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**Movement in the American and French Novel,
1830s – 1920s**

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Gilles Deleuze's Theory of Movement

1.1 The Becoming Is Geographical

In 1977, when Gilles Deleuze's *Dialogues* were published, a brief essay therein included offered a new reading of movement –or better of fleeing– in Anglo-American and French literature. The idea is that, while the French are rooted in their tradition and only see movement as a means, to go from the province to Paris, for instance, Americans have a much more dynamic relation to space. They need to explore, flee, move, wander, in order to become and grow. The aim of this dissertation, thus, is of pondering over movement and space dynamics as distinguishing elements of American and French literature. Is each country's relationship with movement a cultural constant? And how does it affect authors and novels?

This dissertation will analyse four pairs of texts (seven novels and a memoir), seeking not only to prove that French novels are more “static,” if we may say so, even when there actually is movement in the plot, but also to ponder over the implications such an attitude has on the plot. Of course, one could reasonably argue that it would be incorrect to assume there is no movement in the history of French literature. This, however, is not the argument of my analysis. My inquiry, indeed, is to analyse the attitude to movement. This is easily

explainable through Deleuze's essay *De la supériorité de la littérature anglaise-américaine*.

The very opening line of it reads that "*Partir, s'évader, c'est tracer une ligne,*" and that this is "*L'objet le plus haut de la littérature, suivant Lawrence.*" Deleuze hence immediately argues that "*La littérature américaine opère d'après des lignes géographiques : la fuite vers l'Ouest, la découverte que le véritable Est est à l'Ouest, le sens de frontières comme quelque chose à franchir, à repousser, à dépasser. Le devenir est géographique,*" (Deleuze, Parnet, 1996: 47-48) having no equivalent in France. The comparative prospect hither emerges as pivotal. It is within the contraposition of Anglo-American and French literature that one is able to detect the different approach, the looseness of the former and the rootedness of the latter. American history is indeed a history of exploration and liberation. The push for movement is in-bred in American culture, and literature obviously reflects it.

Of course, the French have an older and more established literary tradition. Suffice to remember that until the first post-war some still considered American literature "*a provincial literature, dependent on English standards even when it tried to defy them*" (Cowley, 1994: 296). It is through their experience in Europe that American Modernist authors are eventually able to change "*their notion of what American literature should be*" (*ibid.*: 298) and to give it the respect it deserved. "*Ignorant of their own literature [...] the exiles ended by producing a type of writing that was American in another fashion than anyone had expected*" (*ibid.*: 299-300). Quoting Malcolm

Cowley (an expatriate in Paris who worked as a chronicler for American newspapers during the 1920s and later recollected his writings in his most notable work, *Exile's Return*) is intriguing as he was not a scholar nor an essayist. A writer himself, he observed and reported the first wave of American expatriates in Paris, noticing how their experience contributed to the evolution of American literature, which drew from the French tradition.

Movement already appears as a central element for the analysis of the American novel, but Modernism represents the point of arrival of this dissertation. I chose a representative set of American and French novels and a memoir from the 1830s to the 1920s. My analysis will thereby explore the cultural constant of movement during an important century, which saw the development of modern society and culture. The time span I chose, thus, is interesting for its historical impact.

1.2 Movement and Escape in Deleuze's Philosophy

Movement is an important element of American literature not only within plots, but also as an agent itself. Before understanding what makes it so important in literary analysis, we must define it. Movement is a line we draw, and, if we go back to Deleuze's essay, we will read that "*La ligne de fuite est une ligne de déterritorialisation*" (Deleuze, Parnet, 1996: 48). The concepts therein included are not new to his philosophy. The concept of deterritorialisation was theorised by

Deleuze together with fellow philosopher Félix Guattari in their *L'Anti-Œdipe* (1972), to describe a process of de-contextualisation of a together of relations that will enable their actualisation in other and different contexts. Taken under consideration again in *Mille Plateaux* (1980), it characterises the *corps-sans-organes* (CsO), another central element in Deleuze's philosophy. The CsO is to be interpreted as a dynamic and informal being, herald of desire and lacking organisations, hence fluctuating and free. Moreover, in 1980, the philosophers introduced a distinction between relative and absolute *déterritorialisation*, the former leaving the door open to a possible reterritorialisation.

A line of flight therefore defines a creative moment. To better understand this concept, let us look at William Bogard's explication of Deleuzian lines of flight. If "*Bodies only become subjects through an expression of their sense that is simultaneously a distribution of desire,*" then "*there are modes of social inscription that are exclusive, that separate bodies from what they are capable of doing, that demean their desire and distort their sense,*" but "*there are also modes that are inclusive and connective, that liberate desire, destroy limits, and draw positive 'lines of flight' or escape*" (Bogard, 1998: 58; see also Deleuze, Guattari, 1980: 111 and following). Politics of becoming, according to Deleuze and Guattari, are thus bound up to the drawing of lines of flight, which dismantle segments used to bind the subject to its body. Escape, by that means, is an affirmative or creative moment. "*To escape is to break through the 'microfascisms' [...] of everyday life, [...] a whole host of minor movements that compose the*

forces of bodies and desires and set them in motion in the most ordinary ways” (Bogard, 1998: 68; see also Deleuze, Guattari, 1980: 228 and following).

These microfascisms act through segments, segmentarity being a basic feature of social life for Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze, Guattari, 1980: 208). Segments can be binary (male – female), circular (zones of relevance, neighbourhoods, cities, countries, and so on), or finally linear (tasks, practices, careers, temporalisations...). Bogard hither references Foucault to show that *“modern societies tend to rigidify these lines, to ‘overcode’ them, to saturate them with significance and control”* (Bogard, 1998: 69). The core of these ideas is that *“the liberation of the subject is equivalent to its transformation into an abstract machine, a revolutionary force of decoding, of breaking with the segmentarity inscriptions that connect bodies and desires into oppressive, microfascist systems of production”* (Bogard, 1998: 71).

The potential positivity of a line of flight, hence, is in the power of deterritorialization, which brings us to the abstract machine, where there is no regime of signs anymore (Deleuze, Guattari, 1980: 134). One can therefore assume that the line of flight is a line of relative deterritorialisation, in light of Deleuze’s claims that *“Fuir, ce n’est pas du tout renoncer aux actions, rien de plus actif qu’une fuite. C’est le contraire de l’imaginaire,”* (Deleuze, Parnet, 1996: 47) and that *“Ils [American authors] créent une nouvelle Terre”* (*ibid.*: 48). This assumes relevance when we think of the importance discovery and exploration have in American culture. When Deleuze writes that the line of flight is a line of deterritorialisation,

then, he means that Americans have a different approach to the land, of course, but also that fleeing is fundamental for them. The need for expansion is essential to the growth of the country itself. Without that, America would not be America.

On the contrary, Europe is an extremely static, according to Deleuze's reading. Of course, there is dynamism, people leave, flee, travel, etcetera, but their leaving always has a return, or it was always a non-creative flight. It is not in European roots to simply move: "*Evidemment, ils fuient comme tout le monde, mais ils pensent que fuir, c'est sortir du monde [...] parce qu'on échappe aux engagements et aux responsabilités*" (*ibid.*: 47). Deleuze argues that there is no equivalent in France, French people being too human, too historical, too concerned with future and past, spending their time making the point. "*Ils ne savent pas tracer des lignes. [...] Ils aiment trop les racines, les arbres, le cadastre, les points d'arborescence, les propriétés*" (*ibid.*: 48).

A flight is not a voyage: "*Fuir ce n'est pas exactement voyager, ni même bouger. D'abord parce qu'il y a des voyages à la française, trop historiques culturels et organisés, où l'on se contente de transporter son « moi »*" (*ibid.* : 48). Travelling includes coming back, there is no clean cut in it, whereas the flight is a new beginning (Deleuze, Parnet, 1996: 50):

Le recommencement français c'est la table rase, la recherche d'une première certitude comme point d'origine, toujours le point ferme. L'autre manière de recommencer [that is, the American way], au contraire, c'est reprendre la ligne interrompue, ajouter un segmente à la ligne brisée, la faire passer entre deux

rochers, dans un étroit defile, ou par-dessus le vide, là où elle s'était arrêtée. Ce n'est jamais le début ni la fin qui sont intéressants, le début et la fin sont des points. L'intéressant, c'est le milieu.

This passage will be pivotal later in the dissertation, when analysing equivocal moments such as the flight of a French character or simply the movement of Americans. Deleuze also offers us his idea of what a flight represents (*ibid.*: 51-2):

Une fuite est une espèce de délire. Délirer, c'est exactement sortir du sillon (comme « déconner », etc.). Il y a quelque chose de démoniaque, ou de démonique, dans une ligne de fuite. Les démons se distinguent des dieux, parce que les dieux ont des attributs, des propriétés et des fonctions fixes, des territoires et des codes. [...] Il y a toujours de la trahison dans une ligne de fuite. Pas tricher à la manière d'un homme d'ordre qui ménage son avenir, mais trahir à la façon d'un homme simple qui n'a plus de passé ni de futur. On trahit les puissances fixes qui veulent nous retenir. [...] L'homme détourne son visage de Dieu, qui ne détourne pas moins son visage de l'homme. C'est dans ce double détournement, dans l'écart des visages, que se trace la ligne de fuite, c'est-à-dire la déterritorialisation de l'homme. [...] Et rien ne révèle mieux la trahison que le choix d'objet, [...] parce que c'est un devenir, c'est l'élément démonique par excellence.

Heretofore, we gathered important information that will constitute an important part of the theoretical framework of this analysis. This last passage shows not only that there is something almost Dionysian about fleeing, but also and especially that there is a hierarchy between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. According to Deleuze, the former, bound up to flights and thus to America, is better than the latter, which is more typical of the French.

This allows us to finally define the difference between American and French flights. The American escape is an interrupted segment, whereas the French is a

clear-cut new beginning. The American segment is moved but keeps its inherent elements and desires etcetera. The “movement” of the segment becomes fascinating, for it is always new, continuously different. There is only one point zero. On the other hand, the French segment is broken, and where there is movement there are a new zero and a new segment.

Furthermore, Deleuze ponders about the role of writing correspondingly to lines of flight, too. *“Il se peut qu’écrire soit dans un rapport essentiel avec les lignes de fuite. Écrire, c’est tracer des lignes de fuite, qui ne sont pas imaginaires, et qu’on est bien force de suivre, parce que l’écriture nous y engage, nous y embarque en réalité. Ecrire, c’est devenir, mais ce n’est pas du tout devenir écrivain. C’est devenir autre chose”* (ibid.: 54). This means that, from a Deleuzian point of view, the aim of writing is to lose one’s face: *“C’est ce que Fitzgerald appelait vraie rupture: la ligne de fuite, non pas le voyage dans les mers du Sud, mais l’acquisition d’une clandestinité. [...] Etre enfin inconnu, [...] c’est cela, trahir”* (ibid.: 56-7). Losing one’s face thus means becoming free, absolute, a CsO fluctuating free from microfascisms yet not lost. An example of this is given by Deleuze himself, who references Fitzgerald’s *Tender is the Night*, at the end of which the hero literally dissipates himself geographically (ibid.: 57).

This brings us to another important section of Deleuze’s essay, where the philosopher discusses another important difference. Because American literature is a process of experimentation, rather than interpretation (as French literature would be), there is a distinction between the preference for programmes of the

former and for manifestos of the latter. “*La littérature française abonde en manifestes, en ideologies, en théories de l’écriture, en même temps qu’en querelles de personnes, en mises au point, en complaisances névrotiques, en tribunaux narcissiques*” (ibid.: 61). On the contrary, in American literature, there is no ghost after the lines of flight, but only “*des programmes de vie, [...] des explorations*” (ibid.: p. 59), because “*les programmes ne sont pas des manifestes*” (ibid.: 60). Programmes can change, while a manifesto is a much steadier feature. A programme does not have a long-term target, it can vary, and is not binding, whereas a manifesto leads the way, indicating the route to follow and the destination to head towards.

1.3 Movement and Escape in the French and American Novel: A Representative Set of Classics

Insofar I have commented on Deleuze’s philosophy, but it is also necessary to lay the groundwork for the comparisons which will be carried out in the next chapters. I will analyse seven novels and a memoir, starting from Balzac’s *Illusions perdues*, a masterpiece of French Realism which will be compared to Jack London’s *Martin Eden*. If Balzac is the most known French Realist writer, London represents an important step in American literature: his writing can be seen as a starting point of this analysis not only for these elements but also for the similar themes.

In Balzac’s novel, the protagonist moves to Paris in an attempt to raise to fame and then flees from the French capital because of his decline. In London’s

Martin Eden, the protagonist is a sailor who cannot renounce his role even despite his literary ambitions. This comparison is thus characterized by the theme of success and delusion. Both protagonists are aspiring young writers, both use a woman to climb the social ladder, and both are finally deluded when they obtain what they wanted.

In *Illusions perdues*, Paris appears as the place of potentiality, a city where one needs to move in order to become someone. However, these hopes are quickly lost, as the title suggests, when the protagonist gets lost in the labyrinth of Parisian society. The relation to movement stresses the division among the three parts of the novel, the central being set in Paris whilst the other two in the province. Thus, movement in Balzac is functional to the “de-provincialisation” of the character, whereas in *Martin Eden* the protagonist needs to move and wander in order to be himself.

Movement seems to be in-bred in London’s protagonist, who renounces his identity as a sailor in order to become a famous writer. This renounce is regretted when he will come to conscience of his delusion and his feeling lost. In the novel, we witness a peculiar depiction of dynamicity, as well. Indeed, when the protagonist moves the least, his success raises, and when he begins feeling misunderstood and eluded, he starts wandering again. There is, thus, a different conception of movement. Both protagonists flee from their delusion, but if Balzac’s narrator saw it foremost as a means to reach success and later as a means

to escape, London's narrator portrays it not just as a means, but as a defining element, a feature essential to the protagonist's persona.

The second couple of novels is Zola's *La Bête humaine* and Henry James' *The Ambassadors*. In Zola, movement is represented by the train, continuously moving back and forth between Paris and Le Havre, articulating the characters' hereditary features and their consequent actions. In James, space dynamics are less easy to spot, but the novel is relevant nonetheless, as it portrays an expatriate in Paris at the end of the Nineteenth century. When discussing the pendulum-like movement of the train, Deleuze's theories on heredity and repetition will be useful. It is interesting to ponder over the role of the train as an emphasis not only of dull, never changing provincial lives but also as an element articulating the *fêlure* of the protagonist.

The third couple, exploring the exhaustion of Naturalism and the turn to Modernism, is Huysman's *À rebours* and Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*. Despite being a memoir, Hemingway's book is an interesting part of this analysis because it provides the point of view of the very author. Therein, we can delve in the life of an actual expatriate in Paris, thus focusing on the importance of space dynamics for writers themselves. In *À rebours*, we are confronted with an obsession against movement. The dandy-like figure of the protagonist, an aesthete who retires to private life in a chateau outside of Paris, will fight every social norm and even discover what it is like to travel without actually going anywhere. In *A*

Moveable Feast, on the other hand, movement is intrinsic to every chapter. The protagonist wanders around the streets of Paris. *Flânerie* has always been a typical French feature, but Hemingway takes it to the next level, with day trips, the obsession with spending the holidays elsewhere, and ultimately the clear need not to be solidly based somewhere.

If *À rebours* represents the exhaustion of French Naturalism, and *A Moveable Feast* is a pivotal text for the comprehension of the Lost Generation, then their pairing makes sense for that literary moment of passage from Naturalism to Modernism. In an age of loss of values and certainties, the movement and the opposition to it are characterised by an obsession, destructive for Huysmans' protagonist and prolific for his American counterpart. In both cases, the relationship with space dynamics assumes an aesthetic dimension, it becomes pivotal to the artistry of the protagonists.

Finally, in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, whose second book, *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*, I will take under consideration, we witness another yet similar approach to space dynamics. And, in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, a group of Middle-westerns find themselves in New York for the time of a roaring summer. The summer brings potentiality and opportunities and it ends with the final loss of hopes and the consequent moving away of all remaining characters. The final chapter will be the occasion not only to ponder over the acme of such a comparison, but also to further think about the importance of space and

place in Modernism, making this dissertation part of the spatial turn in literary studies. Indeed, I will show that territory and movement are central elements for our understanding of French and American Modernism.

1.4 Status Quaestionis

In the recent years, interest has been shown in the topic. After the publication of Franco Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel* in 1998 and of Pascale Casanova's *La République mondiale des lettres* a year later, scholarship has begun studying spaces both within novels and in their sociological context. Moretti's work, which also incidentally analyses *Illusions perdues*, focuses on studying the geography intrinsic to the Nineteenth-century novel, namely the movement of zealous and ardent young men moving to a big city. Despite the text's comparative approach, it mostly focused on studying movements towards capitals and then movements internal to the city itself. This is still extremely relevant. Indeed, before proceeding to a work like this dissertation's, Moretti's analysis was needed to set the groundwork.

Casanova's work, more focused on world literature, studies the evolution of "universal literature," its origins, its geographical and historical references, and its structure, questioning its inequalities and its unfairness. Casanova also spends a lot of pages discussing the role of Paris as *ville littéraire*. An immutable leitmotiv, the French capital has become itself a piece of literature ("*Paris est devenu la littérature*"), and at least until the 1960s every description of it had to resume the

refrain of the unique and inimitable Paris (Casanova, 2008: 50-1). Only in Paris, we read, can American literature surge not only to its independence but also to its acme (*ibid.*: p. 58, p. 137).

Scholarship has also carried out more specific studies. For instance, Donald Pizer and Michael Bradbury's work on American Naturalism and the American expatriate tradition frame these periods and these authors' French inspirations. Laurent Jeanpierre's notions of transnational spaces are also a great framework, for the importance of French American exchange during the first half of the Twentieth century in contributing to the cultural growth of both nations. And, finally, theoretical works on French cultural history, such as Christophe Charles' *Histoire sociale de la France au XIXe siècle* and *La vie intellectuelle en France*, contribute in defining the concept of "rootedness" and the social context. These texts, which have virtually nothing to do with literary analysis, are useful in order to fulfill the sociological side of this dissertation but would mean nothing if not put in conversation with Gilles Deleuze's theories.

Chapter 2: Balzac's *Illusions perdues* and Jack London's *Martin Eden*

This dissertation will not follow a rigid chronological order, as, of course, American and French literature, like their history, did not develop at the same time, with the same literary currents. For his relevance in the theory and in the history of the novel, Honoré de Balzac shall be the opening author. Born in 1799 in Tours and dead in 1850 in Paris, Balzac is considered to be one of the most influential writers of the XIX century, his *Comédie humaine* having been an inspiration for many, namely Émile Zola.

French contemporary theorists and critics debate whether he is to be defined a realist novelist or not, but we must bear in mind the change in the novel theory that takes place at the beginning of the Nineteenth century. Guido Mazzoni, in his study, explains how at the turn of the century, a new style gains popularity, a style that emulates conversation and whose *tòpos* is that of proximity. This, he argues, is the bearing structure of literary realism, together with the emancipation from allegories and morals. Ordinary life thereby becomes worthy of being narrated when it moves away from seriality, hence becoming a *casus*. In this regard, it is interesting to remember Balzac's *préparation*, the empathic and analytical work undergone by the novelist in order to better narrate and describe a story and its characters (Mazzoni, 2011: 195 and following).

For the purpose of this study, I will work on one of his best-known novels, *Illusions perdues*. Written in seven years (1836-43), it is composed of three books, *Les deux poètes*, *Un grand homme de province à Paris*, and *Les souffrances de l'inventeur*. Balzac, in a letter to Mme Hanska, described the book as “*l'œuvre capitale dans l'œuvre*” (Balzac, 1971: 172). Inspired by the author's own experience, *Illusions perdues* portrays the defeat and decay of a young man coming from the French province to Paris, Lucien de Rubempré.

Jack London's *Martin Eden*, instead, published in 1909 and partly inspired by London's experience as well, tells the story of a young proletarian who struggles to become a writer. The main theme is the growth of Martin's artistic sensibility and his consequent disappointment. In love with an upper-class girl, Ruth, the young man decides to “*make himself the man*” and pursue his literary ambitions. Subsequently, he faces challenges and defeats until he achieves success as a journalist. Once he got what he thought he wished, Martin falls into a vortex of delusion and depression.

The comparison is thus also based on the theme of success. Both novels can be defined as bildungsroman. Some have argued that *Illusions perdues'* point is that of showing “*the failure of that education*” of the bildungsroman: “*Lucien, in short, is a hero on his way to becoming an antihero*” (Bresnick, 1998: 824). Similarly, we see Martin Eden's rise to fame knowing about his sufferance; we anticipate his discontent, and we are not surprised with his final decision. Both novels therefore

narrate the progressive annihilation of their protagonist and of their literary pretensions. The other intriguing common point of these novels is, obviously, the presence of movement in the stories they tell.

