panoramic reading is that the disinterested aerial view that it assumes exists in abstraction but not in real life. Certeau's critique of the bird-eye view from the World Trade Center thus centers around its erasure of the phenomenological experience of being in the city. On a similar note, the textualizing agenda of rendering Paris transparent veils—and thus cannot constitute a source of critical knowledge apart from—the ground-level, opaque material practices of space where the subject is entangled. For Balzac, thus, the city of a hundred thousand novels is such that it also constitutes the monstrous field of opaque knowledge, an unfathomable ocean that threatens to devour and overwhelm all who attempt to master it—"[j]etez-y la sonde, vous n'en connaîtrez jamais la profondeur" (*Le Père* 34) ("cast the probe in it, you'll never know its depth"). Christopher Prendergast's often-cited investigation of nineteenth-century Paris as an idiosyncratic field of reading also recuperates this tension inherent in the representation of Paris as a textual field and juxtaposes the textualization of Paris with concrete material processes of "chaotic play of forces, transactions and interests, to which one could not attach a correspondingly clear description" (Prendergast 11) that disrupt this reading and renders it unstable.

In other words, the textual vision of demarcation and mastery disintegrates and fractures from the bottom with the material and phenomenological entanglement in which the subject

finds itself—myriad forces of which the subject has no control, of all that is outside of him, that confronts him as an outside, i.e. external, Other. Otherness, on that note, constitutes another important critical concept that undergirds my reading of both space and text. The Other embodies a force that at once threatens to destabilize and problematize the urban text, and—which would be one of the main theoretical interventions that I hope to make in my thesis—in a dialectical tension, informs and sustains the project of reading and the discursive production of both space and text in the nineteenth century.

Indeed, the question of reading (in) the city cannot be addressed without attending at the same time to the question of otherness that at once resists and fuels reading. Paris in the nineteenth century is a place of irreducible otherness and eccentricities no less than it is a place of reading. The urban experience is marked by innumerable chance encounters with the Other. In her recent book entitled *Eccentricity and the Cultural Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, Miranda Gill thus highlights eccentricity as one of the sustained fascinations in Parisian culture. One immediate consequence of these eccentricities is the projection of a beyond of the textualizing agenda that strives to render the everyday transparent—i.e. the site of "the frustration of rationality and the failure of the codes by which social and mental life is interpreted" (Gill 1). The word ec-centric, as Gill reminds us, bears etymological connections with a certain deviation from the center—it is the spatial image of an outside that disrupts the city-text. Eccentricities constitute the heterogenous elements that contaminate and compromise the act of reading. On the other hand, however, one must not ignore that this interruption of mastery is also precisely what motorizes urban textualization. Physiognomic discourse, for instance, inasmuch as it comes from a textualizing initiative of reading, also derives from the

new imperatives to read and master the increasingly heterogeneous urban crowd and dangerous liaisons of chance encounters.

Similar observations could be made about the role of Orientalist discourse in urban imagination. Recent scholarships on realist-naturalist literature turn to Orientalism no longer as a mere discursive deadweight inconsequential to Realism that bears traces of the Romantic fascination of the exotic, but the site of an internal dialectic of Realism, hence broaching a critical re-interpretation of Realism's mimetic contract and its registration of metropolitan spaces. Geoffrey Baker, for instance, sees the incorporation of Oriental references in realist urban novels as the site of an internal tension between the empirical discourse of disenchantment and the opposite drive to re-enchant. (Baker 14) Jennifer Yee, on a similar note, revisits the colonial space as the "'offstage' spaces" (Yee 14) of the realist discourse which both serve as an internal destabilization of its mimesis and power the narrative unfolding of urban life. The importance of these critical re-assessments of the implicit discourses of Otherness in the purported mimetic representation of urban space, I suggest, is the disclosure of a certain discursive foundation in the imagining and registration of the space-text and the complication of the textual (i.e. transparent, impartial) nature of nineteenth-century spatial imagination with a (no longer marginal) political valence that predicates on an active exchange, negotiation, and appropriation of the Other.

Space-text thus becomes a highly political construct. Departing from these critical engagements with the role of otherness in nineteenth-century cultural imaginaries, the purpose of this thesis is to interrogate the structural interrelationships between Space, Text, and Otherness in the nineteenth-century cultural imagination. In doing so, I hope to offer a critical account of the modern Space and Text as produced in conjuncture with a systematic inscription of the Other—Oriental, natural, feminine, eccentric, abject, etc. How is space represented and

textualized in critical dialogue with the Other? To what extent does this entanglement between Space, Text, and discourses of Otherness disclose the ideological production of the modern subject and its politics? To what extent does it complicate the role of knowledge, representation, and the act of reading *per se* in the modern era? These are some of the questions that the current thesis hopes to address.

Structure and Approach

I have so far defined the general field and problematics that the current thesis examines. I shall perhaps also elaborate on the theoretical premise of my approach.

I am interested in space in general as a critical concept—the active field where social interactions happen and political relationships are mapped or contested. Space thus cannot be something that the subject reads from a detached bird-eye view, rather, it is the very locus of the discursive production of the modern subject and its Other[1]. Such a space fails to form a fixed and inert object of knowledge, but something that is open to constant intervention and production. Henri Lefebvre, in his materialist conception of space, thus urges for a shift in critical discourses "from things in space [space *qua* backgrounds of social interactions] to the actual production of space" (Lefebvre 37). I read the marriage of space and text in the nineteenth century as a similar active production of space, and, along with it, of discursive and social categories distinctive to the urban experience. My thesis hence is not an examination of the "Real" Paris, a faithful reading of the Paris *as* text—which could be the focus of the more historically or sociologically oriented projects. Rather, the critical orientation of my approach is predicated on the moments

[1] Patrick Bray thus argues, in his quite ingenious study of the interconnection between space and maps in nineteenth-century literature, that "[t]he historically determined discourses of space and time in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries influence the experience of subjectivity and served as catalysts for the transformation of the subject" (Bray 9). See Patrick Bray, *The Novel Map: Space and Subjectivity in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*.

where the textual status of Paris itself destabilizes and deconstructs (through the problematic inscription of Other in space). The goal is to unveil not Paris *qua* text but the active logic (one that is—far from being homogeneous—filled with internal dialectics and heteronomous tensions) that undergirds the production of urban textualization and epistemologies—in short, to read the textualization of space not as an inert social fact, an objectified text that one represents and decodes, but as textualizing *practice* through which the modern experience of space and the imagination of the "Real" are themselves produced and consolidated. This textualizing practice, I highlight, connects urban imagination with the structural traces of the Other that at every corner haunts and interrupts this space-text.

The primary sources that I work with are realist-naturalist novels. There are a few reasons for this methodological choice. On the one hand, novels as the actual writing of urban scenes provide the perfect textual material to interrogate the reading of space—inasmuch as they are themselves performative incarnations of this textualizing practice. On the other hand, the realist-naturalist discourse itself is one that is highly keen on the question of representation and reading. The close reading of their textual details hence not only furnishes the raw materials to project a certain critical analysis of space, but also brings out their own meta-commentaries on the practice of representing and reading space. The two chapters of the current thesis are devoted to two of the most representative authors in these literary traditions that aspire to offer a comprehensive (textual) representation of urban life: Honoré de Balzac and Émile Zola. In the first chapter, I read the textualization of space in Balzac's *La Fille aux yeux d'or* and the critical role of the Orientalist discourse in both destabilizing and structuring urban production of meaning and value. My second chapter reads the representation of women in Zola's *La Curée* and *Nana*, and argues, in attending to the cartographical and hygienic discourse that structures

Zola’s novel representation of Paris, that beneath Zola's naturalist pretension, there is an underlying appropriation of the feminine other in the textual reading and mapping of urban space. In both chapters, the overarching goal is to contest the mimetic contract that the realist-naturalist discourse purportedly establishes and to read Paris, not as a consolidated, coherent referent that the texts transcribe, but as a (textualized) space that these texts contribute to its discursive production—which is always inseparable from a certain critical engagement with negotiating the role of the subject and its Other in and of space.

CHAPTER 1

The (Ex)Citing City:

Gold, Pleasure, and Orientalism in Balzac's *La Fille aux yeux d'or*

Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêve.
Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant!

—Charles Baudelaire, *Tableaux parisiens*

Paris in the nineteenth century was a place saturated with adventurous activities and multifarious sensorial excitements. In Paris, one is caught by the constant surprise of encountering on street corners unexpected people and things that at once threaten and entertain. Henri de Marsay, the protagonist of Balzac's novella *La Fille aux yeux d'or* (1835), for instance, encounters one day in *Jardin des Tuileries* a mysterious girl to whom his friends has conferred the name "*La Fille aux yeux d'or*", or "The Girl with the Golden Eyes". He takes a tremendous interest in this girl and begins his sustained erotic quest for her. But as the story unfolds, the romance takes a fatal turn and culminates in the murder of this golden-eyed girl in the hands of the other lover to whom she is attached—*la marquise de San-Réal* who happened to be no other than Henri's own half-sister.

This somewhat eccentric (and for sure unsettling) plot of *La Fille aux yeux d'or* offers an interesting point of reference to the phenomenological experience of the nineteenth-century urban dweller as one navigates the streets of Paris. It presents Paris both as a space saturated with exciting encounters and, at the same time, a space where danger lurks. To unravel this urban riddle that mixes excitation with precariousness, an epistemological imperative is imposed upon the novelists of modern life——the goal being to attain a comprehensive mapping of urban

activities so that one can aspire to master the space and one's place in space. Reading thus becomes a quintessential metaphor for this epistemological need. To Balzac, reading is a necessity for survival in the urban city. Paris is in essence a space of reading; one reads Paris as a "livre du monde" (*Le Père* 115) ("world-book"). Christopher Prendergast highlights this unremitting search for the "'sens caché' ["hidden meaning"—Prendergast here is quoting from the "Avant-propos" of the *Comedie Humaine*] of the modern world" as "a veritable nineteenth-century obsession" (Prendergast 2) that internally motivated Balzac's Realism. Indeed, It could even be said that, on the performative level, the ambition of the multi-volumed collection *La Comedie Humaine* partly transcribes this desire for a total mimetic representation of modern life, and, in the course of textualizing urban life (converting it into narratives that can be circulated and read), conferring a certain textual transparency and immediate readability to the urban scenes of Paris.

But as Prendergast also warns us about the danger of the ideological illusions that lie behind this "fantas[ized]" (Prendergast 2) unrestricted access to the hidden truths of the urban text, the reading of modern life in Balzac is never without contestations[2]. In fact, I hope to illustrate that the textuality of urban space, like the phenomenological experience of Paris itself, becomes both exciting and precarious. Granted, there are from place to place concrete material signs that purport to confer immediately legible identities to urban spaces and their inhabitants (the mark of criminality, for instance, that is physically inscribed on Vautrin's body in *Le Père*), but they are far from immediately legible. In addition, there are far more places where identities and readability in the city become disconcertingly problematic. Balzac scholars have often noted this destabilization of urban readability in the novella *Ferragus*, the opening to the trilogy

[2] In a private conversation, Professor Elissa Marder suggests that Prendergast's reading of Balzac's fetishization of the "sens caché" is perhaps already an oversimplification of the complex dynamics of readings that always deconstruct in Balzacian texts.

entitled *Histoire des treize* of which *La Fille* is the last. Masha Belenky, for instance, suggests that the heterogeneous topographies of Paris in *Ferragus* mirror the monstrous circulations of falsified and illegible letters which drive the plot and thus render both readability *of* the urban space and readability *in* the city untenable. In such monstrous urban circulations, argues Belenky, textuality itself becomes precarious: "[n]othing is stable, least of all the meaning of words" ("Letters" 201). This reading is echoed by Nigel Smith, who highlights a similar semiotic "mystification" (Smith 40) that has disrupted the readable topographies of the city and imposes on top of the mapped Paris another dimension of poetic and mythic colorations, transforming "Balzac's Paris into a fantastic city" (Smith 41).

Smith thus highlights the extent to which the realist city immediately reproduces on top of its geographically mapped spatial texture another fantastical cartography that resists to be read. This fantastical element that defers immediate readability *in* and *of* the city, on the other hand, maps a general tendency in Balzac where urban space itself from the start destabilizes (i.e. fails to maintain homogenous spatial identities). One of the modes in which this destabilization is effectuated is through certain marginal allusions to the Orient here and there. Orientalism creeps in in the "margins" (one might, however, contest this "marginal" status of the Orientalist discourse in urban representation later on in this chapter) of the metropolitan spatial texts, placing the immediate, legible urban space under the distancing mirage of an other space. Jennifer Yee, in her recent book entitled *The Colonial Comedy* (hence a play of word on Balzac's *Human Comedy*), reflects on the conscious recourse to oriental tropes in realist discourses as a "polemical use" of the fantastic that unveils the "problematic nature of the mimetic function itself" (Yee 31-32). Michelle Lee, in her astute reading of *La Peau de chagrin*, accords a similar emphasis to the structural role of Orientalist discourse as the metonymic backdrop for a

fantastical space that escapes the rational cartographies and scientific reading of the immediate urban reality. She uses the titular talisman, the magical skin with oriental inscriptions that drives the narrative development in the novel, to illustrate the extent to which the "Orientalist symbol of writing" (Lee 235) profoundly complicates the process of reading and meaning production in the French context. In both cases, in short, the allusion to the Orient seems to function as an external menace that destabilizes and poses an epistemological crisis with regard to the status of reading (or knowledge in general) in urban space.

But what often escapes these critical investigations, however, is the structural correspondence between this fantastical Orientalism that seems to menace reading from without and an urban text that has begun to disintegrate from within. Situating my research at the crossroad of these two modes of destabilization of the urban text, I propose to read *La Fille aux yeux d'or* as a narrative incarnation of this problematic where the act of reading (in) the city itself went wrong in the presence of an oriental other. Henri de Marsay assumes the role of a detective who strolls the streets of Paris in hope of excavating a hidden truth that has not yet been revealed. The Girl with golden eyes, or, as her real name is soon disclosed, Paquita Valdès, embodies this signifying "erotic riddle" (Felman 21) that Henri sets out to decode. On the other hand, similar to what happens in *La Peau de chagrin*, the reading of Paquita, whom we are told to have an exotic origin and oriental appeal—"Ce fut un poème oriental" (289) ("This [referring to her golden eyes] makes an oriental poem"), unsettles the practice of reading in general. Henri's investigation is pervaded with misreadings. He reads Paquita's identity wrong, concluding—based on her residence at the hotel owned by marquise de San-Réal—that she therefore must be the marquise ("Mon paquet, dit-il, est pour la marquise" (262) ("My letter, he says, is for the marquise")). He also reads her speech wrong, mistaking her warning about the

imminence of peril for rhetorical exaggerations ("Des poignards? imagination de femmes!" (274) ("Daggers? What a make-belief of women!")). In other words, in relation to Paquita, the roles of both cartographical space and language itself as translucent signifiers are thus undermined; Henri's reading that in the start seems to promise an exciting erotic encounter, therefore, turns into a site of violence in the end.