In *Illusions perdues*, Balzac presents us with a functional movement, a flight from the province to the capital. Such a flight involves an absolute deterritorialisation. Indeed, all the elements of the *recommencement français* described by Deleuze are present. Though we may argue that there is not an absolute *table rase*, Lucien and his lover plan to start a new life, to fit in in the Parisian social scene. This would be Deleuze's concept of manifesto, because even when Lucien changes and grows it does not. We can therefore think that Lucien's line of flight creates an absolute deterritorialisation.

On the other hand, while there is no real flight in *Martin Eden*, movement is inherent to the protagonist's persona. A sailor, Martin will never be able to reconcile his sea identity with his career as a writer. Movement, especially at sea, is necessary for him, it inspires his first writings and his contentment depends on it, as I will show. Thus, howbeit there is no actual *recommencement*, movement is in a strict relation with success, which is why it is interesting to compare these novels. Martin's segments are broken because of his continuous small travels, creating a relative deterritorialisation. He is thereby allowed to recreate and build on his previous experiences.

Moreover, both Martin and Lucien kill themselves (Martin at the end of the novel, Lucien in another volume of the *Comédie humaine*). For both of them, success is not enough. Does this mean that both deterritorialisations failed? As it will be shown later, this is actually the proof of what Deleuze meant when writing that French are too rooted and that the American becoming happens through geographical lines. Lucien commits suicide because he cannot stand the failure of his manifesto, whereas Martin drowns himself to reconcile with his sailor identity.

2.1 Balzac's *Illusions perdues* and Vertical Movement

In *Illusions perdues*, movement is disciplined. It concatenates and divides at the same time the three sections of the novel. At the end of the first part we read: “*L'imprimeur remonta dans son méchant cabriolet, et disparut le cœur serré, car il avait d'horribles pressentiments sur les destinées de Lucien à Paris*” (Balzac, 2010: 183). The narrator entrusts David Séchard with this sharp and mantic comment upon Lucien's departure from provincial Angoulême with his mistress and *protégé* Louise de Bargeton, a provincial minor aristocrat married to a man twenty years older than her. The second part then opens with a brief commentary of their voyage and arrival to the capital. The narrator thither accentuates Lucien and Mme de Bargeton's provincial origin. The relationship with Paris is constructed by contrast and desire. Subsequently, the third part opens with Lucien's flight from Paris.

Therefore, movement is constantly focused on Paris and Lucien. When he leaves Angoulême, he has just made a reputation for himself as a great poet, which leads Mme de Bargeton to live vicariously through him. When they first meet, we are told that *“Elle vécut par la poésie, comme la carmélite vit par la religion”* and that *“Lucien fut décidément un grand homme qu’elle voulut former ; elle imagina de lui apprendre l’italien et l’allemand, de perfectionner ses manières ; elle trouva là des prétextes pour l’avoir toujours chez elle, à la barbe de ses ennuyeux courtisans. Quel intérêt dans sa vie !”* And later she will tell him (*ibid.*: 104, 141):

Souffrez, souffrez, mon ami, vous serez grand, vos douleurs sont le prix de votre immortalité. Je voudrais bien avoir à supporter les travaux d’une lutte. Dieu vous garde d’une vie atone et sans combats, où les ailes de l’aigle ne trouvent pas assez d’espace. J’envie vos souffrances, car vous vivez au moins, vous ! Vous déploierez vos forces, vous espérez une victoire ! votre lutte sera glorieuse.

Unhappy and unsatisfied with her life in Angoulême, Mme de Bargeton is forced to live there waiting for her inheritance, which she plans to use to go to Paris.

Moreover, the town from which the story starts is described as an old city divided into two *faubourgs* (*ibid.*: 86-87):

En haut la Noblesse et le Pouvoir, en bas le Commerce et l’Argent ; deux zones sociales constamment ennemies en tout lieu. [...] La plupart des maisons du haut Angoulême sont habitées ou par des familles nobles ou par d’antiques familles bourgeoises qui vivent de leurs revenus, et composent une sorte de nation autochtone dans laquelle les étrangers ne sont jamais reçus. [...] Moqueuses, dénigrantes, jalouses, avares, ces maisons se marient entre elles, se forment en bataillon serré pour ne laisser ni sortir ni entrer personne ; les créations de Luxe moderne, elles les ignorent ; pour elles, envoyer un enfant à Paris, c’est vouloir le perdre.

Two main divisions are outlined here. Firstly, a social division, still present in the city, still separates people like before the revolution: now the rich live in a cloistered *faubourg* which creates a social group in which newcomers are not accepted and from which members cannot leave (if not fleeing).

Secondly, the narrator shapes the different social approach between the province and Paris: if in Angoulême notable people can live off their myth by secluding themselves from the poor, in Paris, as Lucien and Louise will find out, the rich show off their status through their appearance, their toilette, and their luxurious clothes. The *Haut Angoulême* ignored such modern luxury creations. They avoid Paris and modernity, as indicated by their unwillingness to send their children to the capital. In the obtuse and obsolete world depicted by the very narrator, Lucien's talent can easily stand out and be noticed.

The division between Paris and the province is emphasised by Lucien's growth, too. At the start of his relationship with Mme de Bargeton, he perceives her as "*la reine d'Angoulême,*" though he quickly becomes a demanding lover: "*Le poète qui avait si timidement pris une chaise dans le boudoir sacré de la reine d'Angoulême s'était métamorphosé en amoureux exigeant. Six mois avaient suffi parce qu'il se crût l'égal de Louise, et il voulait alors en être le maître*" (*ibid.*: 166).

Lucien's artistic ego grows from the liaison, and at the same time provincial life stops suiting the two lovers, for its seriality and banality. Their affair cannot take place there anymore: "*La vie de province est d'ailleurs singulièrement contraire aux*

contentements de l'amour, et favorise les débats intellectuelles de la passion" (ibid.: 164).

Therein is also evidence for what was quoted about Guido Mazzoni's theory: the narrator has to move the characters to Paris, in order for the story not to be common anymore. Thereafter, Louise complains about her life in Angoulême (*"Elle était fatiguée, jusqu'au dégoût, de la vie de province. [...] Elle avait jeté les yeux sur Paris" (ibid.: 170)*), eventually asking Lucien to follow her.

Mme de Bargeton leaves for Paris at night, telling Lucien that he moved her to do so, and expecting him to leave with her (*ibid.: 176-177*):

Mon ami, dit-elle, d'un son de voix triste et joyeux en même temps, je vais à Paris. [...] C'est toi, mon enfant chéri, qui m'as inspiré ce changement d'existence. [...] Dans la situation où nous sommes, et dans une petite ville, une absence est toujours nécessaire pour laisser aux haines le temps de s'assoupir. Mais ou je réussirai et ne reverrai plus Angoulême, ou je ne réussirai pas et veux attendre à Paris le moment où je pourrai passer tous les étés à l'Escarbas et les hivers à Paris. C'est la seule vie d'une femme comme il faut, j'ai trop tardé à la prendre. [...] Je partirai demain dans la nuit et vous m'accompagnerez, n'est-ce pas ? Vous irez en avant. Entre Mansle et Ruffec, je vous prendrai dans ma voiture, et nous serons bientôt à Paris. Là, cher, est la vie des gens supérieurs. On se trouve à l'aise qu'avec ses pairs, partout ailleurs on souffre. D'ailleurs Paris, capitale du monde intellectuel, est le théâtre de vos succès ! franchissez promptement l'espace qui vous en sépare !

It is also interesting to note the irony of the narrator, who makes Louise speak of superior minds belonging together in the same place, when a few pages on she will be outsmarted by those same minds she believes are so similar to her. In the passage quoted above, we can see indicators of the rootedness, such the obsession with roots and respectability (*ibid.: 48*).

Albeit basically a fugitive, Louise is still concerned with her social figure. She still thinks of herself as of a *femme comme il faut*, she knows that her absence will cause an outcry in old Angoulême, yet she is not ready to fully commit to her flight, preferring instead to let the waters cool. Hers therefore is not to be a real line of flight. She tries not to abandon everything, not to have a fresh start, a *table rase*.

Of course, Lucien is excited to leave, too, but, upon his enthusiastic arrival in Paris, he envisions his future in the city. Angoulême was a rock hiding him from his destiny (Balzac, 2010: 178):

Lucien, hébété par le rapide coup d'œil qu'il jeta sur Paris, en entendant ces séduisantes paroles, crut n'avoir jusqu'alors joui que de la moitié de son cerveau ; il lui sembla que l'autre moitié se découvrait, tant ses idées s'agrandirent : il se vit, dans Angoulême, comme une grenouille sous sa pierre au fond d'un marécage. Paris et ses splendeurs, Paris, qui se produit dans toutes les imaginations de province comme un Eldorado, lui apparut avec sa robe d'or, la tête ceinte de pierreries royales, les bras ouverts aux talents.

Lucien only thinks about himself in Paris. Thereof, if on the one hand Mme de Bargeton's arrival in Paris is a flight which does not originate any deterritorialisation, we may now wonder if Lucien's does. If the former needs to leave Angoulême to properly live her artistic dreams through her adulterous liaison with the young poet, the latter does not really seem to feel the need to escape. Rather, he could probably move to Paris in a more respectable way, were not for the monetary issues that force him to stay close to his *protéger*. Thus,

fleeing to Paris is easier for him, and, as I will show in the next paragraphs, it makes for a creative line of flight that will then create absolute deterritorialization.

The second part, then, opens with a very focalised description. The narrator, indeed, wants to show how different the *milieu social* is, and that Lucien and Louise do not fit in it. Once they have arrived in Paris, the lovers are no longer possessed by their imaginary investments towards one another. Lucien, for instance, cannot recognise the *reine d'Angoulême* in her rooms in Paris: “*Lucien ne reconnut pas sa Louise dans cette chambre froide, sans soleil, misérable, où le meuble était usé, de mauvais goût, vieux ou d'occasion. Il est en effet certaines personnes qui n'ont plus ni le même aspect ni la même valeur, une fois séparées des figures, des choses, des lieux qui leur servent de cadre*” (*ibid.*: 185)

As evidenced by Figure 2.1, according to a Deleuzian reading, Lucien lives two different stories. His experience in Angoulême has been one in itself, and his arrival in Paris thereby opens the way for a new beginning, a clear-cut new start

he commits to, differently than Mme de Bargeton—hence, the absolute deterritorialisation. Indeed, a different and diverse continuity of segments would not be allowed. The system is too coded to function in diverse branches, like the American does. The

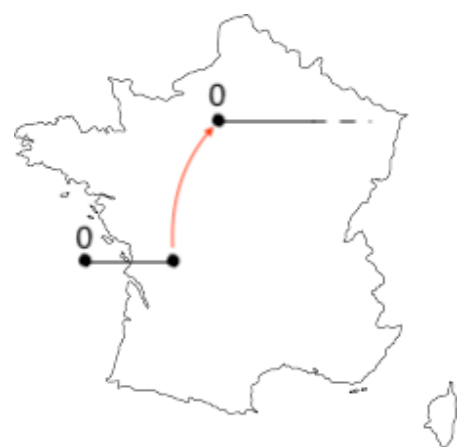


Figure 2.1

need to escape and create a new beginning rises from this, but it is not positive, for it will not create new worlds.

Thereof, it is important to ponder about the meaning of this flight in the narration. Lucien is not the first nor last aspiring writer to move to the French capital, thus one could easily claim that what we read is simply what happens: the poor man makes a great use of his good looks and charm so that the rich woman will bring him to Paris with her. However, we must think the travel from Angoulême to Paris as a rupture. Such a rupture is not part of the story, rather it is out of it.

Therefore, the second zero in the figure suggests that Lucien's is not a positive flight: it creates another unconnected line, it contains a manifesto, and there is treason in it. According to Deleuze, to every zero we encounter in French literature corresponds an attempt to start again, whereas at every rupture we encounter in American literature corresponds a continuous and multiple rhizome, as we can see from Figure 2.2. This is what Deleuze and Guattari call sense and segmentation: each root is itself many, and it originates a multiplicity which is geographical and horizontal. On the other hand, French literature is vertical, obsessed with the future and the past.

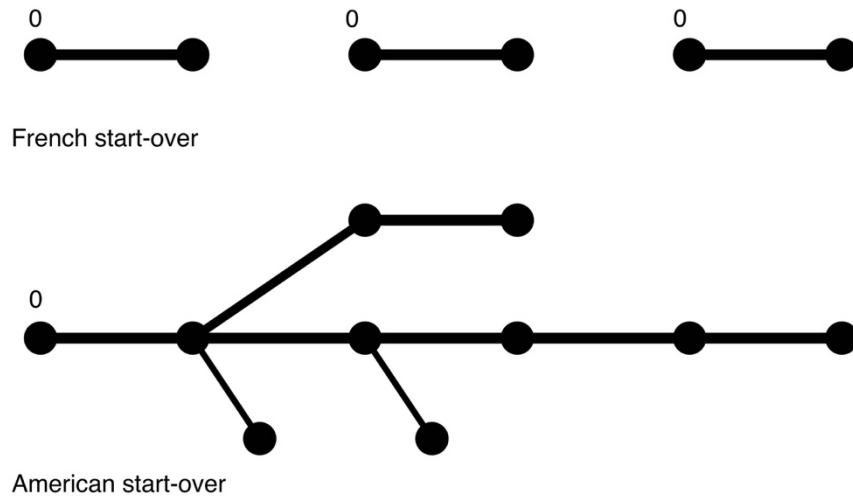


Figure 2.2

Anyway, immediately after his arrival in Paris, Lucien needs to undergo a process the narrator defines “*se desangouler,*” in order to fit in within Parisian society, more complex and competitive than the province’s. Lucien and Mme de Bargeton need to erase the humiliating evidences of their provincial origins. The contrast between their provinciality and Parisian luxury and modernity is emphasised by the narrator through the descriptions of the clothes and the toiletries of Lucien and Louise: “*Lucien, [...] brusquement habillé, se produisit à ses regards dans son pantalon de nankin, de l’an dernier, avec sa méchante petite redingote. Il était beau, mais ridiculement mis. Habillez l’Apollon du Belvédère ou l’Antinoüs en porteur d’eau, reconnâitez-vous alors la divine creation du ciseau grec ou romain ?*” (Balzac, 2010: 187).

Within the imaginary economy of the Parisian social scene, appearance is everything, even for love. Thus, Lucien’s admiration for Louise decreases and, obviously, he seeks to be more of a Parisian and less of a newcomer through

appearance and visibility. Furthermore, Bresnick sees “*the beginnings of a generalized aestheticism as a response to a perceived crisis of what were once thought to be ‘natural’ signs of class identity, [...] in the face of the continuing dilapidation of the aristocracy and the increasing social mobility of an anonymous Parisian public*” (Bresnick, 1998: 834).

This is essential to highlight the contrast between Angoulême and Paris, too. If in the former social belonging was showed simply by the part of the city one dwelled in, in Paris there is much more to it. Henceforth, the narrator will give away details to show the protagonist’s provinciality in order to show that he does not belong there. If we interlace this with space dynamics, then we will see that Lucien’s flight was certainly an absolute deterritorialisation: his not belonging in Paris means that he did not reterritorialise. His movement was not a creative act of escape.

Moreover, during his first stroll around Paris, too, Lucien is described as an outsider (Balzac, 2010: 191-192):

Pendant sa première promenade vagabonde à travers les Boulevards et la rue de la Paix, Lucien, comme tous les nouveaux venus, s’occupa beaucoup plus des choses que des personnes. À Paris, les masses s’emparent tout d’abord de l’attention : le luxe des boutiques, la hauteur des maisons, l’affluence des voitures, les constantes oppositions que présentent une extrême misère saisissent avant tout. [...] Être quelque chose dans son pays et n’être rien à Paris, sont deux états qui veulent des transitions ; et ces qui passent trop brusquement de l’un à l’autre tombent dans une espèce d’anéantissement. Pour un jeune poète qui trouvait un écho à tous ses sentiments, un confident pour toutes ses idées, une âme pour partager ses moindres sensations, Paris allait être un affreux désert.

The narrator hither adopts a Parisian point of view: Lucien is judged. Nonetheless, he perceives Paris as a beacon of hope and, at the same time, as a challenge. This passage then represents another anticipation of Lucien's destiny and is also an index that Lucien's line is vertical. The author, hereto, hints at a social climbing, and the young poet plans on becoming part of a society.

Subsequently, the scene at the Vaudeville theatre allows the two characters to have a first comparative view of each other. Lucien is thereby appalled by the out of fashion toiletry of Mme de Bargeton and wonders if she will eventually change. He henceforth realises that his admiration for her was rooted in the impossibility to confront her to anyone else: *"En province il n'y a ni choix ni comparaison à faire."* At the same time, Mme de Bargeton is thinking about Lucien's appearance, too: *"Malgré son étrange beauté, le pauvre poète n'avait point de tournure. Sa redingote dont les manches étaient trop courtes, ses méchants gants de province, son gilet étriqué, le rendaient prodigieusement ridicule auprès des jeunes gens du balcon : Mme de Bargeton lui trouvait un air pitieux"* (ibid.: 193).

The feeling of disillusion increases when, the following day, the two go to the opera and are surrounded by the Parisian social scene. Lucien and Louise are now able to actually see *"the dissonance of the other as they are cast out of the charmed narcissistic circle in which they had happily enclosed themselves"* (Bresnick, 1998: 834). They both fail in their attempt at looking Parisian, albeit they both had tried to look less provincial (to *se desangouler*) in light of the Vaudeville experience:

“Mme de Bargeton tâcha de se composer une mise du matin convenable. [...] Elle ne trouva rien de mieux dans ses vielleries d’Angoulême qu’une certaine robe de velour vert. [...] Dans son côté, Lucien sentit la nécessité d’aller chercher son fameux habit bleu, car il avait prise en horreur sa maigre redingote, et il voulait se motrer toujours bien mis” (Balzac, 2010: 194).

The passage also shows Lucien’s effort. Indeed, while Louise looks for something to wear from her *vielleries d’Angoulême*, Lucien feels the need to have his new suit and dislikes his old coat. This parallelism highlights the two’s relationship with their escape. On the one hand, Louise has still not committed to it, she still feels like a *femme comme il faut*, attached to the old society of Angoulême. On the other hand, Lucien is even more committed, and he increasingly realises what it takes to become Parisian—which does not mean he will succeed.

By the same token, Mme de Bargeton cannot handle the confront with her cousin, Mme la marquise d’Espard. The narrator presents this contrast once again from Lucien’s point of view, in order to underline his increasing realisation (*ibid.*: 200):

Le voisinage d’une femme à la mode, de la marquise d’Espard, cette Mme de Bargeton de Paris, lui nuisait tant, la brillante Parisienne faisait si bien ressortir les imperfections de la femme de province, que Lucien, doublement éclairé par le beau monde de cette pompeuse sale et par cette femme éminente, vit enfin dans la pauvre Anaïs de Nègrepelisse la femme réelle, la femme que le gens de Paris voyaient : une femme grande, sèche, couperosée, fanée, plus que rousse, anguleuse, guindée, précieuse, prétentieuse, provincial dans son parler, mal arrangée surtout !

Mme de Bargeton's disillusionment is conveyed in a more minimal way, instead, as she now understands what M. du Châtelet said about Lucien. When the marquise says "*Il est facile de voir que vous venez d'Angoulême*" (*ibid.*: 202), indeed, Louise is mortified and realises that "*Il n'est donc pas si beau que je le croyais !*" (*ibid.*: 203). Paris thus makes the one realise how ordinary the other is, and the narrator tells the story of how Lucien fights not to be an ordinary provincial in the capital, nonetheless. Though the young poet feels separated by that world ("*Lucien se voyait séparé de ce monde par un abyme*"), he does want to be part of it: "*Il se demandait par quels moyens il pouvait le franchir, car il voulait être semblable à cette svelte et délicate jeunesse parisienne*" (*ibid.*: 197).

Moreover, it is interesting to notice that Lucien feels separated by the ideas of that world, too (*ibid.*: 206):

Lucien était étourdi par ce qu'on nomme le trait, le mot, surtout par la désinvolture de la parole et l'aisance des manières. Le luxe qui l'avait épouvané le matin dans les choses, il le retrouvait dans les idées. Il se demandait par quel mystère ces gens trouvaient à brûle-pourpoint des réflexions piquantes, des réparties qu'il n'aurait imaginées qu'après de longues méditations.