Studies have been conducted on both the Orientalist discourse and the destabilization of semiotic signification in *La Fille*. But, again, it seems to me that the structural interrelation between Orientalism and the question of textual reading *in* and *of* the city has not been satisfactorily addressed: the two are habitually approached as separate and non-intersecting aspects of the text. Scholars such as Geoffrey Baker and Jennifer Yee, for instance, pay close attention to the colonial and oriental underpinning of this Parisian story but do not address the question of textuality explicitly. On the other hand, Shoshana Felman, who, in her ingenious reading of *La Fille* in "Rereading Femininity", highlights the hermeneutic gesture inherent in the narrative (how the feminine signifier operates, circulates, and eventually destabilizes within certain stratified urban socio-economic orders), elides a critical engagement with the structural complicity of the Orient in the functioning of the feminine signifier and signification in general.[3] Combining these analytical approaches, in this chapter, my goal is to bring to attention the structural role Orientalism performs in the destabilization of the urban text in *La Fille*, but more importantly, to ask whether this oriental otherness might underlie not some accidental destruction of reading but an internal grammar (thus a faint echo of Yee's comment on its conscious "polemical use" internal to the realist discourse) that enables a certain textualization and reading

[3] Felman concludes rather dismissively that the oriental inscription constitutes a mere "alibi of a foreign country" and that one should be careful not to let it "mislead" (Felman 23) our reading of the gendered semiotics which is primarily domestic. In this chapter, I hope to contest this dismissal and suggest otherwise: oriental quotations form a quintessential component to the problematics of readability and unreadability in the Paris of *La Fille*.

of urban space to begin with—indeed, something that has not been stressed enough is how the act of reading is motorized precisely by the exotic lure of Paquita Valdès as an oriental riddle. The method is in essence *deconstructive*: to demonstrate that the Orientalist discourse both signs a precariousness of reading and prescribes its principle of excitation. I would borrow from certain semio-linguistic theories (in particular, from Derrida's conception of citationality as a constitutive element of language) to illustrate the structural role of otherness that both enables and suspends readability. To formulate this argument, I partition the chapter into three thematised parts. The first part addresses the excitational aspect of the Orientalist discourse, examining its role as a productive principle that motorizes general urban activities. The second part deals with the precariousness of urban textualization and its relation to the ex-citing Orient. The final part concludes with an exploration of the modes in which the Orientalist discourse predicates the imagination and construction of urban space in Paris, imparting a question about the status of the Real that the realist project purports to transcribe.

Orientalism and Urban Excitation

Let us first begin by sketching out the tension between the city as a legible textualized space and as a space menaced by unsettling elements of the unreadable. A compositional division perhaps helps to work through this tension. Critical studies of *La Fille* have often treated the piece as composed of two discrete sections. The first part, often referred to as the “prologue”, consists of a comprehensive examination of Parisian socio-economies. The panoramic examination of Paris, presented in the form of a physiognomic reading—of both different social classes and the material spaces of Paris, is often read to assume “the position of mastery” (Prendergast 53) and to have endowed upon the city an unproblematic transparency. Indeed,

Balzac seems to offer an exhaustive catalogue of Parisian social classes and their respective activities as if all can be explained and subsumed under a singular driving principle—that of gold and pleasure: "Qui donc domine… tous les sentiments, toutes les croyances et toutes les moeurs? L'or et le plaisir. Prenez ces deux mots comme une lumière" (227) ("What thus rules… all the sentiments, all the beliefs and all mores? Gold and pleasure. Take these two words as a light"). Gold and pleasure, according to Balzac, explain all the multitude of urban activities; the maxim, serving as the singular light, illuminates urban space and subjects it to the transparent gaze of the reader. In contrast to this mapped, fully illuminated ("light[ed]") space of the prologue, on the other hand, the romance of the narrative is read as the disruptive force that overturns this legible Paris. Felman highlights a tension between the "light" of the prologue and the "darkness… [of] the erotical narrative that follows" (Felman 22); Baker underscores a similar rational "disenchantment of Paris" in the prologue that is tested by "the introduction of an Other, Henri's exotic love interest" (Baker 74) in the narrative proper. But if there does seem to exist a tension between the mapped space of Paris in the prologue and the narrative proper where the unproblematic reading of the city is called into question, one should not ignore the fact that this image of an immediately readable Paris in the prologue already depends heavily on oriental motifs. I shall argue that the Orientalist destabilization of urban space begins the very moment that space is imagined and represented.

Indeed, how is Paris described in this prologue? A place that is exciting, a place full of multifarious passions and desires, driven "par une tempête d'intérêt" (225) ("by a storm of interest"). Paris is a place of constant motions and convulsions, engendering under its jurisdiction unrelenting productive and consumptive activities. True, certain empiricism and materialism reign here in Balzac's description of these seemingly entropic activities in the city.

The metaphor employed to describe the endless productive activities of the city is, after all, thermodynamic: Paris is compared to a "chaudière motrice" (241) ("boiler house"). The "chaudière motrice", a reference to steam power, metaphorizes the heightened energetic excitations within an industrialized city in a techno-scientific language[4], thus assimilating the multitude of its productive acts with empirical exactitude. Despite its chaotic surfaces, Balzac seems to intimate, Paris can be rendered fully legible and determinate once one masters the laws—in this case, no other than the universal principle of gold and pleasure.

But if excitation is first described in techno-scientific terms, I suggest, it soon contracts to a fantastic dimension. One example of the urban excitation in the prologue is documented by the haberdasher's visitation of the theater for aesthetic (if not erotic) pleasure, who, after returning home, feels "still *excited* by the elusive forms of operatic nymphs, and thus diverting the depravities of the world and the seductive glimpses of Taglioni's thighs towards the harmonies of conjugal bed" (*LFE* 71; *my emphasis*). These "operative nymphs"—mythic and exotic figures—who excite, in contrast with the empirical pretension earlier noted, constitute a fantasmatic simulation. It discloses a different logic through which excitations are structured and registered in urban cities: not through mechanical and industrialized thermodynamics, but through a simulacrum that cites figures from the Other world. *Excitation* thus functions in close conjunction with a certain *citation*, where the immediate urban reality ("conjugal bed") couples with an overlay of oriental topographies ("the depravities of the world" afar). The larger context

[4] On the other hand, this thermodynamic metaphor might also read as complicating the vision of a illuminated Paris. In a private conversation, Professor Elissa Marder points out that perhaps the perceived "light" of gold and pleasure is itself to be read thermodynamically—as the carrier of electromagnetic energy, the *lumière* not only illuminates but excites. Hence the Balzacian light of gold and pleasure from the start complicates the visual metaphor of enlightenment and ambiguates the act of reading (as it is submerged in the endless circulation of energetic exchanges). I elaborate on this epistemological crisis as a direct consequence of mechnical modern (re)productions in the city later in the text through a discussion of the concept of citation, but a more radical reading of the thermodynamic here perhaps already begins to deconstruct the act of reading—reading is from the start (thermo)dynamic and libidinal-economical.

of this description of the theatrical space also helps to further illuminate the inherent Orientalism in the erotic experience:

> Every other day, at six o'clock, he [the haberdasher] is faithfully installed as a regular baritone in the chorus of the Opéra, ready to become a soldier, an Arab, a prisoner, a savage, a peasant, a ghost, the rear end of a camel, a lion, a demon, a genie of the lamp, a slave, a black or white eunuch, always practised at expressing joy or suffering, pity or astonishment, with endless, heart-rending cries, or to fall silent, to hunt, to fight for *Rome* or *Egypt*, but always, in his heart of hearts, *a haberdasher.* At midnight we *rediscover him as the good husband, man, and kind father*, slipping between *the conjugal sheets* with his imagination still *excited* by the elusive forms of operatic nymphs, and thus diverting the depravities of the world and the seductive glimpses of Taglioni's thighs towards the harmonies of *conjugal love*. (*LFE* 71; *my emphasis*)

The scene of the Parisian theater incarnates the cited space of otherness. One goes to the theatre to become the Other: "an Arab", "a savage", "a ghost", an animal, "a demon", "a slave", "a black", etc. It is a space that is made "excit[ing]" in reference to that Other space, be it "Rome" or "Egypt". But my emphasis on the oriental phantasmagoria of the theater is not such that it constitutes one public venue where urban dwellers are excited and where Parisian space is momentarily destabilised in the citational presence of the Orient. Rather, I hope to highlight a structural logic that is complicit in the general excitation of the Parisian socio-economies that the prologue outlines: pleasure-seeking activities in the city are always guided by a hypodermic, subterranean Orientalist discourse. Indeed, more broadly speaking, to Balzac, the very nature of urban pleasure—understood as an insatiable repetition of pleasure-seeking activities that can never be consummated—is already implicitly oriental. The Orientalist discourse underwrites the discourse of pleasure: "le plaisir", writes Balzac "est comme certaines substances médicales" que "pour obtenir constamment les mêmes effets, il faut doubler les doses" (239) ("pleasure is like certain medical substances" that "in order to obtain the same effect, one has to constantly redouble the dosage"). This medical substance of which one needs to redouble its use in order to maintain the same effect, is undisputable a reference to opium smuggled to China as a product of

the European colonial expansion for economic gains overseas, hence constituting another instance of subtle oriental citations. For a similar reason, moreover, one finds at the center of Henri de Marsay's erotic fantasies the figure of a "roi d'Orient qui demandait qu'on lui créat un plaisir" (278) ("oriental king demanding to be entertained"), who exercises "le pouvoir autocratique du despote oriental… décuplé par l'intelligence européenne, par l'esprit francais" (281)[5] ("the autocratic power of an oriental despot… multiplied by the [Henri's] european intelligence and french wit"). The oriental imaginaries thus serve as a quintessential surrogate for the exercise of pleasure and eroticism by the metropolitan subject. In the theater scene cited above, therefore, it is not coincidental that the fantastical experience of oriental otherness immediately flows into a general reading of sexual desires and reproductive identities *in Paris*: it is *precisely* through the citation of the Other space, of otherness, that erotic love can be produced in the Parisian "conjugal" beds, and consequently, the individual identities as "a haberdasher", "the good husband", "man", and "kind father" can be consolidated through distinguishing from these multiple instantiations of otherness.

In short, my argument is that "the position of mastery" that various readings of the prologue seems to champion is never tenable. Indeed, the prologue itself perhaps never claims to attain such a mastery. It presents a Paris that opens itself to the panoptic gaze of the novel only insofar as it is also dominated by libidinal circulations (techno-scientific but also fantastic) that render it highly volatile. On the other hand, Orientalism constitutes one of the main figures for this intrinsic volatility: oriental references fuel the search for libidinal pleasures in urban scenes. If the legible Paris presents itself as an autonomous space dominated by empirical laws, one

[5] This image of an oriental despot constitutes a veritable fascination in the nineteenth century. Eugène Delacroix's painting *La Mort de Sardanapale* embodies one artistic rendition of this imagination. It is perhaps not unrelated that Balzac should dedicate *La Fille* to Delacroix: there are dynamic intertexts between Balzac's novella and Delacroix's paintings.

cannot help but find the specter of a fantastic Orient creeping in at all corners of this urban text. The reading of urban excitations, naturalized by thermodynamic rhetorics, hence cannot elide an analysis of this built-in citational doubling of spatialities in urban imaginaries which from the start complicates the strictly cartographical space of Paris and unsettles the act of reading.

To further this reading, I suggest that the same oriental principle that structures this libidinal excitation informs also economic valuations in Paris (thus it destabilizes both the Balzacian pleasure and gold). On the latter, there are both material and ideological components to this oriental superstructure. On the one hand, it is the mise-en-scène of a burgeoning global economic system that connects the importation of colonial objects with commercial activities in the metropolitan centers. On the other hand, the Orient also serves as the discursive backdrop that sublimates the economic circulations in the West. Oriental objects, such as cashmere shawls, as Jennifer Yee relates, became fetishized luxuries that "serve the sublimation of money by Western commodity culture" (Yee 50). In *Le peau de chagrin*, as one example of this oriental sublimation of value in Balzac's oeuvre, the magical skin serves clearly as an oriental double signifier of value: it both helps Raphaël obtain a large source of income through its oriental magic, but the source of this mysterious gold is also rationalized and manifested as an inheritance from distant uncle in colonial India.

Similar to Raphaël's magical skin, in *La Fille*, both of these double dimensions of the oriental treasure are visible in Balzac's description of Paris. In addition to the fact that oriental objects in general acquire a poetic, fantasmatic allure (in Paquita's boudoir, Henri expresses his fascination with a carpet that "ressemblait à un châle d'Orient, il en offrait les dessins et rappelait les poésies de la Perse" (285) ("resembled an oriental shawl, displaying designs that evoke the poetry of Persia")), a myriad of importation from the Orient is subjected to careful

documentation. One of the most compelling images of this oriental economy in the representation of Paris in the prologue is found in Balzac's catalog of the commerce of the *petite bourgeoisie*:

> [I]n short, the active, thinking, speculating members of the petty bourgeoisie... pocket the rent and stock up the goods produced by the proletariat, devour fruit from the south, fish from the sea, and wine from every sun-kissed hillside… stretch their hands [*étend les mains*] out to the East [*Orient*], pick up [*y prend*] shawls spurned by the Turks and the Russians; even prospect as far as India [*va récolter jusque dans les Indes*], lie in wait for sales, lust after profit, discount bills, roll over and rake in the shares [*roule et encaisse toutes les valeurs*]. (*LFE* 72-73; *my emphasis*)

This long list of commodities inventories the multitude of products imported from exotic destinations that powers commercial activities in Paris—in particular products from the Orient ("the Turks", "the Russians", "India"). This list, moreover, is far from neutral; it highlights a one-directional rather than reciprocal movement of commodities. The gestures associated with these items trace this colonial undertone: the petty bourgeoisies "stretch their hands", take—or indeed steal—it ("*y prend*"), harvest it ("*récolter*") so that they can collect all the values ("*encaisse toutes les valeurs*") of the Orient and bring them to Paris. Through a quasi-colonial mastery over this Other space, the multitude of material imports from the Orient thus partakes in the general economic circulations of the Parisian world as a tremendous source of value ("*valeur*") appropriated from the foreign land. The act of appropriation constitutes thus a material *citation* (the Latin root of the verb cite, *citare*, after all, means first and foremost the physical act of summoning and bringing something into motion) that displaces an object from its origin of production and grafts it onto the metropolitan economic system. On the other hand, it is also this exotic source of value that serves as a sublimation (*excitation*) that establishes all other values in urban cities. This is done here first and foremost in a rhetorical sense: indeed, even "the products produced by the proletarians" (I shall return to the proletarian productions later), a force

of production domestic to Paris, because it is listed among the multitude of foreign commodities, seem immediately eclipsed by this immense list of oriental objects, and are now rhetorically situated and defined in relation to this system of commodities established by the citational importation of exotic objects.

For Balzac, thus, gold and pleasure are the "light" that illuminates the multifold topographies of Paris in the prologue—"Toute passion à Paris se résout par deux termes: or et plaisir" (238) ("all Parisian passions reduces to two terms: gold and pleasure"). This maxim offers the ultimate signification that renders all urban libidinal and economic activities readable. But a closer examination of the text reveals that both gold and pleasure are themselves far from stable signifieds and are rather predicated on certain implicit allusions to the Orient. This perhaps echoes what Nigel Smith phrases, in his reading of *Ferragus*, as the "mythic" (quoting from Barthes' formulation in *Mythologies*) doubling of the urban topographies: the transparent *sign* of gold and pleasure now turns into an opaque *signifier* that derives its signification from the oriental citations. Thus the immediate readability of the urban space is from the start destabilized; the unfolding of the romance at best perpetuates this destabilization. Indeed, through the analysis of the orientalist undertone of the libidinal and economic excitations in the prologue, it would not be surprising that Paquita, someone from an exotic origin, would epitomize both this mythic gold and pleasure of the urban text—being given the name *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, "The Girl with the Golden Eyes", she incarnates a mystery that is at once an erotic object (as the "Girl") and economic value (as the owner of the "gold-en" eyes). And, if her oriental riddle, in the end, destabilises both gold and pleasure, turning the fantastical into the murderous, it is because urban excitation, from the start, is at once haunted and conditioned by this oriental doubling.

The Citational City

"[A]lors, la duègne m'a rendu plus qu'amoureux, je suis curieux" (258) ("Well, this chaperone makes me more than just amorous. I am curious"): the oriental allure of Paquita thus creates a distancing effect, producing a sublimation of value beyond the immediately readable urban reality—a value that can be appropriated and cited. I have shown in the previous section that this act of citation (material and fantastic loot from a heterotopic destination) underlies the general economy of gold and pleasure in Paris as represented in the prologue. In the romance that follows, moreover, there is also an immediate practical barrier that creates this distancing effect and forbids Henri from direct interactions with Paquita—the chaperone that accompanies and safeguards her. But curiously, this distancing effect underlies more than just libidinal-economic excitations—to be rendered "amoureux" ("amorous"), it engenders also an epistemological imperative—"je suis curieux" ("I am curious"). The excitation that the oriental citation produces, thus, bears intimate connections with a desire for knowledge—it creates an illusion of a secret that lies hidden.

This brings us back to the question of reading (and of reading *La Fille* as a meta-commentary on readability in the city): the curious marriage of the oriental citation and the desire to decode undergirds my use of the word citation to describe the marginal allusions to the Orient. Beyond a simple wordplay on ex-citation, I suggest that this citational structure also mirrors an internal grammar of semiotic productions *in* and *of* the city. For Jacques Derrida, indeed, citationality is an elementary structure of language, and "the possibility of disengagement and citational graft… belongs to the structure of every mark… in writing before and outside of every horizon of semio-linguistic communication" (*Limited Inc.* 12). To be clear,

by citationality, Derrida means the capacity of each and every sign to be iterated and to be used out of context, to be dissociated from any given "putative 'production' or origin" (*Limited Inc.* 10). In *La Fille*, the oriental citations destabilize the spatial topography of the city in a similar gesture—urban space finds itself confronted with an oriental topography dissociated from its exotic origin and grafted onto the metropolitan spatial text. On the other hand, for Derrida, this citational out-of-context is hardly an accidental function of language but its essential characteristic: the sign is not only *accidentally* dissociated from an original context, but such an original context *already* no longer exists. Semio-linguistic signs could never have a "self-identity" (*Limited Inc.* 10) that bonds them to a coherent meaning and context of use. They are always read out of context and put into new contexts, acquiring a meaning that is differentially located rather than an *a priori* given. Furthering Saussure's formulation of language as a system of difference with no positive term—"dans la langue il n'y a que des différences" (Saussure 166) ("in language, there is nothing but differences"), thus, Derrida uses citationality to suggests that the fantasy of a "proper" relationship that exists between signs and their referent, between signs and their context (in our case, spatial context), at this semio-linguistic level, is already destroyed.

To recycle Derrida's insights in our reading of the textualization of Paris in *La Fille*, my point is essentially this: if oriental citations appear to have destabilised the coherent, homogenous spatial texture of the city, it is also because that the fully transparent, self-identical, immediately readable Paris is, from the start, non-existent. Indeed, Balzac's Paris is always webbed in citations—of which not all are oriental. On the one hand, the textual foundation of Balzac's representation of Paris in *La Fille* is overwhelmingly allegorical. Thus, the physiognomies of Paris immediately reproduce the physiognomies of its inhabitants, and spaces

of Paris cite the parts of human bodies (“jambe”(231) (“leg”), “ventre” (234) (“stomach”), “tête” (241) (“head”)); the spatial topographies of Paris mirrors the construction of both human architectures (“l’entresol” (232) (“the mezzanine floor”)) and that of Hell (“troisieme cercle de cet enfer” (234) (“third sphere of this hell”)). On the latter, moreover, the reference is made explicitly to Dante and his cartographical mapping of Hell in his *Divine Comedy*, of which Balzac’s *Comedie Humaine* and its reading of modern life constitute another general citation. Traversing the multitude of these intertextual citations that predicate Balzac’s representation of Paris, the mimetic exactitude of the city’s real topographies always relies on an enchanted, poetic doubling. On the other hand, the intertextual nature of the writing *of* Paris also flows into the monstrous proliferation of textual productions *in* Paris. In Paris, words fail to maintain stable identities and constant reproduce themselves, precipitating after each word another of its like: “là tout fume, tout brûle, tout brille, tout bouillonne, tout flambe, s’évapore, s’éteint, se rallume, étincelle, pétille et se consume. [...] Cette nature sociale toujours en fusion semble se dire après chaque œuvre finie: —A une autre!” (226) (“There [Paris] everything fumes, burns, gleams, simmers, enflames, evaporates, extinguishes, rekindles, sparkles, shines, and consumes itself. [...] This social nature always in fusion seems to say after each finished work: —yet another!”). Prendergast’s reading of this passage highlights exactly this citational procession of the verbs in Paris: “The sound of one word suggests the next: the vowel sound of ‘fume’ is picked up by ‘brûle’, itself deformed into ‘brille’...” (Prendergast 56). In Paris, thus, textuality is such that constantly self-multiples, creating infinite citations and intertexts, engendering one word after another, one work after another. Closures are defied. Nothing finishes. Nothing is contained: all resist being reduced to stable and legible identities.

Having in mind this general volatility of writing in and of Paris, it might not be surprising to see that the representation of mechanical productions in the city also abides by the same citational logic—citational, however, not in the sense of a heterotopic reference as in the oriental allusions but in the sense of a constant propensity for replication and citational doubling. Productive activities in urban cities themselves imitate this mechanical self-multiplication of language. Balzac's description of the proletarians vividly illustrates this multiplicative nature of Parisian production. The proletarians are depicted as the producers of an immense, perpetual list of commodities, who "de ses mains sales, tourne et dore les porcelaines, coud les habits et les robes, amincit le fer, amenuise le bois, tisse l'acier, [...]"(227))"with their dirtied hands mould and gild porcelain, sew suits and dresses, hammer iron, plane wood, plait steel, [...]"). This list of commodities manufactured by the proletarians has the same abysmal infinitude as the aforementioned procession of verbs. Each finished product seems to infer yet another product, each labor instigating yet another task to be taken up. In addition to this, the diurnal productive work itself soon reproduces and is cited by the self-multiplied army of productive bodies at night: the proletarians are also described as those who "donne des enfants à la France pendant ces nuits laborieuses, et remultiplie pendant le jour son individu pour le service" (229) ("who birth children to France during his laborious nights, and in the day remultiplies his roles for the service"). Subsuming thus both mechanical productions and biological reproductions that define the multitude of Parisian movements, this citational logic renders the reading of identities *in* the city equally unstable, equally abysmal, as the reading of representational and linguistic identities *of* the city.

Like the oriental citations, thus, these urban citations already mark a certain destabilization of readability (i.e. of positive identities) within the city. Unlike the former,

however, these urban citations are far from exciting. Quite the opposite, indeed, in its endless self-multiplication, there seems to present a general degeneration of excitations: “A force de s'intéresser à tout, le Parisien finit par ne s'intéresser à rien” (226) (“by being interested in all, the Parisian ends up being interested in none”). Because citationality has annulled all stable identities and positive meanings, the monstrous urban multiplication of signs, commodities, and bodies produces a mass of unrecognisable mishmash, where the multitude of objects produced overwhelms and suspends the legibility of each individual one. Hence, this citational urban procession is described as hellish: “Paris a été nommé enfer. Tenez ce mot pour vrai” (226) (“Paris has been named hell. Take this word as truth”). The abysmal proliferation of citations in the city renders its social constitutions and spatial topographies practically unreadable. Indeed, Balzac’s physiognomic reading of Parisian people is forced to confront a “face usée par le frottement” (226) (“face worn out by rubbing”) that no longer holds on to personal identities—and it is more than personal identities that are destabilized. In fact, this description is also curious because the face that is worn out due to excessive usage is rarely the face of a person, but rather the face of a coin. Thus as a subtle undertone, this excessive citation of urban production and consumption is also what renders economic value—the Balzacian gold—lose its face value. The same goes for pleasure. Balzac comments: “Chercher le plaisir, n’est-ce pas trouver l’ennui?” (239) (“To seek pleasure, is it not the same as finding ennui?”). Consequently, in this abysmal excess of the Same that constantly cites and reproduces itself, both gold and pleasure—the supposedly illuminating light that light up this textual city—denature and lose their identities.

Reading Orientalism and oriental citations in *La Fille aux yeux d’or*, therefore, cannot be dissociated from this reading of the general urban citation in the city. Inasmuch oriental citations

seem to introduce into the cartographically mapped urban space an elusive otherness that evades immediate recognition, one must not ignore the fact that it only mirrors a citational structure by which the textual city is already destabilized. Stable, immediately legible identities are untenable even before this Orientalist discourse begins. Rather, if the oriental citations are constantly summoned to offer a backdrop of value (a source of excitation, both the Balzacian gold and pleasure) beyond the general urban degeneration, that it promises a secret awaiting deciphering beyond this urban degradation of all meaning, it is precisely because it inserts into the urban self-multiplication of *sameness* an element of *differences* and thus sublimates the overall procession of urban citations. This element of *difference* and *otherness*, inasmuch as it figures a citational destabilization of positive identities, I argue, following Derrida and Saussure, is also what renders readability possible in general. Indeed, in *La Fille*, the general principle of readability of Parisian space and of its inhabitants relies on this differential mark of otherness. Towards the end of the prologue, in the midst of a radically homogenized, worn-out and essentially illegible social landscape of the city, Balzac prepares the ground for the narrative through the reinscription of a differential structure in the largely unintelligible and indistinct urban topography: “Cependant Paris est essentiellement aussi le pays des contrasts” (243) (“And yet Paris is also essentially a land of contrasts”). This contrast, this “essential” differential production of meaning, is personified by Paquita Valdès, who by virtue of her oriental attraction constitutes the quintessential object for Henri’s reading of both gold and pleasure. But moreover, this contrast is personified by the protagonist Henri de Marsay himself, who is distinguished from the rest of Paris as one of those rare “figure raphaëlesque” (244) (“Raphaelesque figures”) in whom “la juvénile beauté du sang anglais ils unissent la fermeté des traits meridionaux, l’esprit francais, la pureté de la forme” (243) (“the youthful beauty of *English* blood is combined

with the strength of *Mediterranean* traits, *French* wit, and a purity of form"). Because Henri is set apart from the rest of the urban mass by the otherness he incarnates, exposing Paris to her multiple spatial others, he can become the actantial agent that mediates the reader's reading of Paris in the narrative.

"là rien de réel": Space of the Unreal and Space of the Other Real

The Orient thus inhabits Paris in its most internal recesses. It predicates the general production and circulation of gold, pleasure, and moreover, differential identities in the city. But as this differential marker of libidinal, economic, and semio-linguistic meaning, its presence is at best citational (i.e. cannot be fully present, but a mysterious riddle that defers). It best exemplifies what Derrida refers to as the "trace" structure of linguistic production: the "presence-absence" (*Of Grammatology* 71) of an otherness contained in each semio-linguistic sign. Yee refers to this presence-absence of the Orient as one of the "'offstage' spaces" (Yee 14) of realist novels that, while offering a fantasmatic space for the sublimation of value and meaning, cannot be inhabited and is indefinitely deferred. In *La Fille*, when Paquita proposes to Henri that they should elope to Asia, Henri rejects it by the pretext that he does not have enough gold—the "real" Orient is thus precisely what one cannot arrive at with the fantasmatic gold and pleasure secured through oriental citations.

The Orient thus exists in Paris in the form of a spatial presence-absence—as a space that everywhere haunts Parisian activities yet is never made habitable. (In truth, this question of a spatial presence-absence interests me broadly in my thesis. The question central to my reading of Balzac is first and foremost the following: how does this deferred "real" space of the Orient, which haunts the libidinal-economic discourse and semiotic productions in and of the city,

fundamentally impact the ways in which Parisian spaces are read and written, and moreover, in which Parisian reality is construed.) In this last section, I shall turn to this question of space and how the oriental Other space informs the spatial imagination and experience in Paris, and in the process entering into a conversation about the nature of Realism's mimetic contract.

One important question that I have not hitherto addressed is the physical location of the oriental other (and of oriental excitation) in the city. How does the Orientalist discourse create in Balzac's illuminated yet degenerate Paris an other spatiality that is utterly exciting? For Henri de Marsay, the search for this Other space brings him—not to the Real Orient, but—to the place of Paquita's residence in Paris, Hôtel San-Réal. There are multiple aspects that are interesting about Balzac's representation of the Hôtel. But perhaps one of its most striking features is its impassibility. Observe the following elaborate description of the Hôtel San-Réal given by the postman, to whom Henri assigns the task of delivering a letter to "The Girl with the Golden Eyes". The report features the barriers this postman encounters while attempting the delivery:

> I've been a postman in Paris for ten years, and I've made quite a study of its doorways! But I can tell you straight, with no fear of contradiction from any of my mates, that there is *no door more mysterious* than that of Monsieur de San-Réal. Nobody can enter [*pénétrer*] the place without some password or other, and look how they chose a house situated between a courtyard and a garden to avoid any access from the other houses. The porter is an old Spaniard who speaks *not a word of French*, but who looks right through you… And even if this first gatekeeper is fooled by a lover or a thief or even by you… you will meet a butler surrounded by an army of valets who is an even more grotesque and monstrous old thug than the porter. (*LFE* 96; *my emphasis*)

Here, the inaccessibility of the house is at least twofold. On the one hand, there is the physical barrier of the mysterious system of doorways that cannot be penetrated ("*pénétrer*") by outsiders. On the other hand, there is also the linguistic barrier of unknown passwords and an alien language. Indeed, Henri's own entry to the house would later require both the utterance of the foreign Spanish word for courtship, "*cortejo*" (273), as the secret code, and moreover, a

blind-folding that prevents him from finding out the precise location of their meeting. This blind-folding marks one of the textual moments of "urban unmapping" (Baker 76) that takes place along with the search for the oriental other in the urban city. Through this unmapping, the Hôtel (where the exciting Orient resides) becomes a place that—although physically "present" in Paris—cannot be cartographically located and made immediately accessible. Rather, by incarnating a mysterious, inaccessible space, the Hôtel cites the Orient by simulating its deferred, impossible spatial presence. To meet Paquita, to redeem this oriental gold and pleasure promised by her riddle, Henri must thus be transported, both linguistically and physically, outside of the familiar mapped spaces of Paris and enter into the fantasmatic space of the other. Balzac's description of Henri's entry to the hotel furthers this analysis: Henri is "transporté pour ainsi dire aériennement dans un hôtel inaccessible, sa bonne fortune devait être ce qu'elle être ce qu'elle avait été jusqu'alors, un rêve" (297) ("transported, as it were, in the air to an inaccessible mansion, his good fortune was to remain what it has been until then, a dream"). To love, in Paris, this means to enter the aerial, ethereal, intangible, unlocatable realm of dreams. The dreaminess of the Hôtel, on the other hand, hints also at the delusional nature of this ethereal oriental citation. Henri's "*bonne fortune*"—both the literal reference to gold ("*fortune*") and the idiomatic reference to erotic pleasure (his romantic success)—becomes again suspended in an ethereal intangibility.