Depicted as unsure of himself yet willing to make himself a man worthy of Paris, he starts seeking Parisian success, following the archetype of the naïf poet from the province. Immediately after the passage just quoted, Lucien's mind goes back to his appearance ("*Lucien devina qu'il avait l'air d'un homme qui s'était habillé pour la*

première fois de sa vie”), as if to show that he is now in the game: he knows that his looks will be part of his success.

If we look deeper into Deleuze’s theories, we will see that, in Lucien’s case, Paris is herald of possibilities and potentiality, which, however, seem to be precluded to newcomers like him. By that means there is a parallelism between Angoulême, close and classist, and Paris. Both cities are austere and impenetrable, however Paris seems to offer the possibility to infiltrate it through appearances and, of course, the right network. If Lucien wins at this game whilst Louise loses, can we say that it is because Lucien corrupts himself and his hopes, or, rather, because Louise does not really commit to Paris?

Moreover, this is because of the absolute deterritorialisation caused by his flight, which does not allow him to reterritorialise and, thence, successful in Paris. Louise does not fully commit to her flight to Paris. We spotted, in the passages from the beginning of the second part of the novel, a desire to still maintain intact her respectability. She wants to keep up the appearances and not let anyone suspect what she is actually doing in Paris. This, of course, contaminates both the French flight and start-over and the process of deterritorialisation.

Lucien can now start his search for success in Paris and, as Bresnick wrote, *“is confronted with two typological choices: either he joins the world of journalism, for which all writing is merely instrumental, or he adheres to the stringent Romantic code of the members of the Cénacle, who believe that each and every work of art must incarnate its own end”*

(Bresnick, 1998: 836-837). After several descriptions of his encounters with members of the Parisian aristocracy and of his struggles with money and loneliness in Paris, Lucien gives a speech to his sister to convince her that he belongs in Paris (Balzac, 2010: 218-219):

Je ne regrette pas [...] avoir quitté Angoulême. Cette femme avait raison de me jeter dans Paris en m’y abandonnant à mes propres forces. Ce pays est celui des écrivains, des penseurs, des poètes. Là seulement se cultive la gloire, et je connais les belles récoltes qu’elle produit aujourd’hui. Là seulement les écrivains peuvent trouver, dans les musées et dans les collections, les vivantes œuvres des génies du temps passé qui réchauffent les imaginations et les stimulent. [...] Enfin, à Paris, il y a dans l’air et dans les moindres détails un esprit qui se respire et s’empreint dans les créations littéraires. On s’apprend plus de choses en conversant au café, au théâtre pendant une demi-heure qu’en province en dix ans.

This praise for Paris makes it obvious that Lucien sees in it the only city in which he could become someone. This idea, which was not new to French literature, has been explored by Franco Moretti, whose essay *Atlas of the European Novel. 1800-1900* is central for the development of this argument.

Indeed, Moretti, who also takes under consideration the second part of *Illusions perdues*, writes that “in the evolution of the [European] Bildungsroman, [...] the road disappears step by step, and the foreground is occupied by the great capital cities,” and that “the great city is truly another world, if compared to the rest of the country – but the narrative will bind it once and for all to the provinces, constructing it as the natural goal of all young man of talent” (Moretti, 1998: 64). And specifically, about Balzac’s novel, he states that “Between Angoulême and Paris [...], the difference is no longer one of

civilizations, but of fashions; fashion, [...] this engine that never stops and makes the provinces feel old and ugly and jealous” (ibid.: 65).

This confirms what I argued above. This vision of the capital gives honour but also potentiality to Lucien’s aspirations. Only in Paris can one’s hopes become reality. We could then wonder why Lucien fails. Indeed, according to this reading, Lucien should find success in Paris. And he will seem to succeed, at a point, though, because he cannot reterritorialise in Paris, he will decay again and fail. His failure, thus, despite following a moment of accomplishment, is predestined in the moment he escapes Angoulême and deterritorialises.

Let us think of this supposition as a parallelism with Moretti’s idea that *“the difference is no longer one of civilizations, but of fashions.”* Before, one did not have to prove themselves through fashion, and one’s worth was already decided upon their birth. Now, however, everything depends on how they play their cards. Hereto, Herbert Gold mentions that everything depends on the hero’s value, too: *“Balzac preserved his sense of value in human effort. [...] What Balzac did know [...] is that he is important, his people are important, and they have been born with the power to contend as persons in the struggle for mastery of their lives. His effort assures us that virtue arises from the passionate use of self within a society of passion”* (Gold, 1954: 18).

Thus, it is important to follow Moretti’s mapping of Lucien’s movements in Paris (Moretti, 1998: 87).

The novel begins in Parisian West End [...], and proceeds to a second space, which constitutes its genuine beginning: the world of the Cenacle, of young intellectuals, in the Latin Quarter. Then follows the world of publishing, around the Cité and the Palais Royal; the Theater, further away, on the Boulevards; and finally, the fluid space of journalism, disseminated a bit everywhere; and rightly so, because journalism here embodies mobility – spatial, mental, social mobility. [...] Paris has five, six major spaces, whose borders are crossed and recrossed in the full light of day.

A certain type of movement is present and encouraged, then. The movement Franco Moretti talks about is the Deleuzian vertical line. The young man arrives in Paris, where every *quartier* represents a different aspect of social life. Balzac's heroes all begin in a certain area, that is the Latin Quarter, from where they realise that "*their objects of desire – [...] women and money – are all elsewhere: in the Faubourg Saint-Germain and Saint-Honoré, in the Chaussé d'Antin, in the demi-monde of the Boulevards. Far away*" (Moretti, 1998: 95).

Moretti then goes on by writing that "*The desire of youth makes Paris legible, selecting from the city's complicated system a clear point of departure, and one of arrival*" (*ibid.*: 95). We may therefore suppose that the "permitted" movement is caused and alimented by ambition itself, by projects, hunger for success. It is a vertical movement which allows the character to move up the social pyramid. Lucien moves around Paris because he is seeking something bigger and better, not because he is fleeing something or because he is exploring. Every neighbourhood has a different spirit, and thus the hero moves around the city, following specific purposes, and in similar ways to others before and after him.

The fluid space of journalism is said by Moretti to embody mobility. This would be the movement accepted by French culture, according to Deleuze, hence the possibility offered to Lucien and, at the same time, the choice he must make between following the premises of the *Cénacle* or diving into the potentially more fruitful world of journalism. This parallelism reflect Deleuze's claims about the French obsession for roots, too. The *Cénacle* is then associated with French rootedness, instead. Hence, in a Deleuzian reading, journalism should be a positive element.

Despite this, Lucien cannot succeed. This happens because movement is positive when there is a reterritorialisation, which is not Lucien's case. When he enters politics, reterritorialisation becomes even more necessary, in light of Deleuze's writings on the social machine I quoted in the first chapter. In a certain way, we may say that Lucien has no ground. Does this mean that he could have succeeded had it stuck to the *Cénacle's* premises? While we can say that the lost hopes that give a title to the novel are Lucien's, in order to properly answer the last question, we can look at the comparison between Lucien and another hero, Martin Eden. Indeed, Martin is another aspiring writer who gets lost in the vortex of journalism, fame, and upper-class expectations.

2.2 Martin Eden's Sailor Identity

In order to properly analyse space dynamics in *Martin Eden*, we should first ponder over the role of the sea in the novel. The sea novel is indeed an important feature of American literature. As Anita Duneer argues, although we cannot define *Martin Eden* as a sea novel, for it is almost entirely set on land, the sea plays a pivotal role in defining the artistic identity of Martin, whose vocation as a sailor is an indicator of his working-class origins (Duneer, 2015: 250). At the beginning of the novel, Martin is a sailor in-between voyages, and, in fact, after chapter eight he leaves for another eight-month travel (London, 2017: 61):

The eight months had been well spent. [...] He was tortured by the exquisite beauty of the world, and wished that Ruth were there to share it with him. He decided that he would describe to her many of the bits of South Sea beauty. [...] And then, in splendor and glory, came the great idea. He would write. He would be one of the eyes through which the world saw, one of the ears through which it heard, one of the hearts through which it felt. He would write—everything—poetry and prose, fiction and description, and plays like Shakespeare. There was career and the way to win Ruth.

The passage shows an important aspect of Martin's literary aspiration: it is consequent to his desire to narrate his voyages. This is what Duneer means in talking about Martin's vocation as a sailor, and it is thus extremely important for this dissertation: Martin's vocation as a writer seems to follow his push for movement. As we will see, this relation will intertwine with the themes of craft and toil as well, creating a clear picture of Martin's journey. Movement does play

a fundamental role, as it is defining of his writing, his success, and, ultimately, his suicide.

Martin's literary ambitions and seamanship are also bound to another important theme in the novel, craft and toil. Duneer and Labor (Labor, 1974: 108) argue that Martin's going to sea is a craft and the labour-intensive crafts of the mariner align closely with that of the writer, even though he tries to separate his two identities. Hence, when Martin decides to become a writer, he transfers his aesthetics of the sea to his work on land (Duneer, 2015: 252).

Accordingly, London does not describe Martin's fatigue in learning as toil, before and after his decision to make a profession out of his writing: "*The long hours he devoted to it [reading] would have ruined a dozen pairs of ordinary eyes. But his eyes were strong; and they were backed by a body superbly strong*" (London, 2017: 43). These claims already make movement a central element in the novel. His intellectual fatigue is not as alienating as some of the jobs he will have to work, as we will see. Or, better, it is not toiling until he writes for money—composing poetry does not alienate him, for instance, while writing for newspapers does.

Movement is also never represented as toil, as Martin enjoys both his sea voyages and his trips to Ruth's house. When Martin is back from the eight-month sea expedition, London does not describe his state as that of someone who has been non-stop working for a long time and is alienated by it. Rather, the focus is on the reading and studying Martin was able to carry out during his period at sea:

“Back from the sea [...] His was the student’s mind, and behind his ability to learn was the indomitability of his nature and his love for Ruth” (ibid.: 60). His passion is hither still lit by his love for Ruth, yet there is clearly another element supporting him, his voyage.

Indeed, it is from the combination of these two that he has the idea to write. Albeit it is the desire to narrate his travels to Ruth that starts his literary aspirations, the core of his first attempts are his travels. In addition, we should notice that here Martin does not want to become a journalist. In the free indirect speech, Martin wants to write *“everything:”* the genres he then cites are associated with high literature, not journalism.

Labor argues that Martin’s labour and craftsmanship as a sailor drive his journey toward his understanding of his art and the proper practice of writing (Labor, 1974: 108). However, although we must believe that Martin’s writing skills get better throughout the novel, we must also bear in mind that the flaws Ruth finds in his writing are grammar mistakes, and she complains about his choice of themes: *“Why didn’t you select a nice subject?’ [...] We know there are nasty things in the world, but that is no reason”* (London, 2017: 100). Thus, it is possible that his writing is not at such different levels from when it is rejected and when it is successful, though in the beginning Martin has to bend to the dictates of the editorial machine, whereas once he has reached fame he can publish whatever he

wants, even Brissenden's *Ephemera*. It also indicator, of course, of Ruth, and at large upper class, not being able to grasp Martin's essence and aesthetics.

Therefore, "*The joy is in the becoming, not in the being*" (Labor, 1974: 122). By losing the struggle, Martin also loses his push, the ultimate result of a process that begins earlier in the novel. Ruth indeed tells Martin that writing must be a trade, right after hearing about Martin's intention to write for a living: "*He told her of what he had been doing, and of his plan to write for a livelihood and of going on with his studies. But he was disappointed at her lack of approval. She did not think much of his plan. 'You see,' she said frankly, 'writing must be a trade'*" (London, 2017: 66). Writing for a trade of course relates to the concept of the fluid space of journalism mentioned in the first part of the chapter.

From that moment on, writing progressively ceases being a craft and becomes a trade, then almost toil. This happens because writing loses that aspect of liberty that so fascinated Martin. By wanting to narrate his travels, he wished not to stop going at sea, but to stop going as a sailor: "*The first thing he would do would be to describe the voyage of the treasure-hunters. [...] While he wrote, he could go on studying. There were twenty-four hours in each day. He was invincible. He knew how to work, and the citadels would go down before him. He would not have to go to sea again—as a sailor*" (*ibid.*: 62). This passage depicts an undefeatable Martin, who is not susceptible nor afraid of fatigue yet who is, essentially, an explorer. His writing is exploration and escape just like his going at sea.

Nonetheless, Martin wishes for a good salary: “Also, he learned from the item that first-class papers paid a minimum of ten dollars a column. So, while he copied the manuscript a third time, he consoled himself by multiplying ten columns by ten dollars” (*ibid.*: 63). Howbeit, he has no problems writing, studying, and working at the same time (*ibid.*: 64). This creates ambiguity regarding Martin’s will to make money and his will to compose poetry. Such dubiety reflects not only the one between Martin’s identity as a writer and as a sailor, but also the vagueness about Martin’s relationship to movement, in a Deleuzian sense.

Indeed, if we argued that Lucien’s is an absolute deterritorialisation that left him lost and destined to failure, what can we say about *Martin Eden*’s space dynamics? According to Deleuze, writing is in itself a form of flight. Would Martin be acting a relative deterritorialisation when writing his short stories and columns, then, and can we be sure that writing journalism is an escape, too? Lucien was not able to dominate it, in a sense, because he had already operated an absolute deterritorialisation. Martin, on the other hand, corrupts himself, despite being able to deterritorialise and reterritorialise in light of his identity as a sailor. He loses himself and has to seek an ultimate remedy.

Anyway, after Ruth tells Martin he needs to treat writing like a trade, his wilfulness starts decreasing. We can therefore assume a chiasmic relationship between craft and toil –Duneer argues that they cannot be thought separately– with craft representing the romanticised skills of the sailor and toil the

dehumanising stoker of the laundryman. Indeed, when one is present, the other is not. If we think about Martin's laundryman experience, we will notice that he is so alienated and dehumanised that he cannot even try to study or write (London, 2017: 118):

He had seen no daily paper all week, and, strangely to him, felt no desire to see one. [...] He was tired and jaded to be interested in anything, though he planned to leave Saturday afternoon, if they finished at three, and ride on the wheel to Oakland. It was seventy miles, and the same distance back on Sunday afternoon would leave him anything but rested for the second week's work.

What is interesting about this passage, for this dissertation's focus, is that the absence of writing goes along with the absence of movement. Tired and alienated by the dehumanising toil of his job, Martin does not even wish to go back to Oakland for the weekend.

On the other hand, would he be at sea, he would find the job less exhausting. Right after, indeed, we read (*ibid.*: 119-120):

Always, at sea, except at rare intervals, the work he performed had given him ample opportunity to commune with himself. The master of the ship had been lord of Martin's time; but here the manager of the hotel was lord of Martin's thoughts as well. He had no thoughts save for the nerve-racking, body-destroying toil. Outside of that it was impossible to think. He did not know that he loved Ruth. She did not even exist, for his driven soul had no time to remember her.

Hence, the sea, and thus movement, is not associated with toil, rather, Martin recalls with nostalgia his work on ship (Duneer, 2015: 257), for it allowed him to be master of his time and of his thoughts, so that he could also study. He even

forgets about Ruth, so present instead in his attempts at writing poetry (“*His poems were love poems, inspired by Ruth*” (London, 2017: 73)). Moreover, Duneer associates the laundry work with the service of the rich, thus not functional to something greater like powering a ship (Duneer, 2015: 258), or, at large, Martin’s intellectual and artistic growth.

Therefore, Martin Eden is depicted as a sailor who tries to become a writer and whose discomfort begins when he realises he cannot separate nor join his two identities. Also, craft is therein associated to sea and adventure, hence to movement and, at large, poetry. On the other hand, toil is associated with work, and journalism makes Martin alienated. Perhaps poetry could be the way to his release, but his need for money forces him to pursue a career in journalism. Success, thus, makes him unhappy because it lacks motion. This can be also related to Duneer’s claim that “*Martin figures physical spaces in nautical terms*” (*ibid.*: 264). Removed from his role of explorer, Martin will die.

Fame does not make him happy either. With it, comes also the obligation, in a certain sense, to stay and make a career for himself, even though he wanted one at the beginning. Hither we could reconsider the idea that Martin’s writing skills get better throughout the novel, though. Rather, his consciousness gets better. Indeed, he comes to the realisation that there really is not a big difference between his class and Ruth’s: “*In spite of every advantage of university training, and in the face of her bachelorship of arts, his power of intellect overshadowed hers, and his year or*

so of self-study and equipment gave him a mastery of the affairs of the world and art and life that she could never hope to possess” (London, 2017: 152). The stativity he found in the upper classes made Martin sick, and London tries to make it evident. While the Morses try their best not to change, not to mingle, Martin wishes to, and the way for him to make change happen is by moving, by exploring. Whether it is travelling, or working, or riding his bike to meet Ruth, Martin’s artistic and personal growth is mirrored by his movements.

Movement and writing, thus, seem to be in a dual, chiasmic relationship, too. Martin always maintains his status and his point of view of a sailor —Duneer says that he is a “*navigator [who] makes observations and interprets signs*” (Duneer, 2015: 263)— and in fact he feels nostalgic about the sea (*ibid.*: 257). London describes going to sea as a source of inspiration (from Martin’s pearl-diving article to his *Sea Lyrics*). Again, writing becomes toil when Martin, who did not commit to poetry (indeed, when writing poetry, he is not tired: “*The toil meant nothing to him. It was not toil*” (London, 2017: 77 see also Duneer, 2015: 77)), has to write for money, treating his art like a trade, under Ruth’s advice.

2.3 Martin versus Lucien: Suicidal Poets

When Lucien experiences an artistic disillusion caused mainly by his impossibility to reterritorialise Paris, he is faced with a choice: “*Either he joins the world of journalism, for which all writing is merely instrumental, or he adheres to the stringent*

Romantic code of the members of the Cénacle, who believe that each and every work of art must incarnate its own end” (Bresnick, 1998: 837). The ideals of the Cénacle are personified not only in his absent leader Louis Lambert but also and especially in Daniel D’Arthez, whom Lucien meets for the first time in the *Quartier Latin*. The writer fosters, helps, and mentors Lucien, trying to dissuade him from falling for the allure of a luxurious life for a more austere yet meaningful life. He even edits Lucien’s manuscript and tries to deter him from changing political beliefs.

Differently, the fluid world of journalism is personified in Étienne Lousteau, who inspires Lucien to pursue the alluring dream of journalistic power (*ibid.*: 837). Lousteau immediately tells Lucien: “Comme moi, vous allez savoir que, sous toutes ces belles choses rêvées, s’agitent des hommes, des passions, des nécessités. [...] Cette réputation tant désirée est presque toujours une prostituée couronnée” (Balzac, 2010: 342-345). Lucien immediately thinks of Lousteau as of a “*feuilletoniste brillant*,” and, likewise, the journalist realises Lucien’s talent, using him upon his ideal that men are means, as he will advise Lucien to do as well (*ibid.*: 442). Bresnick reads *Illusions perdues* as being structured through “*The incessant opposition of journalism and art, high and low, means and end, etc.*” (Bresnick, 1998: 838).

Lucien’s escape at the end of the second part of the novel can thereby be seen as an attempt of a creative act. By fleeing Paris, Lucien tries to escape his former choices and his corruption. It is too late, though, as he already acts within a context of absolute deterritorialisation. Moreover, the Cénacle’s endorsement

for a form of art that is actually classical rather than romantic, as Bresnick argues (*ibid.*: 837), can be seen as interlaced with rootedness. Despite being romantic in their mission, these artists still believe in formal canons, thus displaying the French obsession for history and manifestos Deleuze claims.

On the contrary, Martin comes to his disillusionment in a different way. Indeed, because of his need for money and his willingness to fit in in Ruth's society, he dedicates himself to journalism. He is not presented with a clear-cut choice like Lucien is. Martin's is more of a continuous contrast. And in this kind of contrast appears the figure of Russ Brissenden. A socialist and author, Brissenden is similar to D'Arthez. Not only they share comparable artistic ideals, they also both introduce their friend to a circle of intellectuals and disdain the world of journalism: *"You try to write, but you don't succeed. I respect and admire your failure. I know what you write. [...] It's guts, and magazines have no use for that particular commodity. What they want is wish-wash and slush, and God knows they get it, but not from you."* [...] *Not only did he assure Martin that he was a poet, but Martin also learned that Brissenden also was one"* (London, 2017: 224-227).