At once a fantastical land of fortune, at once a space ultimately deferred, intangible, inaccessible, illusory, the Hôtel spatially materializes the nature of Paquita's oriental attraction: we are told that her enigmatic charm lies precisely in her quality as a "perle introuvable" (266) ("unfindable pearl")—an absolute, sublime, yet impossible, un-localisable treasure.[6] Orient thus

[6] One must also not forget that the moment when Henri finds out the actual location of the Hôtel is in proximity to the moment of the ultimate violence, where both the promised gold and pleasure—instead of being secured by this discovery—perish with the death of Paquita.

disorients Paris by creating within its cartographically mapped space exciting enclaves that deny immediate readability.

From a different angle, moreover, I suggest that the name of the Hôtel also reproduces this spatial disorientation on the semantic level. Indeed, the name San-Réal itself phonetically pronounces the same as *sans réel* in French. Hence, this site of love, at this nominal level, already foreshadows a lack of realness in the disoriented spatial topography it produces. On the other hand, however, the Orient also cannot incarnate this simple space of the unreal. Indeed, if the Hôtel is essentially an exciting space where love is produced, its fantasmatic invocation—citation—of an illusory reality is predicated on a certain *double-entendre* that reads the name in Spanish as *San Real*, "Saint Real", therefore inferring a religious hyper-realness. This linguistic citation thus mirrors the spatial economy of the oriental citation: because marquis de San-Réal is transported from Spain to Paris, to a place where monstrous urban citations have destroyed all meaning and value, a place where "[l]à rien de réel" (239) ("there nothing is real"), the name San-Réal loses its original veracity and no longer signifies an unmediated presence of reality. But because the name San-Réal refers to an original context which is deferred, on the other hand, because it cites the absent, original name in Spain and in Spanish, the French *sans réel* and the Parisian "là rien de réel" also harbours the possibility of being transformed into the Spanish *San Real*.

This dialectic of the unreal and the hyper-real recapitulates our analysis of the deconstructive function of the oriental citation in *La Fille* (i.e. how it at once obstructs immediate readability and promises a deferred signification). In the previous sections, I highlight oriental citations as both what destabilizes the cartographical landscape of Paris and what revitalizes its unintelligible everyday topographies (worn-out due to excessive mechanical

(re)productions) with a fantastic prize from afar which—precisely because it denies immediate accessibility—awaits to be redeemed. But here, perhaps more interestingly, this double reading of the place name also subjects the tension between the metropolitan and oriental spaces to a potential meta-critique of the nature of the Real in Balzac's mimetic project. Indeed, the spatial citation of the Other, inasmuch as defers reality (read as a space unreal), seems to also supply the very principle of reality in Paris (read as a citation of the hyper-real). Henri considers Paquita only *real* in Spain, in Italy, but never in France—"c'est une femme idéale qui se voit quelque-fois *en réalité* dans l'Espagne, dans l'italie, presque jamais en France" (258; *my emphasis*) ("this is an ideal woman who is seen *in reality* occasionally in Spain, in Italy, but never in France"). In other words, for Paquita to be real at all, she must be deferred to an exotic Other space.

The Hôtel thus incarnates at once the space of the unreal (as it is located in Paris) and the space of the Other Real (as it cites the Orient). This reality effect achieved by the oriental citation, on the other hand, needs to be distinguished from that of the Barthesan "*effet de réel*". Both Jameson and Yee have noted that the employment of the "*effet de reel*" in realist novels is intended to "block 'meaning'" (Yee 20), an invocation of objects that "no longer mean anything" and "simply exist" (Jameson 34). Barthes, again, defines this species of textual notations as such that have no metaphoric meaning beyond its immediate face value ("ce sont des données pures, immédiatement signifiantes" (Barthes 17) ("these are the pure, immediately significant givens")), those that do not signify but functions only to authenticate the reality and root the fiction in the real ("à authentifier la réalité du référent, à enraciner la fiction dans le réel" (Barthes 17) ("to autenticate the reality of the referent, to root the fiction in the real"). It is clear that, however, when Balzac writes that Paris is a place where "là rien de réel", he has in mind not the

"existential" (Jameson 34), purely mimetic reality intended by these aforementioned critics, but rather a reality that is "meaningful" (Jameson 34), one that produces signification; it already demarcates another form of reality internal to Realism's mimetic project, one that is produced not by a certain "*effet de réel*", but rather by what Yee refers to as the "*effet d'exoticisme*" (Yee 20) (in a different occasion, Nigel Smith refers to this as the "*effet d'irréel*" (Smith 42)). Yee thus employs this "*effet d'exoticisme*" generated by the oriental citation to suggest an internal tension that uses Orientalism polemically as a critique of the "problematic nature of the mimetic function itself" (Yee 31-32), which fundamentally complicates how Realism is to be read. In *La Fille*, I suggest, this hyper-real reality of the Orient, haunting Parisian spatial configurations in the form of a presence-absence, likewise serves as an internal critique for the homogenous urban citations which, in their abysmal proliferation, had already destroyed all legibility and rendered Paris a space where "[l]à rien de réel" (239) ("there nothing is real").

"l'original de la délirante peinture": Orientalism (and) Beyond Urban Citations

The question of situating the Orient in nineteenth-century realist metropolitan novels is exceedingly difficult. For someone like Balzac, in particular, the Orient has often been read as a destabilizing element that complicates and injures the perceived mimetic exactitude of his realist representation of metropolitan space. In this chapter, however, I attempt to unveil an internal marriage of Orientalist discourse and urban representation through a critical reading of *La Fille aux yeux d'or*. I analyze the integral role that the Orientalist discourse plays in both the general validation of gold and pleasure, and of meaning (and reality) more broadly in the urban city. Instead of relegating Orientalism to an inherited cultural discourse that is in tension with the Balzac's realist representation of Parisian spaces, I hope to illustrate that the Orientalist discourse

functions as a structural component to the realist spatial representations and even reflects an internal meta-critique of the ideological illusion of an unmediated reality. Indeed, recuperating insights from structural linguistics, I suggest that the reading of urban space in *La Fille* has never acquired immediate, homogenous legibility. Rather, urban space is constantly subjected to a proliferation of citations and its readability is fundamentally mediated by differential signs of otherness. Indeed, as Geoffrey Baker argues in his reading of *La Fille*, there seems to exist a thematic "relationship between otherness and the construction of space" (Baker 65). Through the citational presence of the other, the Parisian *sans réel* can, at last, be read to screen (at once blocking and mediating) a remote *San Real*, thus engendering the illusion of a reality to be read and decoded. This other reality effect of the oriental citation unveils the modes in which Realism itself is subjected to internal destabilization and meta-critiques. Such an internal dialectic of Realism—between its mimetic pretension and the fantastic residues in its margins, indeed, has been noted in the past by many Balzac scholars. (Baker recognizes this as the tension between the "empirical and [the] romantic" (Baker 80), and Jameson as the narrative impulse and the mode of the affect.) By connecting this internal dialectic to a certain citational presence of heterotopic spaces, in particular the Orient, on the other hand, my hope is to offer an alternative critical vision to interrogate how nineteenth-century space, urbanity, and by extension, modernity was produced and imagined in relation to the structural inscription of otherness in space and in writing.

Failing to see the citational nature of Paquita's allure, Henri resuscitates in her exotic riddle a positive reality that the monstrous circulation in the modern city has already liquidated. He fantasizes her as the *beyond* of all (urban) citations, or, as the ultimate cited unspoiled by the degenerating forces of the mechanical reproductions: "Elle est *l'original* de la délirante peinture,

appelée *la femme caressant sa chimère*", "une sainte poésie prostituée par ceux qui l'ont *copiée* pour les fresques et les mosaïques" (258; *my emphasis*) ("she is the *original* of an extravagant painting, entitled *The Woman Who Caresses Her Chimera*", "a holy poem profaned by those who had *copied* her for frescoes and mosaics"). Despite this fantasization, however, this original is made legible precisely by citing a painting that precedes her own presence—and doubly so, since her own riddle, "The Girl with the Golden Eyes", immediately mirrors and reproduces the name of this painting. In such a way, the authenticity of the cited other subjects itself from the beginning to deconstruction. Indeed, the name Paquita itself, as Felman points out, phonetically resonates with "the French word *paquet*, 'the package'" (Felman 35). In Henri's fantastical pursuit of Paquita, therefore, there can never be a "real" beloved that is addressed or a "real" Orient that could be arrived at—never an illusory cited, but only the abysmal proliferation of endless acts of citation.

In the end, thus, the oriental citation is itself reproduced and cited. It cannot be an Other beyond the logic of mechanical urban citations, but an other internal to it. After Henri makes his erotic conquest, he substitutes Paquita with a cigar from Havana. This cigar, embodying the same impossible citation of the Other space as does Paquita, becomes the next object to satisfy Henri's insatiable desires: "La bonne chose qu'un cigare! Voilà ce dont un homme ne se lassera jamais" (291) ("What a great thing a cigar is! Here is something that a man would never get bored of").

CHAPTER 2

Vegetal Women:

The Territorialized and Territorializing Other in *La Curée* and *Nana*

Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville
Change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel)

—Charles Baudelaire, *Tableaux parisiens*

In *La Curée* (1871), the second novel of the *Les Rougon-Macquart* series, Émile Zola opens the narrative with a scene of traffic, as Renée and Maxime are transported from the *Bois de Boulogne* back to Paris in a horse-drawn carriage. Zola describes at length the lines of traffic on the road leading toward Paris and, through it, the modern mode of navigating and accessing space. This urban traffic for sure differs from the kind of spatial practice one finds in *La Fille aux yeux*'s Paris—the sheer scale of the spatial motions (and along with it, congestion) was one of the direct consequences of the construction of broad avenues and renovated urban infrastructures amidst the massive urban reforms during the Second Empire.

Paris has changed. In the previous chapter, I underscore the simultaneous excitement and precariousness of reading as a central obsession of the Balzacian city; in this chapter, I turn to the increased urban movement and circulation as another important fascination in Paris towards the latter half of the century. In her paper titled "From Transit to *Transitoire*: The Omnibus and Modernity", Masha Belenky highlights the intimate interrelation between the advent of new modes of transportation in the city and the phenomenological experience of modernity. On the one hand, the rapid development of mass transportation since the opening of the first omnibus line in 1828 effectuated a "democratization and opening up of city life" ("From Transit" 408)

that had been unimaginable up until then. On the other hand, however, the democratized urban flows also fuelled new social anxieties as established social boundaries began to disintegrate. Belenky cites Honoré Daumier's "Madeleine-Bastille" as one example that illustrates the physical competition for space on the omnibus. Here public transportation became one of the venues where different social groups had to confront each other and renegotiate their social space—"an extremely corpulent lower-class woman" assumes too much space in the condensed social milieu such that the other passengers appear "practically crushed by the woman's heavy lips" ("From Transit" 412). But this physical discomfort that resulted from this compression of urban space and the increased exposure to other social groups constituted one mere symptom of the general destabilization of urban spatial orders. From a more global perspective, the "hierarchical division of social classes" (Felman 22) that Felman still reads in *La Fille'*s urban topographies itself failed to sustain in the more and more mobile and democratized metropolis.

Paris needed new maps. The excess of urban circulation demanded new methods of control and surveillance to re-map the disoriented topographies and re-constitute the destabilized social borders. The imperative to read and master urban space, in that sense, continued to exert a sizeable impact on the textual construction of the city, but it no longer spoke in the language of Balzac's spatial reading that is predicated on the *exotic* fantasization of the Orient[7]: it became a place of menacing *internal* circulations that needed to be demarcated. It is no coincidence that Zola's Paris is obsessed with maps—maps pertain to the vision of a proper, self-contained Paris. Patrick Bray traces how Zola's fictional writing has its base in the *dossiers préparatoires* of detailed maps and sketches that already prescribe a certain "geometric" (Bray 159) structure to

[7] Orientalism and colonial intertexts, of course, still creeps in at all corners of the metropolitan text. Jennifer Yee analyzes with detail the colonial undertone is Zola's narrative project. See Jennifer Yee, *The Colonial Comedy: Imperialism in the French Realist Novel*. My point here, however, is that the Orient no longer assumes the same structural role in the textual imagination of urban space as new social imperatives and incentives begin to dominate.

both the physical spaces described and the composition of the novel itself. Philipe Hamon, moreover, in his systematic study of the characters in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, suggests that the Zolian characters themselves are subjected to comprehensive mapping: "[l]e personnage, chez Zola, sera toujours fortement 'territorialisé', inscrit dans un espace… fermement et soigneusement delimité" (Hamon 33) ("the character, in Zola, will always be heavily 'territorialized', inscribed in a space… firmly and carefully delimited"). In both cases, this mania for a comprehensive urban and textual map that is geometrically determinate contrasts with Balzac's spatial map which is subjected to abysmal reproduction and excitation.

In this proper, cartographical Paris, otherness becomes a menace that is subjected to constant obliteration. In the previous chapter, I explore the motif of otherness first and foremost in the Orientalist discourse that predicates the allegorical reading of Paris in Balzac. I suggest that the heterotopic citation of the Orient problematizes any attempt to read urban space and superimpose on every mapped urban topography a fantastical one. In Zola's cartographical Paris, this allegorical depth that saturates the Balzacian city seems to be rendered flat. Fredric Jameson suggests in his recent book on the internal dialectics of Realism that the insistence on "meaning" (Jameson 34)—a signifying reality that I have associated with oriental citations—pervasive in Balzac began to evaporate and flatten in the autonomous codification of affect that he reads in Zola. (Jameson 55) Rather, in Zola's textual appropriation of Paris, there seems to be a higher emphasis on the mere *descriptive* than on the *referential*—the task of the novelist is no longer to decode and interpret urban text than to describe it methodically. Zola explains this methodological difference between him and Balzac in his short article entitled "Différence entre Balzac et moi", where he locates the essential contrast that separates him from Balzac in the moralist message inherent in the *Comédie Humaine*: "[l]es bases de la *Comédie* sont: le

catholicisme, l'enseignement par des corps religieux, principe monarchique" ("the bases of the *Comédie* are: the catholicism, the teaching of the religious organization, monarchist principles"). These determinate ideological conclusions on the social totality that Balzac seems to insinuate from place to place—a hermeneutic drive, as I have demonstrated, that complicates the mimetic rigour of the *Comédie Humaine*—are precisely what Zola proposes to elude in his naturalist project. For Zola, the goal of the naturalist novel can never address "the 'why' [the essence] of things; it simply explains the 'how' [the appearance]" (*The Experimental Novel* 3).[8]

Still, it is debatable whether Zola's own pseudo-scientific, cartographical representation of Paris itself could be exempt from his ideological critique of Balzac. Maps are, after all, ideological projects—their strategic use is to demarcate the boundaries between the spatial subject and its surrounding, to police the frontiers between the self and the nonself. If I have shown that orientalist citations haunt Balzac's spatial mapping of Paris, Zola's scientific embodiment of the city likewise cannot generate an entirely "autonomous" and non-discursive knowledge. Indeed, it is important to highlight that even the pseudo-scientific foundation of Zola's naturalist method derives from a specific scientific discourse—that of medicine. Predicating his experimental method of novel writing on Claude Bernard's experimental method of diagnosing and curing diseases, this pseudo-scientific language of medicine trojan-horses in fact its own brand of moralist[9] messages—an ideological discourse on normality and control, one that seeks to eradicate all that is eccentric, abnormal, abject, in short, to sanitize the city of all

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[8] This distinction is furthered later on in this text as Zola distinguishes determinism from fatalism. Determinism is the belief that all natural phenomena can be explained by the physical or social condition of their existence; fatalism presumes a certain *a priori* essence that predetermines all natural course of events. Experimentalists "never act upon the essence of phenomena in nature, but only on their determinism" (*The Experimental Novel* 3), whereas the fatalistic chronology perhaps resembles more what Jameson notes to be the temporal deadweight of narrativity that he still finds in Balzac's allegorical language. See Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism*.

[9] Zola thus later recuperates the moralist purpose of literature refers to experimental novelists also as "experimental moralists" (*The Experimental Novel* 25).

that is Other. Thus, the scientific aura of a spatial map constructed out of an appropriated hygienic discourse operates on yet another discursive annexation of the other as the foundation of certain textualization of urban life. The moralizing—and, indeed, hermeneutic—drive is thus perhaps not yet extinct[10]. Similar to the way Balzac's hermeneutic reading of Paris predicates on a differential reading of the other, the ultimate purpose of Zola's novel maps, akin to the purpose of medical treatments, undergirds a drive to "master… in order to govern" (*The Experimental Novel* 29) an internal (as a pathological fraction of one's own physical constitution) eccentric otherness that has become increasingly difficult to discipline[11] as to demarcate the subject's own proper (spatial) identities.

In Zolian novels, this internal other is often personified by the female characters. Being one of the most internal metaphysical others in patriarchal social imaginaries, the feminine other epitomizes at once this double feature of a pathogen (that deranges one's health) and an unsettling mobile agent (that disrupts mapping). On the former, scholars have noted that female characters are often chosen as the embodiment of the pathogenic in Zola's novels. Chantal Bertrand-Jennings, in particular, assesses in her systematic analysis of the female characters in the Zolian corpus that "[for Zola] to be a woman is also to be ill, mentally and physically" (Bertrand-Jennings 28). On the latter, sociological studies have highlighted the common social practice of spatial containment that restricts women as immobile, domesticated subjects—along with constant anxieties about their potential intrusion into a field of mobility that has been up until then predominantly masculine[12]. But what has not been satisfactorily assessed, I stress, is

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[10] Hamon reminds us that *séméiologie*—a drive to interpret and decode—is also the ancient and classical terms used for medicine. See Philippe Hamon, *Le Personnel du Roman*, pp. 36.

[11] It is not irrelevant, therefore, that in Daumier's lithograph the anxieties with regard to the increasingly mobile urban experience comes specifically from an unwanted exposure to the other class and the other sex—which converges in the figure of a corpulent lower-class woman.

[12] On this inherent masculine nature of modern spatial experience and the immobility of women in nineteenth-century literature, see Janet Wolff, "The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of

perhaps certain structural complicities between this hygienic discourse of disease (that deals with ab-normality and normality) and the social anxieties about (textual) mapping (that deals with mobility and im-mobility)—in short, between Zola's spatial mapping and Zola's moralist reading of the other. Nana, one of the most famous courtesans under Zola's pen, for instance, is described as the utterly pathogenic: "des ordures", "ferment" that "corrump[re]", "empoisonn[er]" (*NNF* 246) ("garbage", "ferment", that "corrupts", "poisons") and later "décompos[er]" (*NNF* 448) ("decomposes"). But the nature of her disease materializes in a contagion that threatens to also destabilize space—her fermenting putrefaction which threatens to poison and corrupt everything (and every space) that comes into contact with her is precisely what cannot be spatially localized. More curiously, her infestation is described as such that "désorganisant Paris entre ses cuisses de neige, le faisant tourner comme des femmes, chaque mois, font tourner le lait" (*NNF* 245) ("disorienting Paris in between her snow-white thighs, make it turn as the women, each month, make the milk turn"). The word "tourner" in this context registers both a metaphorical turning that is related to corruption and decadence ("font tourner le lait") and a physical turning of Parisian spaces ("désorganisant Paris"), thus etymologically relating the hygienic to the cartographical anxieties undergirding Zola's textualization of Paris.

Traversing this interrelatedness between the cartographical drive and the hygienic discourse in Zola's Paris, this chapter aims to contest the perceived mimetic exactitude of Zola's naturalist project and to underline the structural role of otherness in the territorialization and deterritorialization of Parisian spaces. I am interested in how the other embodies an unsettling mobile principle (similar to how it represents for Balzac an unsettling differential principle of signification) that at once resists mapping and drives the (medicalized) mania of mapping—in

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Modernity", *The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-century Paris*, pp. 34-47.

short, to examine the other as something at once needed to be mapped, but moreover, conditions the general project of mapping in Zola's novel representation of Paris. In the first part of this chapter, I focus on the relationship between otherness and the cartographical imperative. I read the architectural metaphor that compares both Renée and plant life to architectural pillars in *La Curée* as a hint at the general problematics of spatialization that is predicated on a certain territorialization of female bodies. In the second part, I address the role of the other in the inherent hygienic discourse. I read *Nana*—in comparison to Renée's immobile spatial status—as the embodiment of a certain pathogenic potential of the other Sex who fails to be localized and domesticated. In both cases, my intent is to show that Zola's representation of urban life relies on the deprivation of the feminine of the status of the proper spatial subject and instead relegating it to the status of an object that at once needed to be mapped in space (territorialized) and also conditions the general mapping (territorializing) of space.

La Curée: Pillars, Plant Life, and Female Bodies

It is impossible to read Zola's mapping of Paris without at the same time attending to the actual physiological transformation of Parisian landscapes during his period. Georges-Eugène Haussmann's renovation of Paris (1853-1870) was perhaps one of the most notable projects during this time that attempted to domesticate and regulate the increased urban flows. Often referred to as the Haussmannization of Paris, the program aimed at a holistic renovation of urban infrastructures, replacing the narrow, sinuous streets of old Paris with broad avenues and public squares. The concerns that the reform addressed were above all practical ones: on the one hand, the excess of social mixing resulted in the rise of crimes and unrest; on the other hand, overcrowding led to the spread of diseases and deterioration of public health conditions. But

aside from these practical concerns, the project itself also belonged to a larger ideological response to the new set of social demands and imperatives to navigate and monitor urban space—the essence of which lies in the imperative to contain and assimilate the urban population that was becoming ungovernable and to confine Paris again to its proper borders, or as Prendergast relates, "to produce a coherent and stratified identity for modern Paris (it is no accident that Hausmann provided Paris with its first accurate survey map), a clearly readable system of boundaries and demarcations with everything in its proper place, essentially a city without surprise" (Prendergast 10).

This reading of Paris based on an ideological speculation of "a city without surprise", to remind ourselves once again, bears little in common with the Balzacian city that constantly surprises and excites. Rather, it has to do with a systematic project that confers certain geometric—and, indeed, architectural—certainties to urban space. This architectured, geometric Paris becomes a central urban vision that Zola recuperates in the second novel of *Les Rougon-Macquart* series, *La Curée* (1871). On the one hand, the novel is in part a direct response to Haussmann's renovation of Paris: the plot of the narrative sets in the aftermath of the Hausmannized Paris and the gargantuan wealth of the Saccard family rests on well-informed real-estate speculations that profit from Haussmann's project. On the other hand, the text contains both lavish descriptions of architectural spaces and, moreover, architectural metaphors that had become inseparable from the literary imagination of urban life. In this section, I hope to highlight one particular of these architectural metaphors—the comparison of both women and plant life to architectural pillars. Zola describes both little bushes of plants as "de curieux faisceaux de colonnettes" (44) ("curious little clusters of pillars") and Renée, the protagonist of the narrative, as "une des colonnes du second Empire" (45) ("one of the pillars of the Second

Empire"). Following a close examination of this triple proximity between the natural, the feminine, and the architectural, I propose to read from this architectural metaphor a general logic of the novel's construction of space that is predicated on the (architectural) appropriation of the other.

To begin with, it appears first as a strange rhetorical choice to compare both women and plant life to pillars. What kind of rhetorical force does this metaphor supply? One could perhaps speculate the immediate implications that underlie this peculiar comparison, that is: the image of the pillar (as a fixed architectural element) connects the representation of plants and female bodies to an undertone of spatial immobility and inaction. In *La Curée*, both plant life and female bodies are registered as inanimate objects that are spatially fixed—they are accorded a readable spatial location, i.e. mapped. The description of the statues of two nude women and of rare plants towards the end of an extended report on Saccard's mansion in the first chapter is the perfect illustration of this immobile feature:

> Below, on marble pedestals, at the foot of the branching staircase, stood two bronze-gilt women, bare to the waist, holding great lamps set with five burners... On each side was a row of wonderful majolica vases, in which rare plants were displayed. (*The Kill* 17)

As sculptures and planted flowers, both the women and the plants are stationary objects. Positioned firmly "on marble pedestals" and in "majolica vases", both of them lack the capacity for movement and constitute mere ornamental additions to the architectural construction of the mansion (which is itself immobile, as in French the word *immobilier* is given to describe real-estate properties). On that note, the statues and plants can be said to possess pillar-like qualities for having fixed spatial locations. On the other hand, however, pillars—in conventional architectural uses—are often more than just ornamental structures and constitute a fundamental form of support to the entire construction plan. It follows here that the role of the nude statues

and rare plants might also be more critical—given the metaphoric proximities with the architectural pillars—than just an immobile ornamental insertion, and constitute instead an integral constructural component to the overall description of the mansion. To assess this speculation, I highlight again the location of this description in the text: near the end of an extensive exposition of the mansion. Could it thus be trivial that Zola chooses to terminate the description of the architectural space with a description of these two figures? Indeed, in the nudity revealed "bare to the waist" of the women and the flowering of "rare plants", one already observes a certain vertical movement (of the gaze) which evokes the image of the pillar. In other words, the statues and plants already perform the role of architectural pillars at a visual level, supporting the vertical growth of the mansion in the pictorial plane. Note also the spatial location of the bronze statues and the plants: they are "below", "at the foot of the branching staircase" (staircase leading to upper floors). In a metonymic sense, again, these plants and sculptures of women are pillars-like for constituting the base (or basis) of the construction projects.

Thus we arrive at a parallel between the role of female bodies, plant life, and architectural pillars for being both fixed in space and fixing certain construction projects. In short, both the feminine and the natural become appropriated as architectural objects. But to further elucidates the nature of this architectural appropriation, one must attend to the fact that the phallic image of pillars also entertains a particular mode of spatialization—the image of pillars broaches a specific spatial discourse of power and surveillance. To see this somewhat obscure point, note how pillars are to be differentiated from walls which also constitute fixed objects that support architecture. In contrast with the architectural use of walls that predicates a space demarcated by borders and blockades, pillars trace the porous frontiers of an open space. In the image of pillars alone, one finds a form of architectural foundation that not only permits but invites the gaze;

pillars founds an architectural space only insofar as it also becomes an immediate visual space—a transparent space of reading. This subtext of spatial opening central to the metaphor of the pillar, on a relevant note, re-affirms our speculation of the collusion between the narrative project of Zola and the urbanist project of Haussmann. The narrative space founded on metaphorical pillars—to further our metaphor—itself fails to remain the mimetic, "natural" transcription of the Haussmannian Paris but hints at an active discursive construction of (the textual) Paris as the Haussmannian project participates in its architectural construction. Jessica Tanner highlights a similar parallel when she suggests that Zola's textual repossession of Paris carries a similar *strategic* function as Haussman's reconstruction of Paris—in order to reclaim Paris for his narrative enterprise, the novelist assumes the role of "the scientist" no more than he assumes the role of the "urbanist" ("Speculative Capital" 116). Strategies, to be clear, pertain—according to Michel de Certeau's formulation—to the inscription of the proper places: "[a] strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*)[13]" (Certeau xix). This circumscription of the proper place reinvigorates, as Prendergast has highlighted, the myth of "a city without surprise" rendered transparent under surveillance and control. Pillars, I argue, constitute one of the epitomizing metaphor of this urban strategy of control. Entertaining a visual field open for surveillance, the architectural metaphor of pillars thus at once mirrors Haussmann's urbanist project and intimates the strategic nature of Zola's own narrative project. On the one hand, Haussmann's project is dedicated to the regulation and political surveillance of the city's public spaces by creating sanitized architectural spaces for the imperial gaze; on the other hand, one can read the representation of plants and female bodies as pillars in *La Curée* as

[13] I shall return to this motif of proper-ness later in my analysis of *Nana*. But what is interesting to me is the double meaning of the word *propre* in French as it both signifies the "proper" and the "clean", thus again combining the urbanist vision with the hygienic discourse.

a similar disciplining metaphor of the *savoir-pouvoir* which treats women and nature (or otherness in general) as the opening of a space for the narrative gaze.