Brissenden's biggest literary accomplishment is *Ephemera*, an unpublished poem that he cherishes and does not want to share with the public. Martin's admiration of Brissenden is clear because he believes that *"Ephemera [...] was perfect art. Form triumphed over substance. [...] It dealt with man and his soul-gropings in their ultimate terms"* (*ibid.*: 242). Even though it seems like Martin understood and

shared Brissenden's will, in a deed that anticipates his own end, he will publish *Ephemera* upon Brissenden's suicide. And, also, Martin will dedicate more to journalism, for the reasons explained above.

Martin consequently falls into a vortex of decay, following his delusion both with the editorial world and the upper class. This is truly an interesting difference between the two writers. Differently than Lucien, who even becomes a right-wing politician, Martin soon realises there is no real difference between him and the components of the Morses' society, even considering himself as intellectually superior (*ibid.*: 203-204).

Martin's disillusionment, thus, arrives after his venture in journalism, whereas Lucien's artistic disillusionment leads to his entrance in the world of journalism. Additionally, while Lucien sells and annihilates himself before committing suicide, Martin seeks poetry: "*Swinburne showed him that it was the happy way out. He wanted rest and here was rest awaiting him*" (*ibid.*: 326). Hence, Martin's suicide is a way out, it happens when he is still famous, and is essentially an escape. By killing himself, Martin reterritorialises the sea in a creative act, as he needs to explore and create new worlds. On the other hand, Lucien kills himself after he has sold himself to abbey Carlos Herrera.

Going back to Brissenden, we will find the character interesting for this analysis because he is portrayed not only as someone Martin looks up to, but also as an elusive figure (*ibid.*: 230):

But Brissenden was always an enigma. With the face of an ascetic, he was, in all the failing blood of him, a frank voluptuary. He was unafraid to die, bitter and cynical of all the ways of living; and yet, dying, he loved life, to the last atom of it. He was possessed by a madness to live, to thrill. [...] Who or what he was, Martin never learned. He was a man without a past, whose future was the imminent grave and whose present was a bitter fever of living.

Though this description could easily be linked to a stereotypical representation of an aspiring philosopher, it is pivotal when we think that Brissenden is often away. The narrator does not inform us, neither does Brissenden tell Martin: “*Brissenden gave no explanation of his long absence*” (*ibid.*: 241). This little detail assumes importance when we remember that Martin looks up to Brissenden in his hatred towards the upper classes and the world of journalism, and because Brissenden’s suicide is an anticipation of Martin’s own suicide.

Feeling exploited by his society, Brissenden takes away his life in his bed: “*Why, the papers were full of it. He was found dead in bed. Suicide. Shot himself through the head*” (*ibid.*: 273). On the other hand, while Martin will feel exploited, too, he will drown himself. This difference plays a big part in our pondering over their suicide and their relation to movement. Brissenden is an enigma, he goes away, comes back, does not really inform anyone about his wanderings, perhaps in an attempt at escaping. His movement is not, thus, the same movement Martin is pushed to. Brissenden always comes back and seems to be running away from something. Martin’s, however, is a different push to movement, that of a sailor. He moves because it is in-bread in him.

When Duneer writes that Martin's suicide is an attempt at "*reconnecting with his old self, which is now disconnected from his identity as a writer*" (Duneer, 2015: 266), we clearly understand that the only way for Martin to learn things is to navigate them. Martin figures out social contexts, spaces, and even his art, through space dynamics. Thus the claim that Brissenden's movement is a flight is backed up, whether it be from his society or from himself. His is not an absolute movement, as in it seems to have reasons behind it. Martin, contrarily, needs to move in order to grow.

Therefore, these claims allow us to ponder over the juxtaposition of roles I hinted at above. Firstly, D'Arthez is to Lucien as Brissenden is to Martin. They represent idealist and committed high art. Secondly, we did not know who would solve the X of Lousteau: Lousteau is to Lucien as X is to Martin. In light of the last paragraphs, we may suggest that journalist Martin is the X. Martin, indeed, becomes Lousteau in the narration. A famous journalist, he has power, he is sought after, he has money, yet, differently than his French counterpart, he is deluded with his success. Of course, we can simply address this difference by blaming it on the characters.

To the new worlds Martin creates correspond different identities. This can be seen as a reason why Martin's sailor and writer identities can never reconcile in the novel, possibly because of the crack created by his journalist identity. Though journalism is a fluid space and Martin is able to reterritorialise, he gets

lost in the gaze of the editorial industry and of upper-class society. Hence, his disillusion and his need to escape. As I have said, Martin's final voyage at sea is a rebellious escape and thereby a creative moment, in which the writer tries to reconcile with his sailor identity.

Differently, Brissenden's suicide was just an annihilation of himself, a disappearance. There was no crack in him, for what we know, just a discomfort caused by his own society. This is not the case of Martin, whose discomfort is caused by a society different than his own. Indeed, he did believe until the end that people like Lizzie would have better understood him. At the beginning of the novel, he knows he belongs to people like her: "*You belong by rights to girls like Lizzie Connolly*" (London, 2017: 84). And even at the end of the novel he thinks so: "*He desired to be valued for himself, or for his work, which, after all, was an expression of himself. That was the way Lizzie valued him. The work, with her, did not even count. She valued him, himself*" (*ibid.*: 300). Though people like Lizzie would not understand his work, they would at least value him. The "crack" is thus caused by various elements, all concurring to Martin's lostness.

As a result, the difference between Martin's and Lucien's suicide resides in the potentiality of the two. Martin's suicide is a re-appropriation and a reconciliation, it heals the crack just described. Lucien's, on the other hand, is a way of giving up. Focusing on the happenings of *Illusions perdues*, Lucien basically sells himself to abbot Carlos Herrera. Yes, he is saving David Séchard from a

bankruptcy he caused, but he is mostly renouncing the possibility to make any further decision, giving up his potentiality to someone else. Despite fleeing Paris, as I have already argued, his is not a positive flight. To draw lines of flight is to become, to dismantle those rigid segments that individualise and bind the subject to the body and the assemblage of bodies (Bogard, 1998: 72). This is the contrary of what Lucien does, because he is a French character and he could not fit in into French literary tradition would he succeed in deterritorialising.

2.4 More Considerations about Space Dynamics

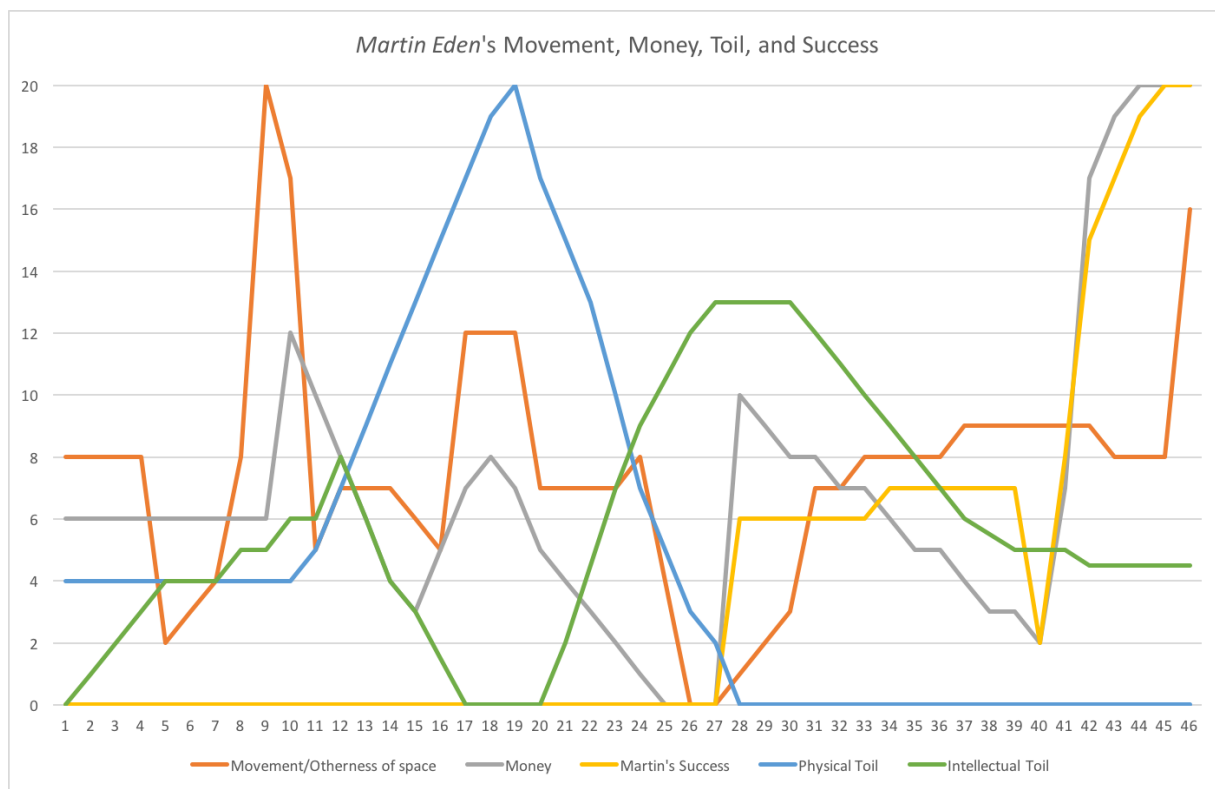
The opposition between Paris and province is even more present in the ending of *Illusions perdues*. As Moretti writes: “*Lost Illusions, at bottom, says it all: to the provinces the endless, heavy task of physically producing paper; to the capital the privilege of covering those beautiful white sheets with fascinating ideas (and glittering nonsense)*” (Moretti, 1998: 68). The lost hopes thereby intertwine with that opposition, and mingle both with Lucien and David, who are both left disillusioned in the end. Movement is thus an element functional to the plot of *Illusions perdues*. It brings Lucien to Paris and then away from it and, according to a Deleuzian reading, it underlines Lucien’s predestination to failure.

On the other hand, in *Martin Eden*, while there is obviously disillusionment, the real opposition, which contributes to creating the crack in his identity, is between stativity, represented by the respectable life in the city, and movement,

represented by the sea. Before concluding this chapter, it is thus important to ponder once again about space dynamics in Jack London's novel, in order to fully grasp its meaning to the novel and this dissertation. It is useful to do this by ordering our data in a graphic.

In the graphic (figure 2.3), the horizontal axis represents the chapters of the novel, while the vertical axis the intensity of the element taken under consideration deduced from the narration—mentions of the narrator, direct quotes, etc.—and arbitrarily given a number from 0 to 20. So, for instance, when we look at the line of money, coloured in grey, we will see that at the beginning of the novel it is quite low, yet it does raise after Martin's eight-month expedition

Figure 2.3



(after chapter eight) then decrease just before his forced choice to go work at the laundry (chapters twenty-five to twenty-seven).

The graphic allows us to ponder over certain themes and their relationships. While Martin's success is not linked to nor follows his movement, we can see that his financial situation follows more or less his displacements. Or, when physical toil decreases, intellectual toil, which is linked to Martin's monetary situation, increases, and, quite obviously, that physical toil disappears when success arises. There is, thereby, a direct proportion between money and movement in the novel. Howbeit, the money line rises only if there the toil line does too. Likewise, success is financially positive only with toil. This underlines the difference between movement and toil, the former annulling the latter. Moreover, toil generally follows money, until success increases, and it opposes movement only with the increase of success. Therefore, movement appears as continuous and necessary, and Martin's conflict is correlated to his inability to "be in the middle."

The graphic thus shows movement and otherness of space as core elements in the novel, which is indeed shaped by them. Martin could never exist without his restless push for exploration and movement, and *Martin Eden*, the novel, could never have been written without such an important role played by the protagonist's (and the author's) push. The analysis of the graphic thereby backs

up the claim that Martin's rise to fame is not a rise to happiness. It highlights the crack in his character and allows us to better understand his discomfort.

2.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, we can gather that in Balzac's *Illusions perdues* two types of movement are present, horizontal and vertical. The horizontal movement is embodied by Lucien's two flights. The first one results, as I argued, in an absolute deterritorialisation, which hence sets the protagonist for defeat. The second and last escape is conditioned by the first and cannot but result in another absolute deterritorialisation. The vertical movement, instead, is represented by Lucien's displacements in Paris, which, as Moretti claims, reflect Lucien's artistic and then social and political aspirations. Therefore, horizontal movement is "not permitted" and condemns Lucien, insomuch as the theories explained by Deleuze about French people being rooted and historical.

The unanswered question of the chapter was, indeed, about this controversy. If vertical movement is permitted in French novel and Lucien did not present any interest in leaving Paris, then why did he fail in the end? Because Lucien did not fully respect the French tradition in his flight to Paris. He escaped with the help of a wealthy woman whom he later left for a more charming yet less rich girl. His flight did not respect the concepts listed by Deleuze as central to French culture, such as roots, history, respectability. This put Lucien in an

absolute position, inasmuch as Deleuzian theory can be applied to this reading. Unbound and fluctuating, Lucien was not able to reterritorialise and thus dominate his destiny. He was already lost and, furthermore, he certainly was not free when he first arrived in Paris.

On the other hand, offering a perfect comparison to conclude this chapter, movement in *Martin Eden* follows a different scheme. Horizontal movement is inborn, fundamental, and, most importantly, not necessarily functional. As we can gather from the graphic (figure 2.3), when he displaces out of necessity his morale is at its lowest. On the contrary, vertical movement hampers horizontal movement and does not bring Martin happiness, as shown in the graphic. It may almost be seen as a means—Martin wants to use his social climbing for different targets, whereas Lucien's target became social climbing. His suicide assumes thus another meaning. Not only, it brings Martin to deterritorialise and break free, it also, in a way, annuls his vertical movement.

However, why does Martin not simply change his programme and flees away? There are multiple hypothetical answers to this question. His disillusion and lost hopes could have again brought him to the need for an extreme gesture, or Martin's objective to impress and enter the upper classes could have tainted his programme into a manifesto, thus compromising his dynamicity. Should it be the second option, the novel would prove not only the American push for movement argued by Deleuze but also its need for programmes. Indeed, it would show that,

when an American character is stuck in an unchangeable manifesto, he cannot survive.

Chapter 3: Social Machine, Habit, and *Fêlure* in Zola and Henry James

3.1 Émile Zola's *La Bête humaine*

3.1.1 Movement and Social Machine in *La Bête humaine*

Quite an atypical novel for the *Rougon-Macquart* series, *La Bête humaine*, for which Deleuze himself wrote a preface, is considered by Zola himself as his best work from a technical point of view. The plot revolves around the witnessing of the protagonist, Jacques Lantier, of a murder on a train. “*The scene is uncanny in many respects, not the least of which is its resemblance to a movie. A moving picture emerges from the darkness (in this case a tunnel) and then disappears, it is played and replayed in the mind and actions of the viewer,*” writes Susan Blood (Blood, 2006: 51). Lantier will then be haunted by the image and will end up replicating that same exact crime at the end of the novel.

Movement is thus a central theme in the novel. The ever-present figure of the train scans not only the rhythm of the narration but also the lives of the employees of the railway company, whose personal lives are supervised by it, too (Paine, 2019: 235). *La Bête humaine* is indeed the perfect novel to explore the theme of movement in French Naturalism because movement is omnipresent and is related to the social machine of the *Second Empire*.

I will show how the train is constantly present in the narration and how every character relates to it. Though one might argue that this novel actually

serves as counterargument to Deleuze's theories, it actually fits in perfectly into the argument of this dissertation. Movement is constantly "negative" and mostly related to a vertical conception of it. Moreover, most of it is actually repetitive, from Le Havre to Paris and back.

It is negative because it never consists in a relative deterritorialisation. The characters are not allowed to escape their predestination—the premise of Naturalism, truly. Deterritorialisation and even more so reterritorialisation, instead, are trajectories that allow one to disrupt one's predestination and, as creative deeds, set one free from the social machines. Such an opportunity is not offered to Zola's characters, who instead cannot but go back to what has been decided for them.

The crime the novel is based on opens the way for an even worse feature, the *fêlure*. Extremely important to properly analyse Zola's work and discussed by Deleuze himself, the *fêlure* is a hereditary feature of someone's character, that will lead that person to act in a determined way, even against their will. Not to be confused with the instinct, it passes on temperaments *and* instincts. What I will show in the following pages is that the Jacques' *fêlure* and movement interlace continuously in the novel, thus backing up my initial claim that movement is vertical.

3.1.2 Crime in *La Bête humaine*

Before we can get to the core of this analysis, we must contemplate on the three central elements of the novel. Indeed, if we are to find key words to describe its plot, we would certainly use crime, train, and *fêlure*. We use the first one because *La Bête humaine* is a story of many crimes. The first to appear is the child abuse carried on over many years by Grandmorin, an important public figure for the Empire and former director of the board of the railway company, against Séverine, the daughter of his gardener whom he raised like her own child, eventually having her marry Roubaud.

It is indeed in the first chapter that he discovers his wife's secret. Hence, Roubaud decides to murder Grandmorin with the help of Séverine: "*Il faut que je le crève. [...] Et, entends-tu, ce que je vais faire, je veux que tu le fasses avec moi... Comme ça, nous resterons ensemble, il y aura quelque chose de solide entre nous*" (Zola, 2018: 64-66). He forces her to write him a note, asking for a meeting on the morning train for Le Havre, where the couple live.

Thereby, Zola inserts the second crime. Grandmorin is murdered as the train emerges from the darkness of a tunnel on the railroad from Paris to Le Havre (*ibid.*: 104-105):

Jacques vit d'abord la gueule noire du tunnel s'éclairer, ainsi que la bouche d'un four, où des fagots s'embrasent. Puis, dans le fracas qu'elle apportait, ce fut la machine qui en jaillit, avec l'éblouissement de son gros œil rond, la lanterne d'avant, dont l'incendie troua la campagne, allumant au loin les rails d'une double ligne de flamme. Mais c'était une apparition en coup de foudre : tout de suite les

wagons se succédèrent, les petites vitres carrées des portières, violemment éclairées, firent défiler les compartiments pleins de voyageurs, dans un tel vertige de vitesse, que l'œil doutait ensuite des images entrevues. Et Jacques, très distinctement, à ce quart précis de seconde, aperçut, par les glaces flambantes d'un coupé, un homme qui en tenait un autre renversé sur la banquette et qui lui plantait un couteau dans la gorge, tandis qu'une masse noire, peut-être une troisième personne, peut-être un écroulement de bagages, pesait de tout son poids sur les jambes convulsives de l'assassiné. Déjà, le train fuyait, se perdait vers la Croix-de-Maufras, en ne montrant plus de lui, dans les ténèbres, que les trois feux de l'arrière, le triangle rouge.

This scene is described as pre-cinematic (Blood, 2006: 57-60), because Jacques, the observer, witnesses a scene that will have a definitive impact on his future actions. The movement of the train, immediate, fast, almost unperceivable, is both a mirror for the continuous pendular movement between Paris and Le Havre and for the *fêlure*, as we will see later, that haunts Jacques.

There is, then, a third crime, caused exactly by the *fêlure*. Blood writes that “Zola’s theory of the inherited defect [...] is explicitly articulated in *La Bête humaine* as an explanation of Jacques’s character. Jacques is doomed by his inherited defect to be a murderer” (*ibid.*: 54). In order to sublimate this defect, Jacques has dedicated all his time and attention to his locomotive, La Lison. However, when La Lison breaks down and he consequently becomes the witness to Grandmorin’s murder, he loses his balance. Haunted by the image of the murder since immediately after seeing it, “Jacques has seen [...] an image of his own desire” (*ibid.*: 55).

We can find evidence to back this up in his reaction to seeing Grandmorin’s corpse: “Jacques fut pris du désir de voir la blessure, pendant qu’il était seul. Une inquiétude

l'arrêtait, l'idée que, s'il touchait à la tête, on s'en apercevrait peut-être. [...] C'était donc bien facile de tuer ? Tout le monde tuait. [...] L'idée de voir la blessure le piquait d'un aiguillon si vif, que sa chair en brûlait. [...] Toujours et en tout, chez lui, l'épouvante s'était éveillé avec le désir" (Zola, 2018: 111). Eventually, the crime will be committed when Jacques can no longer hold his push for murder. When Séverine finally confesses Grandmorin's murder, in the same room she confessed her secret to Roubaud, Jacques' desire to kill is unleashed. Her murder is "*patterned after Grandmorin's. Jacques uses the same knife and inflicts the same wound that had fascinated him when he examined Grandmorin's corpse next to the train tracks*" (Blood, 2006: 55).

3.1.3 The Train, Pendular Movement, and Space Hierarchies

The second key word is train. Its importance has already become apparent in the previous paragraphs. "*The entire action of the novel revolves around those three locales: the rooms overlooking the Gare St. Lazare where the novel begins; the house at the Croix-Maufras where the tracks bisect the garden, the nearby tunnel, and the crossing-keeper's house; and the rooms at the station at Le Havre. The sites are in effect Zola's two colossal gares and the network between them*" (Robinson, 1983: 64). This theme binds the plot to a continuous movement, indeed epitomised by the train.