Such a strategic opening up of urban spaces as the object of certain penetrative powers of the urbanist (for Haussmann) or narrative (for Zola) gaze under the Second Empire is, of course, not unique to the work of Zola. It embodies a much-noted motif during this period. Jules Vallès, for instance, writing at about the same period as Zola, describes with ardour the architectural metamorphosis of nature under Haussmannisation as a form of decapitation: an "assasinat" ("assassin"), like that "de la guillotine sur le cou d'un roi " (Vallès 261) ("of the guillotine on the neck of a king"). The image Vallès has in mind is the actual cutting of trees in public gardens in order to clear the field for view. But it is the metaphorical decapitation that I am interested in, for it provides a point of reference for the general rhetorical imaginaries regarding the architectural appropriation of nature during this period of rapid urban reconstruction. Here, the metaphor of decapitation calls attention to at least two distinct implications. First, the act of decapitation has a marked political connotation. Here a parallel is established between the physical cutting of trees and the political decapitation of "a king"; the quasi-imperial domination of men over nature through architectural advancements is seen as comparable to the political usurpation of power where the sovereign ruler is removed from power and beheaded. On the other hand, the process of decapitation is also utterly physical. The act of beheading, which severs the head from the body, disrupts the body's biological surface and creates a gaping wound that suspends the clear-cut boundaries between the interior and exterior. The nature decapitated is, in consequence, more than just a nature tamed and mastered, but also a nature that is essentially opened up. This latter signification underlies Vallès's ultimate lamentation over the opening up of the Luxembourg garden: "le soleil faisait maintenant reluire les taches de habits, et faisait fermenter

le chagrin sous les crânes, dans ce grand espace sans abri et sans ombre" (Vallès 261) ("the sun now shined through the shadows of the clothes, and made the grief ferment under the skulls, in this immense space without shelter and without shade"). For Vallès, this immense space "without shelter and without shade", this space fully open—this space penetrated and ruthlessly violated—is the symbolism of a nature appropriated and transformed into an architectural milieu—a space no longer founded on the organic proliferation of vegetation but instead on the artificial pillars (decapitated trees as architectural pillars) which metaphorically usurp its place.

In *La Curée*, it seems, Zola is more interested in the opening of space in relation to female bodies than in relation to nature. But attending to the triple proximity noted earlier, this general logic remains applicable. Female bodies are compared to architectural pillars because, like nature under Vallès's pen, they also mediate and demarcate an open space for sight and for surveillance—for sight as surveillance. Indeed, are not the captivating bodies of women the archetypal object of both the erotic gaze and sovereign power in the masculine imagination? In *La Curée*, the correlation between female bodies and the opening of a visual space is consolidated through abundant textual details. To begin with, examine Renée's entrance to the salon prior to the dinner in chapter one:

> Renée's *entrance* provoked a murmur of admiration. She was really divine. Above a tulle skirt, decorated at the back with a cascade of flounces, she wore a bodice of pale-green satin bordered with English lace, caught up and fastened with large bunches of violets... The dress was so low-cut that her nipples were almost visible, while her arms were bare and she had clusters of violets at her shoulders: she seemed to emerge quite naked from her sheath of tulle and satin, like one of those nymphs whose busts issue from sacred oaks. Her white neck and shoulders, her supple body, seemed so happy in their semi-freedom that the eye expected every moment to see the bodice and skirts slide to the floor, like the dress of a bather enraptured with her own flesh. (*The Kill* 20; *my emphasis*)

On the descriptive level, here the representation of feminine beauty begins with an examination of her garments: a "tulle skirt", a "cascade of flounces", "of pale-green satin", etc. However, this

inventory of splendid garments seems to serve less as an encomium of her elegance than as the mediation to the nakedness of the feminine flesh half-hidden. Indeed, one soon finds that with her dress "so low-cut that her nipples were almost visible... she seemed to emerge quite naked". Renée thus appears naked despite her resplendent clothing: naked but clothed. Clothed therefore naked. Half-clothed in order that she could be revealed to be "quite naked [toute nue]". The dialectic of clothing and nudity underlines a fascinating structure employed to describe female beauty: although it seems at first that it is the most luxurious and elaborate clothing that constitutes the essence of feminine beauty, one realizes soon after that beauty exists in fact in their opening—in the "peu à peu" (57) ("little by little") sliding of "the bodice" and "skirts". On the actantial level, a similar paradox ensues. Despite the fact that Renée seems to be the individual who enters (here the translation in the possessive ("Renée's entrance") flattens the active gesture of entering in the original text—"Renée entra" (57) ("Renée entered")) this architectural space, the text does not seem to enter the same space with her. On the contrary, one notes that the space which both the text and the readers enter is precisely the bodily space of Renée—it is her body that is examined, traversed, and described with the same vivacity with which one examines, traverses, or describes the architectural spaces elsewhere in the novel.

I highlight again the particular importance of this passage as the unveiling of the body described here constitutes a reversal of the economy of veiling and unveiling in Balzac. Veils in Balzac are what promise meaning and add allegorical depth to degenerated urban life. Paquita is read as a riddle—a "perle introuvable" (*La Fille* 266) ("unfindable pearl")—because her oriental citation veils and defer the gold and pleasure promised; the moment of unveiling coincides with the dissolution of the signified value. Here, on the other hand, the active interplay between veiling and unveiling flattens the hermeneutic reading and appropriates the other as the agent that

mediates and opens an alternative textual space—Renée's own body, instead of constituting the veiled signified, is transformed into the very surface of writing. To put in other words, the characters in Zola are no longer "personne" that reference a psychological individual, but also "personnel" that the narrative appropriates for its own strategic representation of the real: "[l]e personnage, ici [chez Zola], est "fonction", voire "fonctionnaire", plutôt que fiction, est personnel plutôt que personne" (Hamon 22) ("the character, here [in Zola], is more of a function, even functionary, than fiction, is personnel than person"). Hamon thus theorizes Zola's employment of the characters as the personnel of the novel such that they are not only, like in Balzac, an object of reading, but also the agent that mediates textualization: "[l]e personnage zolien, posons-le ici tout de suite, sera un personnage lisible et délégué à la lisibilité" (Hamon 38) ("the Zolian character, to put it here in short, is both a character readable and that delegated to readability in general"). One example of the "fonctions-types" that Hamon enumerates, for instance, is the *regardeur-voyeur* through whose line of sight the text introduces a general reading of urban scenes.

In *La Curée*, Renée certainly plays the role of another of these "fonctions-types". Extending this problematics of reading to the language of spatial mapping, I suggest that the female bodies are likewise both what is territorialized and—as an active narrative agent—what territorializes. This explains the spatial economy that underlies the general immobility of women (and plant life) noted earlier: Renée cannot move in space (as she is restricted from going to most places) because it is her naked body itself that, as metaphorical pillars, mediates the space traversed by the modern subject. She is *territorialized* precisely as she becomes the strategic principle of all *territorialization*. Several times in the text, therefore, Renée's body becomes almost symbiotic with the spaces she inhabits; descriptions of her body fold into descriptions of

the architecture. In this symbiosis, the image of the female body and the image of the architectural spaces become effectively sublated. One salient example of this sublation is found in the description of Renée's dressing room. Zola pictures the pink color of this dressing room as almost the exact architectural counterpart for Renée's own flesh, that "quand Renée sortait du bain, son corps blond n'ajoutait qu'un peu de rose à tout cette chair rose de la pièce" (210) ("as Renée came out from the bath, her blonde body adds but a little rose to all the rose flesh of the chamber"). Through Renée's personal, nude body, the impersonal pink color of the room seems to, from time to time, become anthropomorphized; it acquires, through Renée, a "chair" ("flesh") of its own into which Renée's own human flesh seems immediately integrated. The nudity of the (female) flesh thus becomes interchangeable with the nakedness (opening for the gaze) of space. Indeed, the readers are informed earlier that, similar to Renée's body, the dressing room itself becomes a public spectacle—one "disait: 'Le cabinet de toilette de la belle madame Saccard', comme on dit: 'La galerie des glaces, à Versailles'" (209) ("talked about the 'dressing room of the beautiful Madame Saccard' in the same way that one talked about 'the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles'"). In this rhetorical association between the nudity of the flesh and the public spectacle of an architectural space, Zola thus once again underscores the description of urban space as such that is predicated on the rhetorical pillars of female bodies on the same order as it is founded on certain concrete architectural projects.

This summarizes the metaphor of pillars. The metaphoric proximities between female bodies, plant life and architectural pillars circumscribe a strategic appropriation of the other in the construction of space in the novel. This appropriation, on the other hand, cannot be "natural" or mimetic, but instead trojan-horses its own ideological import. Indeed, if for Vallès, the strategic decapitation of nature also has the subtle undertone of a political decapitation, this

spatial appropriation of the other in *La Curée* also underlies a social subjugation: spatial immobility itself metaphorizes a simultaneous social immobility. The impasse of the pillars—as they remain forever the immobile object of the erotic gaze (Renée) and political surveillance (Vallès's nature)—is at once spatial and libidinal-political. But perhaps the opposite side of this spatial appropriation of the other is even more fundamental—this repression of the mobility of the other consolidates in its own negative image a certain discursive production of the modern subject in spatial terms. In *La Curée*, thus, the desiring and willing subject is the one who is mobile and capable of traversing space. Plant life and women—plant-like and vegetal women, insofar as they form pillars which open up this space traversed by this subject, can never personify the subject. This, I contend, forms one of the implicit morals of the story. Given this implicit ideological linkage between spatial and libidinal-political mobility, Renée can imagine love only as spatial and/or moral transgressions. Eroticism engenders movements, and her longing for the "autre chose" (46) ("something else")—else than her own spatial immobility as pillars—finds no other outlet than an incestuous, forbidden love with her stepson, Maxime. On the other hand, their incestuous love soon again insinuates itself into eternal movements in the Hausmannized Paris: "Les amants avaient l'amour du nouveau Paris. Ils couraient souvent la ville en voiture, faisaeint un détour, pour passer par certains boulevards qu'ils aimaient d'une tendresse personnelle" (228) ("the lovers are in love with the new Paris. They often rushes around the city in carriage, making detours in order to to pass by certain boulevards that they favor with a personal tenderness").[14]

[14] It is also not surprising that this urban space of their erotic procession is, once again, opened and coordinated by trees and pillars—"Pendant que le coupé filait, ils suivaient, d'un regard ami, les bandes grises des trottoirs, larges, interminables, avec leurs bancs, leur colonnes bariolées, leurs arbres rapetissants…" (228) ("as the carriage departs, they followed, with a friendly gaze, the gray strips of sidewalks, wide, endless, with their benches, their motley pillars, their vanishing trees…").

Throughout the novel, thus, Renée's insatiable erotic and incestuous desires always intimate a simultaneous desire for spatial transgression, as if to project and consolidate her moral transgression in concrete spatial acts. For Renée, the search for this "something else" requires her to set foot in places where she is forbidden to go; her rebellion entails the usurpation and appropriation of the masculine position as the spatial subject. The fourth chapter begins with a proposal to go to the ball of Blanche Muller, an actress of the demi-monde. But Renée could not be there undisguised as such a social field is deemed inappropriate for respectable ladies like her. To do so, she has to hide her own body (her own identity and her femininity) by putting on a dark domino. In other words, the female body acquires the capacity to move in space only when it self-obliterates and imitates the other. Renée becomes a spatial subject on the condition that she imitates men: "[j]e suis un homme, moi" (170) ("I'm a man, you see"). Maxime also seems to notice this extraordinary ambiguity of her sex during this episode: "[l]a grande ride qui lui traversait le front, l'avancement boudeur de ses lèvres, son air indécis de myope, en faisaient un grand jeune homme" (184) ("the noticeable wrinkle that traverses her forehead, the sullen bulge of her lips, her look of incertitude because of her myopia, made her almost like a young man"). However, it is quite clear that Renée can never perfectly imitate men. At the ball, Renée is shocked to find not an other space of love but the same architectural space opened up by female nudity: "Laure d'Aurigny était en jaune comme Suzanne Haffner, et Blanche Muller avait, comme Adeline d'Espanet, une robe blanche qui la décolletait jusqu'au milieu du dos" (173) ("Laure d'Aurigny was in yellow like Suzanne Haffner, and Blanche Muller, like Adeline d'Espanet, wore a white dress that undresses her to the center of her back"). In other words, even in this ultimate act of spatial transgression—in which she imitates the masculine spatial subject—she could not be brought into the "other" space where she can be the proper erotic

subject. Perhaps such a place, after all, does not exist, as it is always through her reified status as "une des colonnes" (10) ("one of the pillars") of female nudity that any erotic or textual space can be made accessible. Renée, therefore, regrets this escapade shortly after: "je m'imaginais des choses prodigieuses… Ça ne vaut pas la peine de faire le mal" (181) ("I imagined wonderful things… That's not worth the pain for the misconduct"). Her episode of spatial transgression reveals itself to be an empty act, which brings her always to the same monotonous space—a space in which she remains structurally subjugated and erotically immobile—that is not worth the crushing weight of her desires.

Nana: Putrefaction and Improper Spatialization

In Renée's spatial transgression, thus, she dreams of the space of the *demi-monde* as that of extraordinary voluptuousness; she envisions it to be the opposite of her own spatial and libidinal impasse. It might be worthwhile then to examine in more detail, one of the most famous courtesans ever depicted in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, Nana.

Inspired in part by Édouard Manet's 1877 painting under the same name, *Nana* (1880) narrates the story of a famous courtesan, Nana, and the moral corruptions and decadence of the Second Empire which unfolds in the course of her fatal seduction. In contrast with Renée—the territorialized and territorializing Madame Saccard, Nana personifies an entirely different mode of spatial being. She is utterly mobile—both spatially and libidinally. She goes from place to place, entertaining one lover after another. She even leaves Paris temporarily, and in doing so exits the textual space of the novel itself. Her stories are told only in the form of embedded diegetic narratives, of "étranges histoires" (501) ("eccentric stories") that circulate:

> it became known that she must have started for Cairo the previous day… She had made a conquest of the viceroy; she was reigning, in the recesses of a palace, over two hundred

> slaves whose heads she now and then cut off for the sake of a little amusement… A fortnight later much astonishment was produced when someone swore to having met her in Russia. A legend began to be formed: she was the mistress of a prince, and her diamonds were mentioned. All the women were soon acquainted with them from the current descriptions, but nobody could cite the precise source of all this information. (*NNE* 386)

Thus, if Renée personifies this vetegal pillar that remains forever immobile and fixes the architectural spaces, Nana is a character of the exact opposite traits: a hyper-mobility and, along with it, the general destabilization of space.