Even though usually Zola's novels are set in a definite place, not showing motion and thus conforming to Deleuze's theories, *La Bête humaine* shows spaces completely related to movement. However, do this continuous pendulum between

Paris and Le Havre and the changes of scenario really make of the novel an exception to “the rule”? The answer, which will be explored in the first part of this chapter, is that they do not. Indeed, there is a hierarchical relationship among places, enticing the vertical conception of space mentioned above.

Paris, as per usual, is the capital of the Empire. The rooms near *Gare Saint Lazare* and the station itself are in the middle. They are in Paris, of course, but they are projected towards the outside, the elsewhere, just like the rooms near the station in Le Havre. The being in the middle could and will be compared with Deleuze’s idea of *milieu*, i.e. being in the middle as in being in-between two starting points. If a *milieu* is present, then does it mean that there is a *recommencement*, too?

In a French new beginning, there must be a *table rase*, Deleuze argues. This is why, when Séverine wishes for a new life with Jacques, she cannot but imagine her husband’s death and a flight to America (Zola, 2018: 383):

Elle songea que, s’il était mort elle serait libre. Elle le regardait de ses grands yeux fixes : pourquoi donc ne mourait-il pas, puisqu’elle ne l’aimait plus, et qu’il gênait tout le monde, maintenant ? Dès lors, le rêve de Séverine changea. Roubaud était mort d’accident, et elle partait avec Jacques pour l’Amérique, mais ils étaient mariés, ils avaient vendu la Croix-de-Maufrais, réalisé toute la fortune. Derrière eux, ils ne laissaient aucune crainte. S’ils s’expatriaient, c’était pour renaître, aux bras l’un de l’autre. Là-bas, rien ne serait plus de ce qu’elle voulait oublier, elle pourrait croire que la vie était neuve.

The text says it clearly. Expatriating is an action functional to a palingenesis. Her *recommencement* could not but start with a clear cut and would need a complete detachment from her life in France—hence the selling of the house. However, this would not be possible according to the Deleuzian idea of French flight, and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, if Séverine were to escape, then she would be doomed to fail. Moreover, her desire to flee can be seen as an intricate and provocative way Zola used to further make irony on her destiny, suggesting she has no escape to her predestination.

Throughout the second part of the novel and until her death, she plans her future with Jacques and how he shall murder Roubaud so to insure her freedom. We can interpret it as a manifesto. Indeed, she seems to have a clear idea of what she wants and how she wants it to happen. Within a programme, instead, she would have fled with Jacques and figured out what to do step by step. The irony of Zola is in plotting her death as an outcome of her own desire of death. She wants her husband killed by her lover, she longs to leave, however she will die by the very hand of her lover. Indeed, the murder of Grandmorin by Roubaud and her confession to Jacques will ignite his *fêlure* and finally take it to its utmost. As I will show later, she is the protagonist of both significant symbolical events that trigger Jacques' push for murder.

Furthermore, between the two cities lies the railway, an important spatial element because of its significance. It is in these places, indeed, that Zola sets

actions outside the law or usual customs, thereby giving a meaning to the elsewhere. We cannot, thus, speak of flights, inasmuch we are mostly confronted with actions that need to be carried out outside of the respectable urban space, which represents the *Second Empire* at large. The railway and the town of Croix-de-Maufras are then symbolical places. By setting the action out of Paris and Le Havre, Zola insists in the hierarchy between the province and the capital. Paris is the centre of the system, where one aspires to be. Séverine herself loves it yet she is portrayed as an outsider in Paris, the hierarchy between province and capital being thereby enhanced.

At the beginning of the novel, the Roubauds are looking outside the window of the small apartment nearby *Gare Saint Lazare*. Roubaud's attention is entirely taken by the trains ("*Le sous-chef de gare, ayant ouvert une fenêtre, s'y accouda. [...] Toute son attention fut prise par le train de trois heures vingt-cinq, à destination de Caen*" (Zola, 2018: 31-33), since the railway company controls the lives of its employees. On the other hand, Séverine is still contemplating her day in the capital: "*Elle l'avait rejoint à la fenêtre, elle demeura là quelques seconds, appuyée à son épaule, regardant le vaste champ de la gare. [...] Cela la grisait, quand elle venait à Paris. Elle était toute vibrante du bonheur d'avoir couru les trottoirs, elle gardai tunc fièvre de ses achats au Bon Marché*" (*ibid.*: 39-40).

Another example can be found in the passage where Séverine goes to M. Camy-Lamotte's *hôtel* seeking his protection: "*Elle qui adorait Paris, qui aimait tant à*

en courir le pavé, librement, les rares fois où elle y venait, elle s’y sentait perdue, peureuse, dans une impatience d’en finir et de se cacher” (ibid.: 197). She is hither depicted as an outsider, enjoying one of the rare times she gets to walk in Paris, even though she is on her way to plead her case. Paris is shown as a place that allows her to be free, hiding from her life, but it is just an impression she has. Not only she does not belong there, the capital is actually a structured place, governed by the social and political rules of the *Second Empire*.

A functionary of the minister, M. Camy-Lamotte finds out the Roubauds’s involvement in the crime yet he prefers to blame it on a country man in order to save appearances and avoid all the political consequences it would cause: “*Les journaux de l’opposition continuaient à mener une campagne bruyante ; [...]cette campagne devenait vraiment désastreuse, à mesure que les élections approchaient. Aussi avait-on exprimé au secrétaire general le désir formel d’en finir au plus vite, n’importe comment” (ibid.: 206).* Camy-Lamotte blames Cabuche, because the system would not benefit from the discovery that Grandmorin was a criminal. Therefore, Paris represents a social machine, coded according to the *Second Empire’s* dogmas.

The three locations are therefore tainted with different meanings. To Paris the role of imperial capital and of maintaining the Empire going. The city attracts and eludes with its image and fame. To Le Havre the provinciality and the alienated lives of the employees of the *Compagnie du Grand-Ouest*. And, finally, in

the middle is the railway, a different space that allows the narrator to create an interesting and unusual weaving of events.

Indeed, not only the space of the railway is a perfect epitome of the Empire's push for modernity and progress, at the expenses of those who are left out, it also emphasises the distance from the ruling class and, at large, the vertical conception of territory. Such a distance, controlled by the railway company, is used to keep the myth of Paris alive. Moreover, these three locations mirror with the locales mentioned by Robinson. The lower-class characters' alienation is showed in their locales being a non-space of the city. They do not live the cities, they just work there. This further suggests a hierarchy of spaces and thence a vertical conception of movement.

Historians agree on the influence Paris had on Nineteenth-century French society and on the interest of novelists like Zola in analysing and describing the social novelties of the *Second Empire*, even though the glamorous image of the city did not always correspond to the reality (Charle, 1991: 99). The provinces –and the suburbs– were affected by a degradation of the conditions of life, and, even though during the second half of the century Paris was remodelled, such a renewal of the city was actually aimed for keeping the lower classes away from the city centre (*ibid.*: 123-125).

The survival of the declining nobility and high bourgeoisie is thus lied to the efforts in keeping distant the lower and middle classes (*ibid.*: 228-237), an

attitude that is mirrored in Zola's critical representation of the Empire. The rooms overlooking the station, the alienated existences lived by the characters, not to mention the finale of the novel, portray a society that is not able to escape its fatal destiny because it is immobilised in its hierarchy and in its obsession for appearance. In this period, moreover, the new intellectual elite Zola was a part of assumes the mission of permanently contesting the government's mistakes (*ibid.*: 267). All these premises are important in an analysis of movement, because they contribute in showing that movement and territory are conceived as vertical.

3.1.4 Gilles Deleuze on *Fêlure* in *La Bête humaine*

The third key word to describe the novel is *fêlure*. As Gilles Deleuze was also the author of a preface to this novel, we can now ponder over his essay in order to better understand the *fêlure*'s mingling with the story and how it interlaces to concepts of memory and habitus. This will help us have a clearer picture of the role of movement in the novel. Mingling, stopping and then activating Jacques' *fêlure*, it contributes to his story and to the plot of the whole novel, thus making it interesting in literary analysis.

The concept of *fêlure* is particularly relevant for our analysis not only because it mingles with movement, as I have just mentioned, but also for its closeness to American literature. Indeed, Deleuze writes that the theme of the *fêlure* will be found again in Modernist literature, giving the example of Fitzgerald

(Deleuze, 2018: 7), and that the great American novel is the utter descendent of French Naturalism (*ibid.*: 22).

Deleuze describes the *fêlure* as a *hérédité* that passes on temperaments, instincts, and *gros appétits* (*ibid.*: 8). These instincts are said to influence lifestyles and to never mix with the *fêlure*. Rather, instincts have different and variable relations with the *fêlure*, which is sometimes slowed down, sometimes enhanced by them. The instinct is what tends to preserve, expressing the “*genre de vie sans lequel un corps ne supporterait pas son existence historiquement déterminée dans un milieu défavorable*” (*ibid.*: 9).

Deleuze goes on distinguishing two types of *hérédité*, *petite* and *grande*. The former is that of the instincts: “*les conditions de vie des ancêtres ou des parents peuvent s’enraciner chez le descendant et agir en lui comme une nature, parfois à des générations de distance.*” The latter, instead, is that of the *fêlure*, which does not pass on nothing but itself: “*Elle n’est pas liée à tel ou tel instinct, à une détermination organique interne, et pas d’avantage à tel événement extérieur qui fixerait un objet. Elle transcende les genres de vie. [...] Celle qu’elle transmet ne se laisse pas déterminer comme ceci ou cela, mais est forcément vague et diffus*” (*ibid.*: 12-13).

Deleuze then concludes by arguing that the essential in *La Bête humaine* is the death instinct of Jacques Lantier, who consequently renounces it by sublimating it with the locomotive La Lison. However, the rupture moment, that is the crime committed by the Roubauds, will develop a system of identifications

and repetitions which create the rhythm of the novel (*ibid.*: 17). In order to better understand what Deleuze means with this, we may take his *Répétition et différence* under consideration.

In the second part of the essay, drawing from Bergson, the philosopher exemplifies three layers of repetitions. The first is the passive synthesis, which is incarnated in the habit, as every individual is composed by contractions, retentions, and expectations (Deleuze, 1994: 73). A habit for Deleuze is “*moments when the atoms settle into a grid, a little matrix of experience that the imagination stabilizes for us, particularly in view of the time it takes to apprehend having acquired a habit, and to anticipate the likelihood of having it in the future*” (O’Keeffe, 2016: 75).

The second level is then organised by the active force of memory, which introduces discontinuity into the passage of time by sustaining relationships between more distant events. Related to the passive synthesis of habit, as “*habit allows the understanding to reason about experience*” (Deleuze, 1994: 68), memory is virtual and vertical, dealing with events in their depth and structure. Where passive syntheses created a field of ‘me’s,’ active synthesis is performed by ‘I’s’ (*ibid.*: 83-85).

The third layer, finally, that of the empty time, is a rupture with the simple repetition of time. Related to the concept of *Thanatos* quello freudiano?, it refers to a great symbolic event, like the murder to be committed by Oedipus, or, in the case of *La Bête humaine*, the murder of Grandmorin. Upon rising to this level, an

actor joins the abstract realm of the eternal return. The 'me's' and the 'I's' give way to the man without name, without family, without qualities, without self or I (*ibid.*: 90).

Hence, what we gather from all of this is that one of the main themes in Zola's work, according to Deleuze, is heredity. Heredity conveys one with *fêlure*, which is often in relation with instincts, forcing one to succumb to determinism. Of course, one can try to resist, by sublimating their instinct, but the repetition and the game of time can abruptly put them back into their spiral of determined destiny, and of eternal return. The rupture with passive and active syntheses forces one to become a man without name, to be acted upon by that same heredity.

3.1.5 Interweaving of Movement and *Fêlure* in the Novel

It is apparent, at this point, that movement is a central element of *La Bête humaine*. Essentially represented by the railway, movement offers sublimation to Jacques' murderous instinct and space to the elsewhere in the novel (hence a potential way of escape). On the other hand, it is controlled by the railway company. This is the reason they cannot succeed in any way and are already predestined. The social machine of the Empire, acting upon the railway company, has already decided everyone's role; every action against the *dispositif* cannot go unpunished.

The pendular movement of the train from Le Havre to Paris is thus a habitus, which Deleuze would call repetition. A passive synthesis, it repeats itself

every time without changing. The rigid binary segments are thereby enhanced, the train accentuating the opposition between Paris and provinces, for example. One could believe that this notion leads to a horizontal conception of territory, that is a territory one can explore and that is seen as a surface rather than a socially coded space (Bogard, 1998: 61.63). However, one must bear in mind that the movement is strictly codified and controlled by the railway company.

Simply put, the train can only move on a railroad and the employees can only move when they are on duty. There is no freedom of movement, which is codified by the social machine of the Empire. People seem to be able to move only within social permissions, suggesting a vertical movement. Hence, Jacques' *fêlure* is contained by the very social machine, if we accept that he makes use of La Lison to sublimate his murderous instincts.

Indeed, there is a strict connection in the narration between Jacques' *fêlure* and his locomotive. When he witnesses the murder of Grandmorin, he is spending the night in the village of Croix-de-Maufras, where his aunt Phasie lives, because La Lison had a connecting rod broken. The town is described as an isolated and alienating place, a "*trou perdu*" (Zola, 2018: 76), where nothing ever happens: "*On ne saurait imaginer un trou plus reculé, plus séparé des vivants, car le long tunnel, du côté de Malaunay, coupe tout chemin, et l'on ne communique avec Barentin que par un sentier mal entretenu longeant la ligne*" (*ibid.*: 74). When Jacques arrives at his aunt's, he explains her that: "*Il venait d'avoir brusquement deux jours de congé force : la Lison, sa machine, en*

arrivant le matin au Havre, avait eu sa bienne rompue, et comme la réparation ne pouvait être terminée avant vingt-quatre heures, il ne reprendrait son service que le lendemain soir” (ibid.: 77).

Moreover, when Jacques talks with Phasie and her daughter Flore, who is desperately in love with him, about the little village, which is continuously called *trou* (hole) throughout the chapter, we gain important evidence for the situation of the French province in the second half of the Nineteenth century, as already mentioned (*ibid.*: 83).

Cela lui semblait drôle, de vivre perdue au fond de ce désert. [...] Bien sûr que la terre entière passait là, pas des Français seulement, des étrangers aussi, des gens venus des contrées les plus lointaines, puisque personne maintenant ne pouvait rester chez soi. [...] Ça, c’était le progrès, tous frères, roulant tous ensemble, là-bas, vers un pays de cocagne.

The two women do not seem to care about modernity, a point of view that might represent what provincial French people thought.

Likewise, Phasie seems to be critical of locomotives and trains: “*Ah ! c’est une belle invention... il n’y a pas à dire. On va vite, on est plus savant... Mais les bêtes sauvages restent des bêtes sauvages, et on aura beau inventer des mécaniques meilleures encore, il y aura quand même des bêtes sauvages dessous” (ibid.: 84).* The mingling of the image of a savage beast and a train shows another level of sublimation and identification between Jacques and the Lison, even though the words are not his. “*Lust and death and the railway begin entwined in the opening scenes. [...] The human beast [...] becomes the*

roaring, smoking, speeding locomotive whose benign façade is shattered like the veneer of civilization masking the turmoil within the men and the women who people this novel” (Robinson, 1983: 65).

Hence, we can suppose that the “transformation” occurs in both ways: Jacques Lantier becomes a *Bête humaine* because of his failed escape from his nature, his *fêlure*. The locomotive, symbol for modernity and progress (and, in a broader sense, the *Second empire*), is a human beast, as in it is created by men but ends up taking their place. This comparison meets the discourse about movement for the obvious reason that the train is the only element that actually moves, creating repetition. As Blood writes, “*The train represents modernity and progress in a general sense, and Zola’s novel can be read as a reflection on technology and its impact on human experience*” (Blood, 2016: 51).

The binary oppositions and the otherness of the village are emphasised when the narrator describes the passage of a train (Zola, 2018: 88):

C’était comme un grand corps, un être géant couché en travers de la terre, la tête à Paris, les vertèbres tout le long de la ligne, les membres s’élargissant avec les embranchements, les pieds et les mains au Havre et les autres villes d’arrivée. Et ça passait, ça passait, mécanique, triomphal, allant à l’avenir avec une rectitude mathématique, dans l’ignorance volontaire de ce qu’il restait de l’homme, aux deux bords, cache et toujours vivace, l’éternelle passion et l’éternel crime.

This passage perfectly portrays the difference and ever-standing opposition between Paris and the province: the capital is the head, whereas the rest of the

country, cities that are not even nominated, are the limbs of the system, they can only mechanically do what they are told to and respect the will of the Empire.

The passage is also evidence for the claim that the train is a human beast, as it is described like a human, and that the railway company controls the lives of its employees, as this description is placed within the dialogue the three were having, even though they do not notice the train (“*Aucun des convives n’y faisait même attention*” (*ibid.*: 89)—this also relates to the Bergsonian concept of *habitude*: we do not realise it. Furthermore, the passage anticipates that the train is herald of Jacques’ destiny: *l’éternelle passion et l’éternel crime* are truly his future liaison with Séverine and his murderous instinct that is about to be triggered.

That night, indeed, Jacques witnesses the murder of Grandmorin. Jacques leaves the house when he feels his murderous instinct activating. Flore, unrequited in her love for the mechanic, questioned him about the Lison: “*Est-ce que tu n’aimes donc que ta machine ? On en plaisant, tu sais. On prétend que tu es toujours à la froter, à la faire reluire, comme si tu n’avais des caresses que pour elle*” (*ibid.*: 95). This quote entails that there is a double transformation of the human beast: on the one hand, Jacques will become a beast when he cannot escape his *fêlure* anymore, on the other the Lison is a human beast as in it is a man-made product that ends up taking their place and it is loved like a real person by Jacques.

Hearing those words provokes uneasiness in Jacques. The narrator clearly suggests that something is about to happen when Flore offers herself to him (*ibid.*: 97-98):

Alors lui, haletant, s'arrêta, la regarda, au lieu de la posséder. Une fureur semblait le prendre, une férocité qui le faisait chercher des yeux, autour de lui, une arme, une pierre, quelque chose enfin pour la tuer. [...] Jacques fuyait dans la nuit mélancolique. [...] Brusquement, il dévala, il buta contre la haie du chemin de fer : un train arrivait, grondant, flambant ; et il ne comprit pas d'abord, terrifié. [...] Ce pays désert, coupé de monticules, était comme un labyrinthe sans issue, où tournait sa folie, dans la morne désolation des terrains incultes.

Women, indeed, are the hereditary base of Jacques' *fêlure*, as the narrator explains in the following pages. And they are always present in its phenomenology in this novel. Flore's offering to Jacques scares him, activating his instinct. Hence, he flees, but Zola is a French Naturalist. There is, thus, no possibility of true escape from one's destiny.

Jacques will immediately find his on a train, but before that the reader is given an explanation of his *fêlure* (*ibid.*: 99-101):

Il était donc revenu, ce mal abominable dont il se croyait guéri ? Voilà qu'il avait voulu la tuer, cette fille ! Tuer une femme, tuer une femme ! cela sonnait à ses oreilles, du fond de sa jeunesse, avec la fièvre grandissante, affolante du désir. [...] Là-bas, à Plassans, dans sa jeunesse, souvent déjà il s'était questionné. [...] La famille n'était guère d'aplomb, beaucoup avaient une fêlure. Lui, à certaines heures, la sentait bien, cette fêlure héréditaire ; [...] c'étaient, dans son être, de subites pertes d'équilibre, comme des cassures, des trous par lesquelles sont moi lui échappait, au milieu d'une sorte de grande fumée qui déformait tout. Il ne s'appartenait plus, il obéissait à ses muscles, à la bête enragée. [...] Cela venait-il

donc de si loin, du mal que les femmes avaient fait à sa race, de la rancune amassée de mâle en mâle, depuis la première tromperie au fond des cavernes ? Et il sentait aussi, dans son accès, une nécessité de bataille pour conquérir la femelle et la dompter.

This proves that Jacques uses the Lison as a means to sublimate this feeling he seems to know very well. However, as I have said above, because the movement of the train is not free but framed in the indications of a social machine, Jacques cannot control his sublimating means. Thus, when he is left “on land,” he loses control: the hereditary base of hatred towards women, which surely would deserve more analysis than I am giving to it, is triggered by the absence of movement, but at the same time movement is intrinsic to the trigger.

Jacques cannot be on the train but the ultimate trigger to his *fêlure* is another train. One could easily see in this a fault in the coding of the social machine. Indeed, this latter contains the *fêlure*, helping the individual to sublimate, however it cannot fully control their thoughts and feelings. The society of the *Second Empire* worked to keep excluding the lower classes from benefitting from the same privileges of the higher classes. In a sense, this is mirrored by the train passing in front of Jacques. He is without it, but he needs to be within it in order not to commit a crime.

This claim would enhance Zola’s critique of the Empire, showing that, when lower classes feel left out, they are more likely to succumb to criminal instincts. However, this only interests this dissertation inasmuch it interlaces with

movement. Jacques, thus, is left in a confused state of mind when the narrator offers him the ultimate trigger to his *fêlure*. He tries to walk away from it but then sees another train, one he usually works on—other evidence for that claim that he uses the Lison and movement as means of sublimation (*ibid.*: 105):

Tout de suite les wagons se succédèrent, les petites vitres carrées des portières, violemment éclairées, firent défiler les compartiments pleins de voyageurs, dans un tel vertige de vitesse, que l'œil doutait ensuite des images entrevues. Et Jacques, très distinctement, à ce quart précis de seconde, aperçut, par les glaces flambantes d'un coupé, un homme qui en tenait un autre renversé sur la banquette et qui lui plantait un couteau dans la gorge.

Jacques' *fêlure* is thus definitely activated. Henceforward, *l'éternelle passion et l'éternel crime* will taint his life. Indeed, he will start a relationship with Séverine, to whom he is attracted because he knows about the murder, and he will have to fight his desire to kill.

This allows us to ponder over the meaning of these events in their interweaving with Jacques' memory and heredity. When he witnesses the murder, his *fêlure* is triggered and processes of identification and repetition thereby begin. Thus, if seeing Flore brought him to the level of the active synthesis, that is memory, it was Grandmorin's murder that represented the symbolical event that brought Jacques to the dimension of empty time and eternal return. From the memory of his hereditary trait, he succumbs to it. All he can do, then, is trying to escape it, to sublimate it. Sublimation thus is sought in lines of flight: the Lison –

and thereby movement–, once it is fixed, and the desire of escape shared with Séverine.

The two live their adulterine relationship in Paris, a place other and apparently herald of possibility. There, Séverine and Jacques walk around, *ils flânent*. They can be other people, they can lose their face, as Deleuze would say. However, theirs is not a flight. They always come back to Le Havre. For Séverine, the capital still represents a luxurious beacon of hope she will never reach. Their first tryst, encouraged by Roubaud himself, who hopes Jacques will not tell on them, takes place in Paris and ends with their arrival at *Gare Saint Lazare*.

Thither, she is happy about her dinner in a luxurious restaurant in front of the station enjoying the movement of the capital: “*En face de la gare, elle choisit le restaurant le plus luxueux, [...] très amusée par le mouvement de la rue*” (Zola, 2018: 225). On the other hand, Jacques leaves her to prepare the Lison, since he is going to be driving the train back to Le Havre. It truly seems that he is more attracted by the locomotive than by Séverine (*ibid.*: 225-227):

Jacques, en la quittant, après être allé chez lui remettre ses vêtements de travail, s'était rendu tout de suite au depot. [...] C'était une de ces machines d'express, à deux essieux couples, d'une élégance fine et géante, avec ses grandes roues légères réunies par des bras d'acier, son poitrail large, ses reins allongés et puissants, toute cette logique et toute cette certitude qui font la beauté souveraine des êtres de metal, la précision dans la force. Ainsi que les autres machines de la Compagnie de l'Ouest, en dehors du numéro qui la désignait, elle portait le nom d'une gare, celui de Lison, une station de Cotentin. Mais Jacques, par tendresse, en avait fait un nom de femme, la Lison, comme il disait, avec une tendresse caressante.

Et, c'est vrai, il l'aimait d'amour, sa machine. [...] Elle était douce, obéissante, facile au démarrage, d'une marche régulière et continue, grâce à sa bonne vaporisation.

This passage further suggests that the human beast can either be seen in the man transforming according to their *fêlure* or in the machine as a man-made creation. Indeed, through the characterisation of the locomotive's description, we grasp Jacques' obsession with it. Described as if it were a woman, the Lison is completely personified in his eyes.

These passages also offer us an occasion to read between the lines and grasp the different relation of the two characters towards movement. Séverine sits at a restaurant gazing at the people and cars coming and going, in a typical Parisian fashion. She is intrigued by the movement, yet she does not participate in it—in a parallelism with Jacques' being intrigued by Grandmorin's murder whilst not participating in it. Differently, Jacques cannot wait to be in the station and drive the Lison. He is the maker of movement, but such movement is not controlled by him.

Along the journey back to Le Havre, moreover, Jacques spots Flore: "*Mais, tout de suite, ses yeux emportèrent une autre image. Près de la maison des Misard, contre la barrière du passage à niveau, Flore était là, debout. Maintenant, à chaque voyage, il la voyait à cette place, l'attendant, le guettant*" (*ibid.*: 234). This apparition contributes to the play of Jacques' memory and *fêlure*, which is based on women and movement. According to this passage, we may think that Jacques sees Flore as the cause of

his murderous instinct and Séverine as his saviour, as we can also gather from another passage in the novel: *“Lui, n’en doutait plus, avait trouvé la guérison de son affreux mal héréditaire ; car, depuis qu’il la possédait, la pensée du meurtre ne l’avait plus trouble. Était-ce donc que la possession physique contentait ce besoin de mort ? Posséder, tuer, cela s’équivalait-il, dans le fond sombre de la bête humaine ?”* (ibid.: 267-268).

Is there, then, a way of escaping one’s destiny? We may think so when Jacques thinks: *“Parfois, entre ses bras, il retrouvait la brusque mémoire de ce qu’elle avait fait, de cet assassinat, avoué du regard seul; [...] et il n’éprouvait même pas l’envie d’en connaître les détails”* (ibid.: 268). Jacques can only suspect, despite being sure of it, that Séverine took part in Grandmorin’s assassination (ibid.: 328-331). A few chapters later, out of a fortuitous snowstorm, the two will enjoy their first night together, when Séverine finally confesses. Symbolically, they find themselves in the same rooms where Séverine had confessed her past to her husband in the first chapter. The rooms, overlooking the station, keep emblematically portraying the characters’ not belonging in Paris.

Thereafter, Jacques takes physical possess of Séverine. Their passion comes out of her confession: *“Ils se possédèrent, retrouvant l’amour au fond de la mort”* (ibid.: 342). Later, while Séverine sleeps on his shoulder, Jacques cannot close his eyes. The *fêlure*, reactivated by the memory of the assassination, is taking possess of him (ibid.: 343-344):

Malgré sa fatigue écrasante, une activité cérébrale prodigieuse le tenait vibrant, dévidant sans cesse le même écheveau d'idées. Chaque fois que, par un effort de volonté, il croyait glisser au sommeil, la même hantise recommençait, les mêmes images défilaient, éveillant les mêmes sensations. Et ce qui se déroulait ainsi, avec une régularité mécanique, pendant que ses yeux fixes et grands ouverts s'emplissaient d'ombre, c'était le meurtre, détail à détail. [...] Pourtant, il s'était cru guéri, car ce désir était mort depuis des mois, avec la possession de cette femme ; et voilà que jamais il ne l'avait ressenti si intense, sous l'évocation de ce meurtre.

That illusion of finding a way of escape to the *fêlure* is shattered by Jacques' wide-open eyes. He cannot but think and plot her murder. His murderous instinct is so intense that he has to flee, looking for someone else on whom he could vent his “*soif héréditaire du meurtre*” (*ibid.*: 348)—a failed attempt.

Henceforward, Séverine and Jacques start plotting Roubaud's death. They want to flee France, go to America (as in the already quoted passage from page 383): they want to expatriate in order to be reborn. However, Jacques fails in his attempt at killing Roubaud, because “*Le raisonnement ne ferait jamais le meurtre, il fallait l'instinct de mordre*” (*ibid.*: 396). This shows that Jacques' *fêlure* is entangled with movement. Indeed, in order to kill, he needs to be stopped. He was stuck by the broken rod when he first experienced his instinct with Flore, he was stuck by the snowstorm when he wanted to murder Séverine, and likewise he will be stuck when he finally kills her.

Indeed, before Séverine's murder by the hand of Jacques the narrator places another important and symbolical death. Flore, insane and jealous because of her unrequited love for the mechanic, decides to derail the train Jacques was working

on with the goal of killing Séverine. She succeeds inasmuch the object of Jacques' love dies, though it is the Lison. The description of the narrator is, once again, similar to that of a human corpse: "*La Lison, renversées sur les reins, le ventre ouvert, perdait sa vapeur, par les robinets arrachés, les tuyaux crevés, en des souffles qui grondaient, pareils à des râles furieux de géante*" (*ibid.*: 425-426). The locomotive, a human beast, dies because the means of sublimation needs to be eliminated from the narration for Jacques' destiny to impose.

Furthermore, it is appropriate to hither introduce Paine's claim that Zola's "*aesthetic [...] denies subjectivity, individuality, and rationality in favour of automated responses*" (Paine, 2019: 233). All the characters act in ways they are expected to, they are acted upon by the narrator that shows their total subjugation to the system. When Flore realises she did not kill Séverine and thus failed in her plan, she has nothing to do but to kill herself. Once again, this action is described as the outcome of an instinct: "*Maintenant qu'elle en avait la force, il fallait mourir. [...] Elle n'hésita pas, car elle venait de trouver d'instinct où elle devait aller*" (Zola, 2018: 443). The implications about her suicide are multiple and all interesting, however for brevity we shall focus on one single aspect: Flore kills herself walking towards a train in the tunnel nearby her village.

She knows where she has to go, and she seems absent-minded while she walks. Clearly, her response is automatic, as if she was being acted upon. This premise allows us to ponder on the cause-effect system of the novel, which unveils

Zola's aesthetic. Every action in the novel is caused by another. Séverine's confession to Roubaud causes the murder of Grandmorin, which is witnessed by Jacques, causing his murderous instincts to be activated. The murder also offers the occasion for Jacques and Séverine to get to know each other, hence starting their relationship, which causes jealousy in Flore. The latter consequently wrecks the Lison, an action which annihilates Jacques' sublimation. Thus, he cannot but succumb his *fêlure* and kill his mistress.

How do space dynamics insert in all this? Movement and flights are always present. Indeed, when Flore offers herself to Jacques, activating his *fêlure*, he tries to contain it by escaping. Similarly, his relationship with Séverine alternates with his working on the Lison. We can therein read an unconscious flee: by spending too much time with her and away from the train, he might fall prey to his murderous instinct.

Accordingly, there would be no reterritorialisation, as Deleuze's essay suggests. Because Jacques cannot reterritorialise, then, his instinct does not allow him to kill Séverine's husband. If he did, he would have to run away with her. Movement interlaces with his murderous instinct toward Séverine, too, because the first time he experiences it, he escapes it by leaving the apartment. The second time, however, he falls prey to it, because, as I will show in the following paragraphs, without his locomotive he cannot sublimate anymore.

While one could think that this argument entails that Jacques has to move in order not to commit crime, we shall bear in mind that the movement of the train is controlled. Indeed, he needs to be told where to go. His sublimation is thereby an escape in the social machine, which makes him feel protected. It is, in fact, in the middle of the countryside that he witnesses the murder, as if to show that his *fêlure* is outside of the coding of his society. Likewise, he will succumb to it in the rooms above the station, a place I have already defined other to Paris.

As I have mentioned, Jacques' *fêlure* is provoked by women. The mirror scheme utilised by Zola in portraying the two murders is interesting. Before both murders, Flore is responsible firstly for triggering Jacques' *fêlure* and later for eliminating his means of sublimation. Séverine is present in both cases, as murderess and then as victim. Both times, there is a hereditary motive: Jacques could not escape his hereditary traits, whereas Roubaud was interested in the actual heredity (though it appears he only cared about his and his wife's honour, we find evidence to my claim in the fact that he did take part of Grandmorin's money).

In the same room she confessed Grandmorin's abuse to her husband, Séverine confesses she and her husband are the killers to Jacques. Though in a first moment he says he does not care, he will ultimately completely succumb to his instinct (*ibid.*: 480):

Jacques, sans se retourner, de sa main droite, tâtonnante en arrière, avait pris le couteau. [...] Il fixait sur Séverine ses yeux fous, il n'avait plus que le besoin de la jeter morte sur son dos, ainsi qu'une proie qu'on arrache aux autres. [...] Elle renversait son visage soumis. [...] Et lui, voyant cette chair blanche, comme dans un éclat d'incendie, leva le poing, armé du couteau.

The image mirrors the first description of Jacques' *fêlure* in the novel, when he feels "*le besoin pervers de la jeter morte sur son dos, ainsi qu'une proie qu'on arrache aux autres*" (*ibid.*: 101). By using the same words, the narrator entails that this is the utmost of Jacques' instinct. He did not kill Flore or the woman he followed on the rue d'Amsterdam after fleeing the apartment because he had to specifically murder Séverine. This claim is further backed up by the words "*une proie qu'on arrache aux autres:*" clearly the narrator entangles that this almost primitive push for murder is bound to the search of one's masculinity.

Even though Séverine sees him and tries to stop him, he does indeed slaughter her with the same dagger she had used to kill Grandmorin—another parallelism, hence backing up the Deleuzian-Bergsonian claim that Jacques identifies and repeats (*ibid.*: 481-482):

Et il abattit le poing, et le couteau lui cloua la question dans la gorge. En frappant, il avait retourné l'arme, par un effroyable besoin de la main qui se contentait : le même coup que pour le président Grandmorin, à la même place, avec la même rage. Avait-elle crié ? il ne le sut jamais. À cette seconde, passait l'express de Paris, si violent, si rapide, que le plancher trembla. [...] Immobile, Jacques maintenant la regardait, allongée à ses pieds, devant le lit. Le train se perdait au loin, il la regardait dans le lourd silence de la chambre rouge. [...] Enfin, enfin ! il s'était

donc contenté, il avait tué ! Oui, il avait fait ça. Une joie effrénée, une jouissance énorme le soulevait, dans la pleine satisfaction de l'éternel désir. Il en éprouvait une surprise d'orgueil, un grandissement de sa souveraineté de mâle.

This passage portrays Jacques as enthused with his murderous instinct. He kills Séverine as if under the influence of a tragical *furor*. He follows in the steps that had been already decided for him. Movement is hither hinted at once again by the train that hides Séverine's scream in the dark.

The train also remembers the reader that all the lives in the novel are controlled by the alienating codes of the social machine, the *Compagnie du Grand-Ouest* and, at large, the *Second Empire*. The whistling of the train reminds that movement is controlled, too, and that flights are not allowed. Thus, if Jacques identified and repeated the actions he saw that night, he also identified with and repeated the movement of the train. Indeed, he did not simply sought sublimation in the Lison, he also identified in the pendular movement. Just like he got used to moving back and forth, so he got used to repress his murderous instinct.

3.1.6 Movement and Social Machine: Conclusions

After Séverine's murder, the narration jumps forward three months. The countryman has been accused of the murder and Jacques is still driving the express train from Le Havre to Paris, though his new locomotive is not personified anymore, it now is called with a serial number like all the others: "*Sa nouvelle machine, la machine 608, toute neuve, don't il avait le poucelage. [...] Il jurait souvent contre*

elle, regrettant la Lison” (*ibid.*: 486). Jacques has satisfied his need for murder, yet he hates his new locomotive nonetheless, and he has a new liaison, this time with his colleague’s mistress. Does he still need to sublimate his *fêlure*?

The last chapter takes the idea of human beast to the next level. The two are on the locomotive when they start to fight about the woman—once again, a death is preceded by a woman. They eventually throw themselves off of the train, in a last attempt at imposing their masculinity (*ibid.*: 529):

Mais Pecqueux, d’un dernier élan, précipita Jacques ; et celui-ci, sentant le vide, éperdu, se cramponna à son cou, si étroitement, qu’il l’entraîna. Il y eut deux cris terribles, qui se confondirent, qui se perdirent. Les deux hommes, tombés ensemble, entraînés sous les roues par la réaction de la vitesse, furent coupés, hachés, dans leur étreinte, dans cette effroyable embrassade, eux qui avaient si longtemps vécu en frères. On les retrouva sans tête, sans pieds, deux troncs sanglants qui se serraient encore, comme pour s’étouffer.

This last double murder, thus, is not an instinctive one. Rather, it comes out of the struggle the two live, in a sense. The narrator hither displays the alienating effects of the system on the subjects. Moreover, in the discussion about space dynamics, this passage is useful if we focus on the train as emblem of the *Second Empire*. Indeed, the two cannot control it, as they could not before. The railway company has always controlled them, and they finally succumb to it, too. The theme of masculinity is present as well, but for brevity let us only focus on movement.

The train, metaphor for the *Second Empire*, leaves Jacques and Pecqueux not only dead but even shattered in pieces, without head and feet. The head of course represented the thoughts of the characters, which were controlled by the company, as we have already explored. The feet, furthermore, represent the possibility of movement, which was also controlled by the company and the Empire. They die nearby the halfway location where Grandmorin was assassinated, hence closing the circle of parallelisms of the novel. If we are to read this from a Deleuzian point of view, we will then see that the corpses of the two represent the alienation of the lower classes under the regime of the *Second Empire*. They cannot move, they cannot flee, all they can do is follow a pre-determined path.

The illusion of finding an escape to one's predestination is finally excluded by Zola, who does not offer a way out to his characters. However, Zola is also extremely critical of the system itself. His narration is not only tainted with asperity, but it also predestines the Empire for a terrible fall. We can find evidence to this in the very ending of the novel. The train, which was bringing soldiers to Sedan for the notoriously defeated battle, now without drivers, runs free towards an unknown future: "*Et la machine, libre de toute direction, roulait, roulait toujours. [...] C'était le galop tout droit, la bête qui fonçait tête basse et muette, parmi les obstacles. Elle roulait, roulait sans fin, comme affolée de plus en plus par le bruit strident de son haleine*" (*ibid.*: 529-530).

This image clearly reflects the declining Empire furiously running towards its collapse. The train is indeed described as “*ce train fou, cette machine sans mécanicien ni chauffeur*” (*ibid.*: 530). The passengers do not even seem to realise what is going on in a first moment: “*Ces wagons à bestiaux emplis de troupiers qui hurlaient des refrains patriotiques. Ils allaient à la guerre, c’était pour être plus vite lâbas, sur les bords du Rhin*” (*ibid.*: 530). Once again, the narrator entails a parallelism between man and beast. This time, the soldiers are compared to slaughter cattle. The Empire makes use of them as if they did not matter.

It is interesting here that this comparison is set in a moving location. The novel therefore inscribes within this dissertation’s argument inasmuch it shows that movement was not free, rather it was texturized, codified, and administrated. Movement is lived by the employees of the railways company as a habitus. They are told what to do, they repeat it, identify in their mansion, and keep repeating, until full alienation is completed. There is no space for deterritorialization nor reterritorialisation. It goes hand in hand with the aesthetic of Naturalism, truly.

If an escape is a creative act that breaks through the segments created by the social machine, then it goes without saying that in a novel that encompasses characters’ predestination such a deed is not allowed. The man is thus a beast because he does not have a mind of his own, alienated and governed upon—hence the automated responses claimed by Paine. Likewise, Jacques cannot escape his

fêlure. He is subject to it because nobody in his family was ever able to break through the segmentarity of it.

Indeed, the ending of the novel keeps open the ambiguity regarding the meaning of the human beast (*ibid.*: 531):

Qu'importait les victimes que la machine écrasait en chemin ! N'allait-elle pas quand même à l'avenir, insoucieuse du sang répandu ? Sans conducteur, au milieu des ténèbres, en bête aveugle et sourde qu'on aurait lâchée parmi la mort, elle roulait, elle roulait, chargée de cette chair à canon, de ces soldats, déjà hébétés de fatigue, et ivre, qui chantaient.

The train is once again described as a beast, but, once again as well, the soldiers are described as dazed, already disoriented for the fatigue, yet singing. They do not know what will happen and the system benefits from it. Moreover, and more interestingly for this analysis, the novel is ended with movement. Movement has governed the narration, with trains scanning time and covering screams.

Zola critiqued the *Second Empire* by portraying a pendulum that reinforced the binary oppositions created and reinforced by the system. His characters cannot move if not out of habit, and his work represents perfect evidence for Gilles Deleuze's theories.