Indeed, reversing the role of female sexuality in *La Curée* as a certain architectural foundation of urban space, the excess of spatial and libidinal mobility in Nana's unregulated libidinal activity is perceived as "désorganisant Paris entre ses cuisses de neige" (245) ("disorienting Paris in between her snow-white thighs")—in between her thighs, that is, a euphemistic reference to her genitalia and her sex. As one epitome of the trope of the *femme fatale*, thus, Nana's spatial and libidinal movements do not translate, as Renée envisions, into a romantic vision of a proper (spatial) subject, but soon turn into a menace that is degenerative and pathogenic. To contextualize this pathogenic reception of her disorienting mobility, let us turn to the summary of a chronicle entitled "La Mouche d'Or" ("The Golden Fly") from which the afore-cited passage is taken. Here, the journalist Fauchery (and, through him, Zola the novelist himself) narrates the story of a harlot supposedly modelled on Nana. The excerpt of the summary is reproduced below. The chronicle paints:

> the life of a harlot descended from four or five generations of drunkards and tainted in her blood by a cumulative inheritance of misery and drink, which in her case has taken the form of a *nervous exaggeration of the sexual instinct*. She has shot up to womanhood in the *slums* and on the pavements of Paris, and tall, handsome and as superbly grown as a *dunghill plant*, she avenges the beggars and outcasts of whom she is the ultimate product. With her the *rottenness* that is allowed to *ferment among the populace is carried upward and rots the aristocracy*. She becomes a blind power of nature, a leaven of destruction, and unwittingly she corrupts and disorganizes all Paris, churning it between her

> snow-white thighs as milk is monthly churned[15] by housewives. And it was at the end of this article that the comparison with a fly occurred, a fly of sunny hue which has flown up out of the *dung*, a fly which sucks in death on the *carrion* tolerated by the roadside and then buzzing, dancing and glittering like a precious stone enters the windows of palaces and *poisons* the men within by merely settling on them in her flight. (*NNE* 181; *my emphasis*)

Critical studies of *Nana* have often turned to this episode as a mise-en-abyme of the novel itself—the genre of the writing, a chronicle, for instance, mirrors the genealogical approach of Zola's own naturalist project. I am interested, on the other hand, in the allegorical nature of this allegorical citation of the novel itself—i.e. how the emblematic representation of the harlot-Nana as a golden fly reflects the novel's more general rhetorical treatment of Nana's unregulated mobility as something that is pathogenic and menacing. In contrast with Renée's spatial status as an assimilated metaphoric pillar that fixes proper places, the metaphor of the golden fly embodies a failed spatial appropriation of the other. Flies, like Nana, represent a principle of movement that cannot be localized. Not only are they utterly mobile; the failure to contain them causes the spread of diseases and pandemics. In this cited passage, thus, Nana embodies at once a "rottenness", a "leaven of destruction" that circulate "corrupt[ion]" and "is carried up and rots the aristocracy". On the other hand, in comparison to the *visual* metaphor of architectural pillars (I argue that pillars open a visual field for the gaze), the metaphoric golden flies are attracted not to light but rather to smell, hence insinuating an *olfactory* experience. Everything in this passage smells—be it the "dunghill plant", her "rottenness", the corrupted "milk", the "dung", the "carrion". In comparison to the pillars that inscribe *proper* places, odor is a principle of spatialization that is forever *improper* and fails to territorialize; it is the failure of a certain

[15] The original text reads: "désorganisant Paris entre ses cuisses de neige, le faisant tourner comme des femmes, chaque mois, font tourner le lait" (245). Sophie Ménard highlights in her ethnogenetic analysis of this phrase that the periodic turning of the milk ("chaque mois") is associated with the popular reading of the menstrual blood (a symbol of female sexuality) as a dangerous and corruptive force which is contrasted with the regulated appropriation of female sexuality for reproduction (the production of milk). Here the translation of "tourner" into "churning" might be a mistranslation of this intertext. See Sophie Ménard, "Faire tourner Paris : ethnogénétique et logogénétique de Nana de Zola", *Flaubert*, vol. 10, 2013.

reading and mapping of space inserted into the phenomenological language of inadequate sanitation. Henri Lefebvre thus relates the "immense deodorizing campaign" of the modern world as coextensive with a vast ideological enterprise that includes "the transposition of everything into the idiom of images, of spectacle, of verbal discourse, and of writing and reading" (Lefebvre 198). In *Nana*, the oversaturation of odor is perceived as a menace that destabilizes the novel spatial map: they are always too intense, and, as Audrey Burba points out, they "appear as a threat to those who cannot avoid entering into contact with them" (Burba 79). Nana carries with her an odorizing spatial disorientation that contaminates everywhere she goes and everyone she comes into contact with. This contamination culminates in her dead corpse which emanates once again a menacing, acute smell: "[l]e cadavre commencait à empoisonner la chambre" (517) ("the dead corpse begins to poison the chamber").

This odorized spatialization is distinct from the inscription of proper places in *La Curée*. As the emblem of a destabilizing spatialization, it affects instead an inscription of some of the nineteenth century's most characteristic heterotopic milieus—of spaces that failed to be assimilated into the proper Paris. On the one hand, this harlot-Nana figure manifests "a nervous exaggeration of the sexual instinct" ("un détraquement nerveux de son sexe de femme" (244)), alluding thus to the unassimilable otherness of both the feminine sex and the mental disorder of hysteria[16] and madness, and, moreover, to the heterotopic destination of medical institutions such as asylums or psychiatric hospitals. On the other hand, with this harlot-Nana figure, a "rottenness that is allowed to ferment among the populace is carried upward and rots the aristocracy", hence alluding both literally to the accumulation and fermentation of filth in the less sanitized districts

[16] This coupling of the female sex to mental disorder traces an inheritance from Adélaide Fouque, the famous Tante Dide who is the common ancestry of both the Rougon and Macquart families. Bertand Jennings suggests that "[h]ysteria, taken here in its strict etymological sense, is seen as a purely female disease, and, in Zola's fiction, it seems to coincide with the onset of womanhood". See Chantal Bertrand-Jennings, "Zola's Women: The Case of a Victorian 'Naturalist'", *Atlantis*, vol.10, no.1.

and metonymically to the underground Paris (in the threatening "upward" movement of ascension ("remontait" (245)) that begins to contaminate also the aristocratic world[17]. The reference to "slum" marks another of these eccentric spatial citations. The inscription of these spaces of otherness here insinuates again both a cartographical anxiety and a sanitary concern in Zola's Paris. Prendergast reads in these marginalizing spaces a potential Foucauldian analysis of nineteenth-century urbanization as "a story of imposed surveillance and attempted mastery… devoted to the marginal or marginalizing spaces of the new urban order (the prisons, the hospital, the slums, the brothels, the cesspits and the sewers" (Prendergast 10). These eccentric destinations, networked into Nana's metaphoric embodiment of a golden fly, are spatial incarnations of the pathogenic segments that the modern world endeavours to eliminate and sanitize.

To put this in other terms, if for Renée, spatial appropriation of plant life and female bodies functions—in the form of architectural pillars—to elicit sight, to provide the architectonic basis for the urban *scene*, here for Nana, these cited spatialities are precisely that of an *ob-scene*—what is to be eliminated and kept out of sight. Their unassimilable mobility and energetic circulation constitute a sanitary hazard for the myth of a proper city. The failure to constitute an immobile pillar like Renée thus does not transform Nana into a mobile subject. Rather, her mobility is signed off as forever improper, the lack of properness. She does not become the proper subject that Renée dreams of becoming, but only the emblem of a failed territorialization. This lack of properness, both *impropre*—inappropriate, disorienting the proper city—and *malpropre*—unclean, pathological, obscene, I suggest, constitute one of the central problematics that surround Nana's spatial being. In *La Curée*, I read the image of architectural

[17] On the reference to the underground Paris in nineteenth-century literature and its destabilization of proper urban spatial order, see Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 74-101.

pillars that connect female bodies to the vegetal as the epitomizing metaphor of this strategic inscription of proper places. In *Nana*, this triple proximity between the feminine, the vegetal, and the architectural is precisely absent——Nana becomes the decadent insect of an improper space. Indeed, if the vegetal trope is again used to describe Nana's flesh, such that she is represented as "tall, handsome and as superbly grown as a dunghill plant", it is such that plant life itself ceases to be the unspoiled, picturesque, gaze-inviting architectural scene that inscribes proper places, but instead, the incarnation of the obscene—this "dunghill plant" itself begins to degenerate and metamorphizes into the epitome of the unclean.

The serene vegetal status of Renée is hence precisely what Nana could not possess. In *Nana*, what is vegetal immediately metamorphizes into the animal. In contrast with the undisturbed spatial stability of plant life, Nana is more often described according to a monstrous, volatile animality. In the very first visual description we have of Nana, thus, her hair is described as the "toison de bête" (38) ("fleece of beast"). She is customarily described as a cat ("chatte battue" (271)) or a dog ("chien"(197)) here and there. Later in the plot, moreover, there is a horse named after her. Zola describes humorously the confusion of the crowd that cannot distinguish which Nana the name actually refers to: "l'on ne savait plus si c'était la bête ou la femme qui emplissait les coeurs" (416) ("one can no longer distinguish whether it is the beast or the women that holds their hearts"). This confusion of naming is not without certain merits in revealing the ironic animalistic character of Nana which is in stark contrast with the ideal of a vegetal woman as depicted in *La Curée*.

The single most notable description of plant life in the earlier sections of *Nana* appears in a scene of Nana's dressing room. But even here, the floral elements are presented as excessive, decadent, and, moreover, de-natured rather than existing in their natural state of harmony:

> On the toilet table the bouquets—roses, lilacs and hyacinths—appeared like a very *ruin* of flowers. Their perfume was *strong and penetrating*, while through the dampish air of the place, which was full of the *spoiled* exhalations of the washstand, came occasional whiffs of a more *pungent* scent, the scent of some grains or dry patchouli g*round to fine powder* at the bottom of a cup. (*NNE* 45; *my emphasis*)

The flowers are described as ruins. Rather than endorsing an idyllic image of a flowering nature, these plants cut-off from their natural soil belong to a transient glamour that is already beginning to decay. Indeed, they decay and denature on a quite physical level: the patchouli disintegrates into "fine powders". The organic beauty often ascribed to nature is nowhere to be found in this flora scene; even their perfume transforms into a "pungent" odor that is too acute.

In contrast to this total dearth of (organic) plant life in Paris, on the other hand, one observes the overabundance of vegetation in Orlean, which the text describes with great detail during Nana's temporary stay there. One particularly memorable scene of this overflowing plant life can be found in Nana's excursion to the *Chateaux de Chamont*, of which Irma d'Anglars, an aged courtesan, is the proprietor:

> The trees stretched away and away, and there were endlessly recurrent patches of ivy along the wall with glimpses of lofty roofs and screens of poplars interspersed with dense masses of elms and aspens. Was there no end to it then? (*NNE* 166)

It is not coincidental, moreover, that this sight of the overabundance of plant life, and the image of Irma d'Anglars reigning over this land, gives Nana the vision of a proper (spatial) existence. Vegetality is the symbol of being proper. In this land of vegetation which Nana could not possibly possess back in Paris, she arrives at the impression of experiencing something at once "tranquille et royale" (226) ("tranquil and royal")—the exact opposite of her improper (both obscene and subverting) spatial status earlier noted. In this precise narrative moment, Nana also arrives at the maxim that informs much of her later struggles: "l'ordre seul menait à la fortune" (229). This epiphany perhaps reads similarly to Renée articulation of her desire for the "autre

chose" (46) ("something else") at the beginning of *La Curée*. In much the same way Renée reads spatial mobility—the thing "other" than her pillar status—as the key to erotic subjectivity, Nana read the vegetal—"something else" than her volatile animality—as the sign of spatial properness.

This desire for the inscription of proper place, on the other hand, does not mean immediately for Nana to become, like Renée, one of the architectural pillars; it means for her to become, like Irma d'Anglars, a proprietor. On that note, we might further the thematic series of *propre*, *impropre*, and *malpropre* that I have highlighted earlier, and add to this sequence also two related terms: *propriété* ("property") and *propriétaire* ("proprietor"). One of Nana's central desires in the plot is to own a property of her own—to have a proper place. "Je suis propriétaire" (187) ("I am proprietor"), Nana exclaimed, delighted that Steiner has bought her in Orlean a property of her own, *la Mignotte*. It is thus in Orlean, the place of overabundant vegetation, that Nana arrives the closest to having a proper spatial existence—of properly belonging to a place, having a *propriété*, as the *propriétaire*; it is in Orlean, moreover, that Nana is described as rejuvenated—brought back to infancy, cleansed for her moral faults, capable of possessing "proper" emotions she had rarely been able to possess before: affectionate love ("une fleur d'amour refleurissant chez elle"(211) ("a flower of love blossoming again inside her")), maternal affections (196), and most striking of all, the feeling of guilt and shame (205). But of course, this utopian image of Orlean as the space of properness is more vulnerable than Nana would imagine. This transient illusion of having a proper spatial existence soon evaporates. Since her status as the proprietor exists only in the nominal (and indeed, textual) but not the actual sense, Steiner soon sells the property after Nana shut him out at the door. In addition, the proper emotions which Nana experiences there for the first time are already mediated by layers and layers of citational practices—"c'était dans des romances qu'elle avait vu tout ça" (205) ("all of that she

had only seen in the romances"). Much similar to the abysmal citation that denatures Balzac's Paris, this citational allure of proper affections would be revealed to be a similar illusion.

Orlean thus embodies this other, idyllic space that, much like Balzac's Orient, can never fully realize. It exists in Paris only in the form of oneiric citations—Zola describes the abundant vegetation and idyllic charm of *la Mignotte* as something "dont elle [Nana] avait rêvé autre-fois, quand elle traînait ses savates d'ouvière sur le pavé de Paris" (200) (of which she had dreamed of before when she was idling on the pavement of Paris"). Despite the momentary restoration of proper spatial status that Nana experiences in Orlean, therefore, the newly acquired vision of order and proper-ness ("l'ordre seul menait à la fortune") would ironically force her to return to Paris, where she witnesses her eventual downfall.

In Paris, such an idyllic Orlean could not sustain, and, along with this idyllic Orlean, the properness that Nana dreams of possessing is also revealed to be delusional. Inasmuch as she continues this fantasy of becoming a proper woman (as she rejects the role of a courtesan which she is offered in one of Bordenave's shows but instead demonstrates vehement interest in the role of the other character who is the good woman—"Je voudrais avoir le rôle de la femme honnête" (328) ("I want to play the role of the good woman"), Nana claims), Nana becomes proper and proprietor in Paris only, like Renée, as property. This time, it is Count Muffat who proposes to offer her a mansion. But he proposes this offer on the condition that she cannot sleep with anyone besides himself: "ce serait l'unique condition: sans partage, etends-tu" (327) ("this is the only condition: [I want to have you] all to myself, you heard me"). In order to become proper and proprietor, Nana enters into a contract that restricts her libidinal and spatial mobility and appropriates her again as one of the architectural pillars that coordinate masculine desires similar to the one Renée embodies. Indeed, even this house that Muffat eventually offers to her is

conveniently located next to the *parc Monceau*—the same park to which Saccard's mansion is adjacent—thus forming a metonymic reference to *La Curée*. The descriptions of the layout of the mansion also bear an uncanny intertext with the description of Saccard's mansion—the "quatre femmes de marble blanc" (343) ("four statues of women in white marble") and "des cloisonnés chinois emplis de fleurs" (343) ("Chinese vases full of flowers") in Nana's courtyard reminds us of the description of bronze statues and flowering plants in Saccard's mansion.

If this intertext is to be sustained, then, perhaps despite the immediate contrasts between Nana and Renée's spatial status—one being immobile and the other hyper-mobile—they in fact assume the same structural position of otherness in the urban spatial and libidinal economy. Both for Nana and for Renée, their female sex enters into a double bind. For Renée, it is her spatial immobility as a metaphoric pillar that becomes sterile; for Nana, it is her hyper-mobility that becomes improper and pathogenic. Renée embodies the figure of a certain immobility hopelessly searching for mobility; Nana personifies the improper seeking to reconstitute properness. But both of their projects are destined for failure. Renée finds in the fantastical world of the *demi-monde* which she dreams of not an erotical "other space", but the same space where she remains forever a pillar; Nana, likewise, confronts in her wish to constitute the proper (as proprietor) a masculine will that reduces her to the status of an immobile, passive, proper (as property) pillar.