3.2 Henry James' *The Ambassadors*

3.2.1 *The Ambassadors* and the Elsewhere

An American counterpart to Zola can be found in Henry James' *The Ambassadors*. If we are to find common themes in this comparison, we will think not only of the criticism of capitalism both writers undertake but also of the processes of identification and repetition we have explored in the previous section. The novel, published in 1903, was considered by James himself his best work (Bennet, 1956: 12). The protagonist, Lewis Lambert Strether, is a middle-aged man from Massachusetts. Engaged to the wealthy Mrs Newsome, he embarks on a rescue trip to Paris to bring back her son, Chad Newsome, who is thought to have fallen prey to a wicked woman: "*He's a young man on whose head high hopes are placed at Wollett; a young man a wicked woman has got hold of and whom his family over there have sent you out to rescue*" (James, 2008: 59).

Before arriving in France, Strether stops in England, where he meets Maria Gostrey, an American who has lived for years in Paris and who works as a guide, as she defines herself (*ibid.*: 31):

I'm a general guide – to "Europe," don't you know? I wait for people – I put them through. I pick them up – I set them down. I'm a sort of superior "courier-maid." I'm a companion at large. I take people, as I've told you, about. I never sought it – it has come to me. [...] It's a dreadful thing to have to say, in so wicked a world, but I verily believe that, such as you see me, there's nothing I don't know. [...] I bear on my back the huge load of our national consciousness, or, in other words – for it comes to that – of our nation itself.

This presentation she makes of herself is useful in addressing the novel within our discourse. The characters, indeed, can be thought of as part of the first wave of expatriates in Paris, and James' criticism towards American rising capitalism is thus interlaced with space dynamics. Miss Gostrey is happy in Europe and has accepted her role of guide. Moreover, she compares such a role to the consciousness of her nation.

The novel is a novel of contrasts, namely between New England's morality and Paris' modernity and laxities—it is, at large, a contrast between the two countries, which are used to express James' ideals. This opposition is evident from the beginning of the novel, through the two characters that help Strether and to whom he confides throughout the novel. In the second chapter of the first book, Strether meets Waymarsh, an old friend of his who has long unhappily lived in Europe, though he is married and has made a life for himself there (*ibid.*: 39):

Such a country as this ain't my kind of country anyway. There ain't a country I've seen over here that does seem my kind. Oh I don't say but what there are plenty of pretty places and remarkable old things; but the trouble is that I don't seem to feel anywhere in tune.

Waymarsh, contrarily to Miss Gostrey, does not feel at home in France. He seems to be doomed to be an expatriate forever. In Deleuzian terms, his reterritorialisation did not succeed, because, like characters in the novel, he is

subject to the rules of American capitalism. Their movements are not real escapes then, or, if they are, they lead to an absolute deterritorialisation.

Once Strether meets Chad, he is impressed by his change. Chad is much more sophisticated and introduces Strether to Mme Marie de Vionnet, a French socialite of impeccable manners, and Jeanne, her daughter. Strether thus begins being more and more seduced by Parisian culture and he confides in Little Bilham, a friend of Chad's, that he has missed the best of his life. Strether eventually even stops Chad from returning to America. Hence, at the middle of the novel, Mrs Newsome will send a new group of ambassadors, her daughter Sarah and her husband.

Sarah refuses to recognise Chad's improvement and insists that they all should go back to the family business in Wollett, thus highlighting her role of representative of the puritan New England society. At this point, Strether escapes the troubles in the countryside, where he meets Chad and Mme de Vionnet, thus understanding the nature of their relationship. He advises Chad not to leave, but Chad is now ready to go back. At the end of the novel, Strether refuses Miss Gostrey's virtual proposal and also returns to New England.

As it appears from this brief summary of the plot, the roles invert throughout the novel. At the beginning Strether is subject to his society, as we can gather from the very passage quoted from page 59. He believed Chad had to go back and participates in the family's business. However, when he meets the

young man and realises how much sophistication he has gained during the years spent in France, he wants to identify and repeat the same process on himself. An older man, Strether almost looks up to Chad and his social circle, trying to become part of it and also gaining sophistication. On the other hand, Chad will be the one to eventually bring Strether back to the United States, falling back into the capitalist culture of New England.

This identification-imitation relates to space dynamics, and I will thus analyse it throughout the novel. I will follow the scheme of the first part of this chapter, taking under consideration important passages from the novel's books, pondering over the themes mentioned and their interweaving. Questions such as Chad's deterritorialisation will be considered. And, if he did deterritorialise, was he able to reterritorialise in Paris? Why does he want to *go back*, then? Moreover, Strether's identification and repetition of Chad's experienced will be pondered over.

3.2.2 A Mission in Europe

If the first of the twelve books that form the novel sets out Strether's voyage and mission, the second and third open with Strether's arrival in Paris and the discussion over Chad, who is momentarily absent from Paris. The opening of the second book sees Strether and Miss Gostrey talking about the reasons why Chad is still in Paris. Miss Gostrey suggests Strether he should take under consideration

“the possible particular effect on him of his milieu” (ibid.: 69). Strether, instead, still subject to New England’s values, wants to protect Chad from life: *“Consideration and comfort and security – the general safety of being anchored by a strong chain. He wants, as I see him, to be protected. Protected I mean from life” (ibid.: 70).*

On the one side, we can think Miss Gostrey had been able to deterritorialise from the United States and reterritorialise in France, hence believing Chad might actually be in a good place in Paris. On the other, Strether’s voyage to Paris clearly is not a flight *yet*. He wants to bring Chad back so that he can settle down and be anchored. He is clearly attached to his society and does not still understand the value of transformation. As Hutchison argues, the novel stresses on *“the transforming power of experience”* (Hutchison, 2003: 240). The transformation is not only that of Chad, but also and especially that of Strether, who will find himself fascinated with Paris’ paradoxes, perils, and promise of modernity (Garcia, 2011: 75).

Moreover, the transforming power of experience is related to travel. It is, we may say, the transforming power of travel that is discussed in the novel. Strether’s transformation begins even before he meets Chad. Immediately after his talk with Miss Gostrey, we are presented with a description of Strether’s first *promenade* around Paris. Initially walking with Waymarsh in the bankers’ area of Paris, Strether is as if inserted in the French tradition of the man arriving to Paris and being attracted to it whilst walking around (as we have seen for Lucien in

Illusions perdues): “The two men had walked together, as a first stage, from the Gymnase to the Café Riche. [...] There was indeed a great deal of critical silence [...] till they gained Place de l’Opéra” (James, 2008: 75).

The narrator characterises Waymarsh as an American who cannot find his place in Paris: “Europe was best described, to his mind, as an elaborate engine for dissociating the confined American from that indispensable knowledge, and was accordingly only rendered bearable by these occasional stations of relief, traps for the arrest of wandering western airs” (*ibid.*: 76). The banking area is thus the only bearable place for the capitalist American, who can momentarily leave the laxities of Parisian life. Not casually, Strether hither leaves Waymarsh and heads South, to the Latin Quarter, in another reference to Balzacian literature.

This movement anticipates Strether’s future shift from puritan values to French aestheticism (*ibid.*: 76-77):

Strether, on his side, set himself to walk again. [...] He came down the Rue de la Paix in the sun and, passing across the Tuileries and the river, indulged more than once – as if on finding himself determined – in a sudden pause before the book-stalls of the opposite quay. [...] But his draft was, for reasons, to the other side, and it floated him unspent up the Rue de Seine and as far as the Luxembourg. [...] He passed an hour in which the cup of his impressions seemed truly to overflow. But a week had elapsed since he quitted the ship. [...] More than once, during the time, he had regarded himself as admonished; but the admonition this morning was formidably sharp. It took as it hadn’t done yet the form of a question – the question of what he was doing with such an extraordinary sense of escape.

Drawn to the *Rive gauche* as if determined to do so, Strether finally feels like on a flight. We are here anticipated with his future sensations, while Strether's mind drifts and reflects, in the contemplation of Paris. In a first moment, the otherness of space allows Strether to think about his condition, and, in a second moment, after he is struck by Chad's change, it will allow him to act, or at least try, to change it (*ibid.*: 77-79):

It was the difference, the difference of being just where he was and as he was, that formed the escape – this difference was so much greater than he had dreamed it would be; and what he finally sat there turning over was the strange logic of his finding himself so free. [...] The fact that he had failed, as he considered, in everything, in each relationship and in half a dozen trades, as he liked luxuriously to put it, might have made, might still make, for an empty present; but it stood solidly for a crowded past.

Paris thus becomes the place where one can feel free, a place of aestheticism, contemplation, and sensations: “Buried for long years in dark corners at any rate these few germs had sprouted again under forty-eight hours of Paris” (*ibid.*: 81).

In this moment, Strether becomes conscious of what he has missed in his life. Paris, a place other than New England, thus assumes the dimension of a location where he could regain his youth's potentiality, represented by Paris. This sensation will only be enhanced and revealed with Chad's arrival: “It hung before him [...] the vast bright Babylon, like some huge iridescent object, a jewel brilliant and hard, in which parts were not to be discriminated nor differences comfortably marked” (*ibid.*: 83).

Strether's *flânure* then moves to another important area, *Montagne Sainte Geneviève*, "The region [...] in which the best French, and many other things, were to be learned at least cost, and in which all sorts of clever fellows, compatriots there for a purpose, formed an awfully pleasant set. [...] They were, Chad sagely opined, a much more profitable lot to be with [...] than the 'terrible toughs' [...] of the American bars and banks roundabouts the Opéra" (*ibid.*: 85). The description of this area is carried out through the memory of Chad, who is said to have migrated there a few years before. Chad, too, then, wanted to be part of the tradition of young men arriving to Paris and living in the Latin Quarter.

The passage also highlights the contrast between Waymarsh and Chad, who appreciates the Latin Quarter over the others for its tradition and the clever people one gets to meet there. Streher already seems to take Chad's side. The parallelism with Balzac is also important for the discourse over the meaning of business, which is "central to the myth of America and enters an historic debate over the meaning of American statehood. [...] For James, as for Strether, the 'business' of America is the 'errand into the wilderness,' which would be defined by James as art and life itself, not the errand chosen by Mrs. Newsome to return Chad to the Woollett mills" (Lawrence, 2011: 134-136).

The novel is thus James' pledge against imperialistic American values, which he criticises through a series of contrasts and Strether's final return. Edel claims that *The Ambassadors* balances "the rigidities of New England against the laxities

of Paris, without altogether being able to shake off his own New England conscience,” and that “at the core of the novel is James’s mature belief that life is a process of seeing, and through awareness the attaining of understanding; that if man is a creature with a predetermined heredity and a molding environment, he still can cherish the ‘illusion of freedom.’ He should, therefore, James holds, make the most of this illusion” (Edel, 1960: 32-33).

If in Zola we witnessed men completely subject to their predetermined destiny, in James we rather see men who can enjoy the illusion of escaping their destiny also thanks to the potentiality offered by the elsewhere. Of course, as we can gather from the passages and claims quoted, this topic is interweaved into the space dynamics of the novel. The moulding environment Edel writes about is then Wollett, with its rules and expectations, whereas the travel and sojourn in Paris are the occasion to break free from the bounds with Massachusetts. However, the contrast between Chad’s and Strether’s experience will show that we cannot certainly consider both of them as flights.

Chad’s character does not appear immediately. Fascinatingly, he is discussed about in the beginning of the novel and, when Strether eventually looks for him in his apartment on Boulevard Malesherbes, the young man is away from Paris, in the South of France: “Chad [...] went a month ago to Cannes and though his return begins to be looked for it can’t be for some days” (James, 2008: 94). At this point,

Strether has decided that, though he still has to bring Chad back, “*he musn’t dispossess himself of the faculty of seeing things as they were*” (*ibid.*: 103).

When Chad finally arrives, Strether immediately notices his transformation: “*Chad had been made over. That was all; whatever it was it was everything. Strether had never seen the thing so done before – it was perhaps a specialty of Paris*” (*ibid.*: 127). After the days spent admiring Paris and his promise to see things as they are, Strether is able to see the change in Chad. Indeed, a central topic of the novel is the value of Chad’s transformation, which Strether is able to grasp more and more because he is transformed, too (Hoople, 1988: 416-418). Strether’s perspective has already begun changing at the beginning of the fourth book, hence he is able to appreciate the new Chad, being “*susceptible to doubt*” (*ibid.*: 418).

“*Strether has left Boston with what James calls a parti pris, a prejudice or a preconceived notion. His idea of Chad is rooted in the kind of boy he had been before leaving on his grand tour and is filled out by the reports of Chad’s dangerous attachments*” (*ibid.*: 419). However, a few days in Paris are enough for Strether to start questioning everything, both his life and Chad’s. “*Far from arriving at a new truth, Strether simply marches forward to a new parti pris*” (*ibid.*: 419).

Therefore, Strether passes from a programme to another, in Deleuzian terms. He arrives in Paris with a mission but rapidly changes his mind. The travel activates the process that transforms Strether’s mission from what he thought a

manifesto, a set scheme of rules and ideals, to a programme, a fluid sequence of doubts and questions.

Chad is first described as “*a young Pagan,*” which, Strether thinks, was “*the thing most wanted at Wollett*” (James, 2008: 132). Chad, thus, has apparently already become what New England wants from him. He is more sophisticated, he can behave in society, but he is not ready to leave, nonetheless. However, when Chad explains to Strether that there is no woman keeping him entangled in Paris, Strether wonders if he is a gentleman, instead, and if a person can be both a Pagan and a gentleman. At this point of the novel, Chad represents American freedom and push for exploration, whereas Strether still incarnates Wollett’s values, though he has started changing. Chad has been able to deterritorialise and reterritorialise in Paris. Strether cannot see it fully yet, though he can already appreciate his renewed manners.

If this is already useful in inscribing the novel in this dissertation, the second chapter of the fourth book is even more useful, as it shows Strether’s growing fascination with Chad’s life, which will activate the mechanism of imitation and repetition. At this point of the novel, we are also offered another insight of James about determinism. Indeed, whilst Strether sees a good deal of change in Chad, Little Bilham describes him as “*the new edition of an old book that one has been fond of*” (*ibid.*: 147). Nicola Bradbury argues that this comparison “*gives pause to [...] Strether’s mission*” and even pushes him in the other direction: “*the*

paradoxical ‘progress back’ [...] that Paris offers him, revisiting the memories of his own past hopes” (Bradbury, 2014: 138). Moreover, *“these processes amplify the resonance of relation between the characters”* (*ibid.*: 139)—hence the claim that Strether imitates Chad in his relation to the city.

Paris thus shows the benefits of a European city for the American expatriate. This opposition is created by James with the intent of criticising the society of New England. In order to break through these segments of *micro-fascisms*, one has to flee overseas. Hitherto, this is the reason why Chad wants to stay in Paris: he refuses to go back to his small provincial hometown. Strether is also still passive and controlled on, but he shows the first effects of his journey, he wants to stop being passive and starts questioning things.

3.2.3 American and French Societies

When, in the fifth book of *The Ambassadors*, Mme de Vionnet appears in the narration, the contrast between America and Paris intensifies. Strether sees Mme de Vionnet younger and wittier than himself: *“Her air of youth, for Strether, was at first almost disconcerting, while his second impression was, not less sharply, a degree of relief at there not having just been, with the others, any freedom used about her”* (*ibid.*: 170). Later, Strether wonders about what she can offer over Wollett: *“What was there in her, if anything, that would have made it impossible he should meet her at Wollett?”* (*ibid.*: 173).

Mme de Vionnet, thus, represents Parisian society. If in the first four books of the novel we only saw the expatriation, whether long or short it may be, of Americans in Europe, we are hither presented with their interaction with a French socialite. Mme de Vionnet could never go to Massachusetts: “*They wouldn’t, they couldn’t, want her to go to Wollett*” (*ibid.*: 179). It is impossible to even imagine meeting her in Wollett, for she is too different.

At this point, through the direct encounter with French society, Strether realises he has not lived his life. This newly gained open-mindedness colours his perspective. He is now willing to meet new people, build new relationships, and re-find his youth. This is the mechanism of identification-imitation I mentioned, because Strether’s “vows” are consequent to his jealousy for Chad’s life: “*It was that rare youth he should have enjoyed being ‘like’*” (*ibid.*: 178). Paris thereby appears as a “*gilded trap*.” “*Paris is here part of Strether’s experience and his problem, since ‘almost any acceptance of Paris might give one’s authority away’—that is, one’s moral authority as ambassador from the land of puritan blacks and whites*” (Brooks, 2007: 51). Strether cannot stay the same, rather he has to renounce his New England perspective—hence his admiration for Mme de Vionnet and Chad.

This is also the reason the contrast between France and America is connotated through Mme de Vionnet. She attracts everyone and is the main cause for Chad’s improvement, which shows that he really could not have changed should he had stayed in Wollett. For Strether, observing her is like observing

Paris, then. They symbolise what he has missed, *“those spontaneous joys that come from the contemplation of beauty, the culture of the mind and uncalculating love for a fellow-creature”* (Bennett, 1956: 26).

The sixth book then portrays Mme de Vionnet in her apartment in Rue de Bellechasse. Her belongings are old and come from her lineage, fascinating Strether, who immediately notices the difference with his American friends: *“They were among the matters that marked Madame de Vionnet’s apartment as something quite different from Miss Gostrey’s little museum of bargains and from Chad’s lovely home”* (James, 2008: 196). This description enhances the contrast between the two countries: *“While the possessions of these latter Americans derive from the vulgar transaction of the marketplace, the things displayed in Marie’s elegant drawing room in her residence of Bellechasse are founded on lineage and tradition”* (Francescato, 2012: 135).

Therein is an opposition between two characterising elements in the Deleuze’s theories, the American conquer and the French roots. Chad and Miss Gostrey merely buy art, pieces they will perhaps sell, whereas Mme de Vionnet cherishes her belongings with which she identifies (*ibid.*: 135). They conquer, explore, and will eventually move on, whilst she is static and rooted. American capitalism and imperialism hither find a counterpart in French culture of mind and aestheticism.

Of course, this does not mean that there was no capitalism in France. Rather, even in French literature art collections were an example of the

“consumerist turn that French metropolitan society [...] was taking in the middle of the 19th century” (Francescato, 2011: 140). The difference is that the French attitude to collecting art was aimed at creating an image of oneself. Mme de Vionnet identifies with her collection because she wants to embody a certain ideal. On the other hand, Americans bought art to gain a sense of control and possession, to conquer, in a sense, France. Likewise, *“Strether’s trip in the country involves a delusional sense of control and possession”* (Francescato, 2012: 138).

Strether thinks he managed to deterritorialise New England and reterritorialise in Paris –perhaps through his purchase of a seventy-volume edition of the works of Victor Hugo– but he will not be able to fully renounce New England: *“In contrast to Chad Newsome, who somehow embodies the perfect tourist, as he reaches a full-circle finally returning to his original place with a stronger confidence in American consumerist values, [...] Strether returns, carrying within himself the signs of a deep change”* (*ibid.*: 144).

Indeed, at the end of the sixth book, Strether has changed his perspective. When Little Bilham asks him if he thinks Chad should go back to Wollett, he says he believes Chad should better stay in Paris. To this change in his mind corresponds the arrival, in the seventh book, the arrival of the Pocock clan, Chad’s sister and her husband, who, instead, fully embody the business-focused point of view of Mrs Newman and have a completely touristic attitude to Paris.

Though it may seem that American characters are static, we must bear in mind that French characters do not move at all. That the Americans are in movement and the French are not becomes clearer in the second part of the novel, when the roles switch. Chad wants to go back to Wollett while Strether wishes to stay in Paris, and the Pococks enjoy Paris like a couple of tourists on holiday even spending some time in Switzerland.

3.2.4 Identification, Imitation, and Elsewhere

The mechanism of identification-imitation operates within the character of Strether. According to what we said about repetition, we would imagine that something happens in Strether's memory for him to work on it. The memories of his honeymoon in Paris with his late wife indeed occur throughout the novel as an indicator of his lost youth. These images trigger his wish to regain his youth. Such an aspiring *recommencement* takes place in Paris. Of course, Strether meets the new Chad there, thus naturally he will develop this wish to start over after the encounter. However, what is worth pondering is Strether's idea that in order to actually live his life, he cannot go back to Wollett.

The elsewhere, therefore, assumes importance as an essential element to one's growth. It had been useful to Chad for his change and to Strether, who sees the product of such a change. The fascination to the new Chad pushes Strether to wanting to stay longer in Paris, thinking he belongs there. His point of view, his

expectations, and his actual travel, though, are those of a tourist (Francescato, 2012: 133). Strether falls for a picture of something he may not fully comprehend, and once he will understand both that Chad's improvement is a reflection of Mme de Vionnet's love for him (*ibid.*: 143) and the full nature of their relationship, he will be left disenchanted (*ibid.*: 141).