Urban Space, Mimesis, and Otherness

Similar to my argument about Balzac's subterranean engagement with the Orientalist discourse, in this chapter, my intent is to show that the spatial mapping and unmapping of the feminine other play a likewise essential role in Zola's textualization of urban space. The

appropriation of the hygienic and architectural discourses in Zolian novels underscores a strategic appropriation of the feminine other both as something that conditions urban territorialization and a pathogenic agent of a threatening deterritorialization. In *La Curée*, Renée, insofar as she embodies a metaphoric pillar, conditions the urban visual fields and the libidinal economy for the masculine subject; In *Nana*, on the other hand, the excess of her female sexuality and spatial mobility results in a sanitary hazard that soon contaminates and corrupts every man that comes into contact with her. But in both cases, nonetheless, the hygienic anxieties and cartographical practice combine around the female figures to fuel the general textual mapping of space in the novel.

In other words, similar to Balzac's representation of the real that is subjected to immediate allegorical doubling, Zola's naturalist representation of Paris cannot be said to be purely mimetic. The ideological inscription of otherness preconditions his reading and writing of space. Simone de Beauvoir famously asserted, in her celebrated *The Second Sex*, that feminity, the signifier of Sex, more than being the Other to the masculine subject, also conditions the masculine subjectivity—"the Other is posited as Other by the one positing itself as One" (Beauvoir 7). Femininity is thus less an essential category than a structural relation; the location of the masculine subject in the (erotic) space is predicated on a certain inscription of the Other in their proper space, "to keep them 'in their place'" (Beauvoir 12). This feminist insight, I suggest, offers an important critical perspective for a rethinking of urban spatial politics as well. It suggests that a pre-discursive spatial map (one that is simply mimetic) perhaps could not exist at all—the imperative to keep the self and the Other "in their place" underscores not a certain natural, *a priori* relation to space but already a structural production of the self and the Other in and through space. And it is more than the subject and its Other that is being produced here:

space itself is actively produced and consolidated (rather than passively documented and transcribed) through the disciplinary act of keeping the Other in their proper place. In Zola's urbanist projects, therefore, discursive appropriation of the feminine (the making of them legible on maps) forms an important part of the way in which urban space is read and written. Jessica Tanner, on a very similar note, examines how the *mise en carte* of prostitution—the endeavors to make the prostitutes "localisable" (*Mapping* 12)—not only constitutes one of the readable elements of the urban experience, but sits at the very basis of the "readability" and "writability" of both the lived space and textual space of the city.

Ending on that remark, it thus seems to me that the narrative plots of both *La Curée* and *Nana* are to some extent a, perhaps unwitting, attempt to address the following question: could the Other ever escape this spatial text in which they remain forever the Other? In *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, the Other escapes their confine to meet Henri in the streets of Paris. The other constitutes a reified object of Parisian desires only insofar as it also incarnates a latent disruption of all urban hierarchies. Thus Paquita claims to Henri that "si je suis esclave, je suis reine aussi" (*La Fille* 288) ("if I am a slave, I am also queen"). In Zola's cartographical vision of a proper Paris, on other hand, it seems that there are far fewer opportunities to escape and invert the masculine spatial and libidinal economy. Still, both Renée and Nana reveal to us a possible interruption of this urban order: from the very start of the novel, Renée is already in motion—a mobility which is later advanced by her moral transgression. In *Nana*, more stunningly, in the famous mirror scene, she abhors Muffat by claiming for her own libidinal activity her nude body which has been up until now appropriated as an object of masculine desire—"[c]e n'était pas pour les autres, c'était pour elle" (*NNF* 245) ("this [her nudity] was not for the others, it was for herself").

But as in *La Fille*, the Other ultimately pays for its disruptive and mobile power. Both Nana and Renée are in the end punished and territorialized by the narrative—they perish from a disease that their own unregulated mobility helps spread. *Nana* thus terminates with the scene of her horrendous death from smallpox. In *La Curée*, Renée also dies abruptly and silently in the name of the story, forbidden to live beyond the novel. The novel ends as follows: "L'hiver suivant… Renée mourut d'une méningite aiguë" (*La Curée* 338) ("the next winter… Renée died from an acute meningitis").

Conclusion

The Other Space of Critical Intervention

Here is the one-sentence synopsis of my argument: space can no longer be imagined without an active mapping and unmapping of self and otherness. Otherness, understood in this sense, no longer constitutes a mere object of reading under the surveillance of the space-text, but a constitutive element in its formation. Baguley rightfully stresses that the theorization of Zola's experimental method (the pseudo-scientific facade of transparent reading) needs to be contextualised by a particular polemic instance where it finds itself—this methodological theorization developed primarily between *L'Assommoir* (1877) and *Nana* (1880), "novels of slum life, alcoholism and sexual depravity, as, in part, an attempt to justify their apparent excesses" (Baguley 45). Naturalism has thus been received all wrong: Zola's empirical attempt to read modern life amounts less to a transcendental methodology than a discursive strategy—it is to authenticate a particular discourse on these excesses (both literary and social) of "slum life, alcoholism and sexual depravity". These excesses of otherness in Zolian texts, therefore, cannot be something innocuous that the theorization of reading proposes to explain. They supply the discursive conditions of this textualization and, in a quite counter-intuitive manner, precipitate the very act (as well as the retroactive ideological authentication) of reading. Zola's feminine, pathogenic other, thus like Balzac's Orient, forms the indispensable, quintessential basis of the urban space-text.

In short, realism could no longer hold itself as a scientific reading of the space-text than a discourse that produces the text it reads; the real itself is a production. Having highlighted the polemic context of Zola's theorization, Baguley continues to distinguish naturalism as a "mode"

(Baguley 47) (as the mimetic representation of reality) and naturalism as a "genre" (Baguley 48) (as the historically specific literary form defined by a set of common themes and aesthetics), between its philosophical theorization (as a non-generic, universal "method") and its actual literary practice with a set of aesthetic concentrations. Marshall Brown elaborates on a similar critique in his distinction between "realisms of form" and "realisms of content" (Brown 233). Indeed, if realism as a mode assumes a transparent readability of reality, realism as a genre brings out the historical and social production of the real that is being read. "The age of realism is thus not the period when reality became the literary norm," writes Brown, "On the contrary, realism developed into a central issue in mid-century precisely because the conception of reality had become increasingly problematic" (Brown 227). It is not trivial that Maupassant, one of the most avid followers of the realist-naturalist discourse, should arrive at the conclusion that "les Réalistes de talent devraient s'appeler plutôt des Illusionnistes" (Maupassant 52) ("the talented Realists should be better called the Illusionists"). Indeed, the real itself becomes an illusion, a textual effect; in the textual space that realism produces, the real itself is actively consolidated. The Real as the referent is forever lost in reading, buried beneath the ideological and discursive construct of the space as text.

On that note, can we thus locate the Other—insofar as it is often depicted in dialectical tension with the transparency of reading—as the alternative site of the Real, lurking beneath the visible texture of the urban text? Does the Other supply the epistemological energies that interrupt this hegemonic imposition of a space-text that alienates (in its Icarian view dissociated from the phenomenological life), abstracts, and reifies its own socio-historical processes of production? Perhaps also not so much. Otherness is itself the myth of the illegible upon which the modern subject projects all that falls outside of its transparent readable world. Indeed, for

Miranda Gill, "the construction of 'others'" is indissociable from the construction of a screen "upon whom was projected much that was forbidden within their [the bourgeois subjects'] own social codes" (Gill 4). Said's Orientalism treats Orientalist discourses as both the fetishization of the Other as the source of empirical knowledge and as a beyond of this epistemological force: it is on the one hand "a form of radical realism" and, on the other hand, "a form of paranoia, knowledge of another kind" (*Orientalism* 72). This paranoic, unknowable Other that constantly threatens to destabilize the urban text—the dialectical destabilization of its readability—is hence not so radical a force of interruption as it might appear to be and becomes itself integrated as another myth internal to the urban textualization of space. In other words, not only is space imagined and constructed in close connection with an active mapping and unmapping of self and otherness, but it is now possible to examine otherness itself as a critical category that is from the start *spatial* and *textual*; it threatens to disrupt the textual representation of urban scenes not because it constitutes something that lies beyond this space-text, but because it is itself a spatial concept registered, imagined, produced and projected (as an unreadable and mobile other) in this spatial problematic—i.e. even its disrupting mobility itself must be seen as to some extent profitable and appropriable for the textual economy of reading space.

This might seem a somewhat more obscure argument to make[18], but I shall support it with one last piece of my close reading. Here, I hope to add one last comment on the synopsis of Fauchery's "La Mouche d'Or" in *Nana*, which ended with a description of the grandiose palaces where the fly enters through the windows—"les palais où elle entrait par les fenêtres" (*NNF* 245)

[18] It is, of course, not the same as suggesting that there therefore could have no possibility of internally contesting the hegemonic domination of the text. However, it is to counter a certain fetishization of the illigible Other as the site of a sufficient revolution against the homogenizing space-text. This is the other critical aspect of the nineteenth-century hyper-textualization of urban space that my reading of Balzac and Zola hopes to bring out: the dichotomic tension between the transparent urban text and a disrupting otherness that defies control itself seems to deconstruct.

("the palaces where she enters by the windows"). The reference here is the image of the fly as the carrier of a contagion, the source of an acute odor that destabilises space—the flies enter the house through the windows left open for ventilation. But on the other hand, the motif of the window interests me as it connotes an incomplete or partial entrance: it hints at the possibility that the fly does not physically enter, but is instead sighted through the windows. This partial entrance—a presence-absence that echoes the structure of the oriental citation in *La Fille aux yeux d'or*—re-integrates Nana's olfactory interruption back into the visual field of reading. Hence, paradoxically, the obscene—what is to be kept out of sight, to be relegated to another space—returns through the liminal space of the window, which at once obstructs its entrance and transforms into the scene of scopic pleasure.

In fact, this partial entrance-by-window brings to attention another set of windows that recurs in *Nana*—the windows as in window shopping. This visual field of shop windows that for Benjamin constitute one of the most curious sites of the modern phantasmagoria of commodities returns to haunt the whole of the visual experience of reading in *Nana*. Nana herself, takes note of this phantasmagorical effect of windows as she remarks disappointingly that the sapphire Muffat bought her does not look as good as they were on display: "[d]is donc, mon chéri, tu crois que c'est la même? Dans la vitrine, ça faisait plus d'effet" (*NNF* 376) ("tell me, my dear, you think they are the same? In the shop window, it appeared to have more charms"). But the same formula might be even more effective as it is applied to Nana herself: her obscene, precarious, contagious nature—all of her improperness—is beautified (and made permissible for reading and to be cited in a text that is the novel itself) as she is read through textual screenings that resemble a display window on the *Passage des Panoramas* where she window-shops; i.e. the entrance-by-window of the disease-laden fly insinuates also the possibility for Nana

herself—along with her disorienting corruption—to be read and textualized as a commodity in the window shops that is the novel itself. Indeed, her entrance in the novel itself is haunted by this phantasmagorical effect of a textual "window": screened by the figure of Venus that she plays in Bordenave's show, her sexual licentiousness is mediated, assimilated, and rendered legible through that of the fantastical goddess. It is precisely in such an (ex)citing theatrical (window) space, moreover, Nana's improper body, at last, becomes appropriated as another commodity on display and assumes the same architectonic function earlier reserved for the inscription of proper places through Renée:

> Under the crude gaslight, round the pale, naked walls of the entrance hall, which with its scanty First Empire decorations suggested the peristyle of a toy temple, there was a flaring display of lofty yellow posters bearing the name of "Nana" in great black letters. (*NNE* 5)

Note here also that it is the textual bodies of Nana (posters bearing her name in grand letters) that condition and mediate this visual field of a "naked" space in ways that are not at all dissimilar from the role of Renée's physical nakedness in her dressing room.

Having said that, in this spatializing and textualizing social imagination of the nineteenth century which harvests even the disorienting power of the other to its own ends, where can one find the space for critical intervention and political resistance? Here we seem to run into the same dilemma Said faces in his theorization of Orientalism—the discursive production of the other that Western discourses appropriates seems to leave little space for possible intervention that interrupts them on a critical level. For Certeau, hence, the strategic grid of the urban text can only be contested and reappropriated in ground-level tactical[19] acts of poaching—the transgression of proper spatial limits. This gesture of tactical reappropriation then seems to shape

[19] Certeau defines tactics as the opposite of strategy. While strategy partakes in the inscription of proper places, tactics form the art of appropriation and of lacking a proper place—"[a] tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance" (Certeau xix). See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

the landscape which guides and underlies various imagined practices of resistance. Tanner hints at a possible tactical interruption where the mapped other "also evade or disrupt this mapping, this authority" (*Mapping* 13). Said, on a similar note, also attends to the possibility of the interruption of the urban text in the Other's "*writing back* to the metropolitan cultures" (*Culture and Imperialism* 216). In both cases, again, despite the ingenious insights that these theoretical engagements are able to furnish, I am skeptical of the radical forces that such tactical reappropriations can convey without being re-integrated back into the hegemonic discourse. Both Nana and Renée's tactical reappropriation and interruption of the urban text—and even Paquita's attempts to write back in her handprints of blood on the cushions in her death scene—are, in fact, silenced and disciplined at the end of the novel. Henri silences Paquita's death through a euphemism: she died "[d]e la poitrine" (*La Fille* 310), that is, a chest ailment which conceals the actual fatal stabbing in her chest.

But does this mean the dismissal of all productive forms of resistance altogether? Perhaps not. If I have suggested, in articulating the structural collusion between the textualization of urban space and the (un)mapping of self and otherness in and through space, that space obtains an active political valence, in suggesting that the various discourses of otherness become a categorical production internal to this modern space-text[20]—that the principle imagination and construction of otherness is also in and through space, my point is that the political resistance to the hegemonic domination of the textualized space and the discipline and surveillance that come with it must also be negotiated and contested in spatial terms. The site of intervention cannot be a (pure) tactical reappropriation in the pre-existing space-text if it does not precipitate the

[20] I do not intend to argue, however, that otherness is a modern invention. There have, of course, existed multiple forms of otherness and subjectivity prior to this modern textualization of space. My point is that the modern categories of otherness and subjectivity cannot be read apart from the modern production of space and of the mapping of self and other in space.

production altogether of new spaces and new textualities—the production of a new subject that is no longer founded on the attempted mastery over its Other, I suggest, coincides with an alternative space not mapped by the internal dialectic of borders and transgressions, centers and peripheries, and a text no longer preoccupied with the imperative of reading and the haunting presence of the unreadable. This other spatial vision that the critical interrogation of the nineteenth-century space-text enables and unveils, at last, lies at the center of my ambition for the current project. This alternative vision derived from nineteenth-century cultural imaginations, however, is still up to us to actualize: it remains an unfinished project for artists and cultural critics in our present age and continues to predicate and inform creative efforts and critical discourses which seek to renegotiate social and political frontiers.

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