Chad, through his improvement, has become a different person. He deterritorialized from Wollett and reterritorialized in Paris. The influence of the *milieu* has been central in the process, thereby enhancing the role of the elsewhere. The encounter with Mme de Vionnet never could have happened in Wollett, and perhaps she also transmitted him some of her French rootedness. This would explain why he is ready to go back. Another hypothesis is that his return to a "hollow, centerless America" and his acceptance of its capitalist society (Hoople, 1988: 430) are influenced by the consumerist turn that took place in France since the middle of the Nineteenth century. Or, again, he accepts American capitalism and imperialism because, because of the *milieu's* influence, he wants to participate in a lineage of his own.

All these hypotheses make sense with our reading of the novel, and all of them lead to a common conclusion. Movement and flights are central in Chad's improvement and in his coming back. Indeed, though he comes back, he will not be the same person. Though his mother hates his staying in Paris, as we gather from a conversation between him and Strether in the first chapter of the eleventh

book (James, 2008: 392), she does not understand that he will come back a different man. Chad, thus, feels ready to go back to Wollett because he has gotten what he wanted from Paris and can now move on.

His return, thus, is not a renounce to his flight. Rather, he keeps fleeing, because he is now able to conquer every place he goes. This intertwines with his newly found interest for advertising and for the family business. He can now reterritorialise in Wollett, thereby living there according to his own ways. The elsewhere has served its purpose, allowing Chad to grow stronger and, perhaps, more confident in his free will. Though James uses his character to criticise American imperialism and capitalism, his escape is positive for him as an individual. His movement has revealed as herald of positivity and growth.

On the other hand, Strether's perception of Paris deceives him. Once again, the novel works by contrast. Though he can finally reconnect with a part of himself he had long buried, he cannot fully commit to his escape. Indeed, in the second part of the novel Strether expresses that he does not want to go back to Wollett, but, as we have already observed, his point of view is a touristic one. He is not able to deterritorialise, for a touristic sojourn implies a return. In a way, his experience is similar to Sarah Pocock's, howbeit Strether is actually able to gain something from his travel. Strether starts doubting, whereas Sarah obeys her mother's instructions, as we can gather from their conversation in the third chapter of the tenth book: "*What is your conduct but an outrage to women like us? I mean*

your acting as if there can be a doubt – as between us and such another – of his duty?” (ibid.: 374).

Sarah thus acts as an opposite to Strether, representing the close-mindedness of Wollett. To Sarah and Mrs Newsome, Europe has corrupted both Chad and Strether. They reject Paris and any potentially positive outcome its culture might have had on Chad. Differently, Strether’s mind is now open and he recognises the positive influence the city and Mme de Vionnet have had on the young man. If Sarah is still attached to the worldview she arrived with, Strether now rejects it.

Therefore, as Hoople argues: *“The two ambassadors [...] view each other [...] across an impassible chasm. Their differences over Chad are not the result of a casual dispute but the proceeds of irreconcilable modes of seeing. Strether, susceptible to doubt, insists on confronting what he sees. Sarah, ideally equipped for imperfect vision, insists on seeing as she has been commanded”* (Hoople, 1988: 418). The defamiliarisation offered by being elsewhere, united with the repetition of Chad’s improvement, allowed Strether to broaden his perspective and attempt at breaking through the chains of New England’s puritanism.

Because of this, it has also been argued that James introduced a Modernist consciousness at the end of *The Ambassadors*: *“fluidity and multiplicity of identities; states of permanent dislocation or expatriation; a skepticism toward accepted sources of authority, including the links between seeing, knowing, and mastering; a critical stance*

toward capitalism and a valorisation of individual freedom” (Garcia, 2011: 73). Indeed, Strether’s travel assumes the fiction of a flight, but it is never fully carried out as such. His “*vexed return*” to New England is an “*act of self-denial*” (Hoople, 1988: 430).

Nonetheless, he realises how much the travel has changed him: “*What he could now was think of three months ago as a point in the far past. [...] He felt, strangely, as sad as if he had come for some wrong, and yet as excited as if he had come for some freedom. [...] It was the freedom that most brought him round again to the youth of his own that he had long ago missed*” (James, 2008: 384). Strether knows that he has deeply changed and reconnected with his old self, however he is not able to fully commit to his intention of staying in Paris, of escaping.

Perhaps, as Hoople argues (Hoople, 1988: 431), because Strether lost something else in his youth, he is now unable to do anything. Would his line of flight thereby have been broken already? For sure, it would mean that he is not strong enough. Hence, the Modernist consciousness is only hinted at because their times are not mature enough. It is up to the younger generation, which is personified in Chad, to take on the challenge. Strether thus puts the bases for it, but we can also believe that, since he has been imitating-repeating Chad’s improvement, in a Bergsonian sense, the young man’s will to go back to Wollett influences Strether.

3.2.5 Failed Escapes and Potentiality

The episode in the twelfth book of *The Ambassadors* contributes to the meaning of this return. Indeed, before going back to Wollett, all the protagonists are temporarily scattered around. The Pockock's go to Switzerland. They are clearly in Europe to carry out their mission and to enjoy their time whilst they are there, representing thus the tourist perspective. Chad and Mme de Vionnet go to the countryside, instead. So does Strether, who will eventually run into the couple. And Chad even goes briefly to England.

In the countryside, Strether is able to enjoy a landscape that he actually had already prefigured in his mind. He thinks of Maupassant and of a painting he had seen in his youth. Clearly, when, on his own, he cannot imitate Chad, the otherness of space leads Strether to contemplate his past. his point of view, then, is touristic. About this, Francescato mentions the “*distinction between sightseeing and noticing, that is, between limited pre-packaged tourist fantasy and broader and more penetrating forms of human perception*” (Francescato, 2012: 144). Therefore, when he runs into Chad and Mme de Vionnet and realises the true nature of their relationship, Strether is left deluded and disenchanted.

The comfort he feels in Europe is ruined, for Strether thither understands that it was not Paris alone that changed Chad—in the previously quoted passage, he and Miss Gostrey argued about the influence of the *milieu*. Rather, it was Mme de Vionnet that inspired Chad's improvement. Paris, as a place, then represents a

location where such a relationship was possible, for she could not exist outside of it and she embodies the French spirit. The mechanism of identification and repetition-imitation collapses. Strether's disenchantment is caused by his coming to consciousness of the fact that his attempted escape was based on a "mistake:" he thought he could improve his life like Chad did, but he thought he only needed to repeat his actions and go in the same places he went to.

This is also the reason why Chad is able to "conquer," to reterritorialise Paris (and perhaps it is better understandable if we look at its consequences). He broke through the chains of puritan New England, deterritorialising it, he went to Paris and reterritorialised there, and he is now ready to move on. His Americanness is expressed in this: he does not want to stay there, rather he wants to reterritorialise Wollett, to make it his. When he explains to Strether he went to England to learn about advertisement, he is excited and describes it as "*the new great force*" (James, 2008: 462). This is because by having become a freer man, Chad can now set his own rules, and his "taking over" the family's business is a metaphor of it.

In a sense, we may argue that what Chad really breaks through is his *fêlure*. He interrupts the continuous repetition in his familiar line and allows for others to do so as well. On the contrary, Strether cannot fully deterritorialise Wollett nor reterritorialise in Paris. As Francescato argues, his touristic point of view is rather a mind (Francescato, 2012: 133). It would then take more than just the imitation-

repetition of Chad's change to evade it. Strether's experience, therefore, is positive yet not potential. He does realise what he lost and what he is missing, though he cannot commit to a quest to solve his discomfort. Is his disenchanted return to Wollett a return to the same?

During their last exchange, when she silently proposes him and tries to convince him to stay, Miss Gostrey mentions a "*great difference*" (James, 2008: 469) which Strether would be going home to. Strether replies showing he understands what good she could make him: "'*Shall you make anything so good –?*' [...] '*So good as this place at this moment? So good as what you make of everything you touch?*'" (*ibid.*: 469-470). Because Strether realised it was Mme de Vionnet that changed Chad, he also realises that he would need the help of a woman—Miss Gostrey and Mme de Vionnet even share the same first name, highlighting this parallelism.

Strether, then, has all the elements to fully repeat Chad's experience, but he renounces it. The hypotheses to it are multiple, but because of James' criticism of American capitalism and imperialism, we may suggest it is Strether's search for a financially good marriage and his renewed imitation-repetition of Chad that push him to returning to Wollett, whose mentality he never completely got rid of.

3.2.6 Space Dynamics in *The Ambassadors*

If we are to gather the claims and thoughts on space dynamics in *The Ambassadors*, the first thing we want to mention is that they help emphasising the contrasts in

the novel. New England versus Paris, morality versus laxities, Miss Gostrey versus Mme de Vionnet, all these binary pairings sum up in the contrast between America and France. Movement is a central element in the discussion of them. Not only the elsewhere is an element almost ever-present in James' work, it activates the interweaving of the plot, the remembrance and coming-to-consciousness of Strether. It also permitted Chad's improvement. Indeed, even if it was mostly caused by Mme de Vionnet, her being quintessentially Parisian gives importance to the fact that his improvement could not have taken place but in Paris.

Chad's return to Wollett breaks the binarity of the pairings, since he has become able to be free there too. America is not only associated with morality and capitalism but is now a land Chad can conquer. This is why Deleuze will argue that the American start-over is completely different than the French. Chad can go back and still be the new Chad. He does not have to be who he was before he went to France. The push to movement in his character is thus what most relates to Deleuze's theories. As a metaphor for America, Chad's renewal mirrors the future renewal of the county itself, which needs movement for it to happen. His flight to France and even his return to Wollett are thereby extremely positive acts, creative and potential at once.

Similarly, yet differently, Strether's return is a renounce. Fascinated by Chad's improvement, he finds in Paris the place to remember his lost forgotten

youth and to try to have it again. Strether's active synthesis of time –his memory– is thus activated by Paris. Therein, he can escape for a moment his current life and live his youth again. His identification with Chad's improvement and the consequent attempted repetition of the latter's experience is thus an attempt at not losing the possibility of escaping into his youth. Upon the realisation that Mme de Vionnet is actually responsible for the improvement, his privileged relationship with the city crashes. Henceforth, he will no longer be able to see a positive outcome to his flight, hence his decision to return.

Nonetheless, Strether goes back to Wollett bearing the signs of a deep change, yet he is resigned to an incomplete life. This is the hint of Modernist consciousness argued on by Garcia that still needs to be developed. With Strether's return, Henry James not only criticises American capitalism and imperialism but also confirms the binary opposition of the pairings. Howbeit, with Chad's return, he gives hope to the new generation, which will be able to better navigate the waters of American society.

3.3 Conclusions

Analysing the space dynamics of these two novels therefore opens up the discussion to different and important features such as the role of society and of the social machine. In Zola, movement is controlled by the social machine of the *Second Empire*, which operates through the railway company. The author criticises

the social machine of the Empire by showing that it too loses control of its *dispositifs* in the ending. Lower-classes characters have been alienated and separated, both metaphorically and literally, from the higher classes and, when the social machine loses control, they are stifled. When Jacques and Pecqueux fall from the locomotive, they embody their social class, and the train embodies the Empire furiously running towards its tragic ending.

Through this, Zola gives no hope of overcoming one's predestined *moira*. The lines of flight almost seem impossible to create, because movement has to be approved by the system to happen. The continuous going back and forth of the train between Paris and Le Havre, then, is nothing but the mindless repetition of a habit. Of course, Jacques finds sublimation to his instinct in his job, but he is not in control of it, nonetheless. The system has him and when it fails, so does Jacques.

In Henry James' novel, on the other hand, there is a more optimistic vision. If Strether fails in escaping, Chad is able to dismantle the social machine, to overturn its power. And, also, Strether lives his Parisian experience with a new open-mindedness, nonetheless. Where is, then, James' critique to American capitalism and imperialism? Strether's vexed return means that he succumbs to the social machine. The system needs for Chad, the winner, to triumph that someone else shall fail. Though Strether admires Chad and gains a new point of view on his own life, the ending of the novel does not portray him as a winning

figure, perhaps because for him it was not time to break through the schemes yet, a mission left to the younger generation.

In conclusion, then, we can say that movement in *La Bête humaine* is controlled by the social machine, whereas in *The Ambassadors* it allows to reach an elsewhere, a place other that is herald of potentiality and possibility. The elsewhere truly is a pivotal element in the latter novel. Movement and elsewhere are heralds of potentiality, as mentioned above, and they also anticipate what will happen with American Modernism. If Chad's return to Wollett is seen as a positive reterritorialisation of America, then his experience exemplifies the same journey undergone by many other American characters and authors who were able to redefine and recreate the American territorial and cultural space after travelling and encountering different societies. American movement is therefore central to the country's cultural development, which goes hand in hand with the exploration of land.

Chapter 4: The Exhaustion of Naturalism and the Turn to Modernism

4.1 Huysmans' *À Rebours*

4.1.1 The Exhaustion of Naturalism

When we think of Huysmans' most famous novel, *À Rebours*, we cannot but remark its difference with the contemporary canon. Published in 1884, the novel tells the story of Jean Floressas des Esseintes, personification of the classic decadent dandyism of the end of the century. Des Esseintes is the last heir of his family, is hypersensitive, and tries by all means to be different and special. Such a character focuses Huysmans' descriptions and storytelling, which are entirely devoted to him. A maniacal aesthete, des Esseintes leaves Paris to isolate himself in Fontenay-aux-Roses, a small village not far from the capital, where his isolation journey begins. He decides to live against the grain, doing the opposite of any custom. His aestheticism goes along with his perversion and elitism, though, and through his character Huysmans is able to portray the historical and literary moment of the end of the Nineteenth century.

Indeed, des Esseintes' relationship to his world is important if we are to understand the passage from Naturalism to Modernism, because of the changed landscape depicted in the novel. If Zola was concerned with showing the struggle of a whole class and its consequent clash with the upper classes, Huysmans is

more interested in giving importance to the interior disease of the protagonist (Huysmans, 2014: 44):

Son mépris de l'humanité s'accrut ; il comprit enfin que le monde est, en majeure partie, composé de sacrifiants et d'imbéciles. Décidément, il n'avait aucun espoir de découvrir chez autrui les mêmes aspirations et les mêmes haines, aucun espoir de s'accoupler avec une intelligence qui se complût, ainsi que la sienne, dans une studieuse décrépitude, aucun espoir d'adjoindre, un esprit pointu et chantourné tel que le sien, à celui d'un écrivain ou d'un lettré.

Des Esseintes, indeed, has already experienced everything and, thus, “he has reached a point of total exhaustion, disillusion, and utter loneliness” (Gasché, 1988: 194).

This element, as I will show later, is a prominent anticipation of the Modernist canon, according to which the world of the novel is no longer the whole society but the individual alone.

Nonetheless, *À Rebours* has a great debt to Naturalism, whose aesthetic canon is used by Huysmans. The three main features of Naturalistic narrative are the opposition to the *romanesque* and the plot, the annihilation of the hero, and impersonality (Zola, 2004: 502-504). As Stefano Ercolino argues (Ercolino, 2014: 5):

In Against Nature, on the contrary, the same theoretical intent of getting rid of the plot, which Huysmans shared with Zola, materialized. Absolutely nothing happens in the novel. Des Esseintes is the only character. The whole of narration is about his self-segregation at Fontenay and his aesthetic experiments. The uninterrupted flow of Des Esseintes's essayistic reflections freezes narration, destroying the plot. The novel itself is challenged as a form by the encyclopaedic

opening of Against Nature, in the attempt to break the “limitations [of the novel], to bring in art, science and history, in short, to no longer use this literary form except as a frame in which to introduce more serious work.” Zola’s dream of abolishing the romanesque and the plot is finally fulfilled, but at what cost. The “exact picture of life” and the “ordinary course of common existence” are completely gone. The aestheticizing folly of des Esseintes is everything but usual; the protagonist’s programmatic intent of making artifice triumph over nature is poles apart from the naturalists’ rational observation and depiction of reality. Of the three hinges of the naturalist novel—attack on the romanesque and the plot, death of the hero, and impersonality—only impersonality seems to remain intact in the narration of the exhausting performance of des Esseintes’s seclusion.

Moreover, the focus on such an exceptional character twists the Naturalist canon and brings back the theme of the hero opposed to his society and his complexity (ibid.: 9):

In Against Nature, Huysmans’s choice to “concentrate the ray of light on a single character,” magnifying it, not only challenged one of the cornerstones of naturalism, the death of the hero, but also it reintroduced a romantic theme, that of the hero in contrast with his own time. [...] A platform was then set up for a new type of character, which would constitute one of the starting points for a global revision of the character in modernism, after the rise of irrationalistic philosophies, the advent of psychoanalysis, and World War I.

The novel is therefore an important anticipator of Twentieth-century literature, for the exchange of temporal structure with spatial form, the absence of development, and the importance granted to the individual, but the novel is also important for the presence of essays, excursus, and soliloquys (Mickelsen, 1978: 48-50). About this, Ercolino, in defining the novel-essay, explains that the

emergence of it is due to the desperate need for synthesis and the perception of the world's decay (Ercolino, 2017: 61).

Des Esseintes' adventure is tainted by a symbolism that takes his story out of space and time (Gasché, 1988: 184-185), as he renounces his society to flee to the countryside. This is also the reason why the novel is interesting within this analysis: des Esseintes' isolation is an escape to oneself. He flees Paris to live according to his canon, but he will be forced to go back. It is worth, thus, pondering over the role of his renounce to movement. Des Esseintes truly flees to Fontenay, as we can read from the very end of the *notice*: "*Brusquement, un jour, sans faire part à qui ce que fût de ses projets, il se débarrassa de son ancien mobilier, congédia ses domestiques et disparut, sans laisser au concierge aucune adresse*" (Huysmans, 2014: 46). Just like in Balzac, the protagonist runs away from a place he dislikes, hoping to never come back, but des Esseintes also erases himself, or at least attempts to.

His renounce, indeed, is not portrayed as a negative act. Rather, the narrator enhances the role des Esseintes has for himself. He becomes the object of his art and the artist himself. Des Esseintes decides to live his life as art (Mickelsen, 1978: 52). All the excursus and essays in the novel serve then to underline the protagonist's whimsical neurosis. They extract him from his time and transform him in a decadent figure. Des Esseintes therefore represents the cultural turn, and his failed escape is useful for this dissertation in underlying the

role of movement and the relationship to the territory, which once again does not change.

4.1.2 Movement and Escape from Society

We have seen that des Esseintes' adventure starts off as an escape. He leaves Paris without telling anyone where he can be found. His is an escape from society, a search for peculiarity moved by the hatred for his peers (Cognly, 1980: 66-67). Des Esseintes' behaviour against nature is thus functional to his being against society (*ibid.*: 61). As Pasco argues, the home in Fontenay is thereby a metaphor for the hero himself: he creates it to enhance his introversion (Pasco, 2009: 627). The novel itself begins with the description of the house, suggesting its importance. The novel thereby eliminates concepts such as historicity, and, as Huysmans himself explained, the story only follows the development of des Esseintes' neurosis (Gasché, 1988: 195).

The house in Fontenay is therefore important in shaping the discourse on movement and space dynamics within this novel, too. Des Esseintes deliberately renounces movement. He abandons Paris to lock himself in a house he decorates according to his own whimsical disease. The space dynamics in the novel, thus, are limited to des Esseintes' usage of the house. To every room he assigns a function. Similarly, the rooms scan the division in chapters of the novel. Each chapter is indeed characterised by the description of one of them, or of a sensorial

experience, therefore entailing the synaesthesia effect. The house becomes des Esseintes' world, a place where he can experience everything.

Des Esseintes' exile is thus the "*static description of a morbid state*" (Porter, 1987: 52). The cataloguing and descriptive tendency, together with the lack of development, becomes central in the passage from Naturalist to Modernist literature. What is interesting is that this twist is represented as a neurosis and entails the abandonment of one's society. It is a flight, indeed, however, just like for Lucien de Rubempré, such an escape is not acceptable according to Deleuze's reading of French movement. Hence, movement is not present. Des Esseintes escapes Paris and tries to erase himself from his society. He cannot succeed in it, though, and he will have to and put an end to his whim.

The novel-essay is said by Ercolino to carry an important symbolical function, it is supposed to recompose the landscape of modernity while criticising it (Ercolino, 2014: 75). This claim perfectly adapts to *À Rebours*, but if we take the notion of novel-essay further we will see an important contrast with American literature. Indeed, in *À Rebours* not only nothing happens but the novel is also tainted by an absolute stativity. Des Esseintes only leaves his house to go to London, a trip he will not complete, and even that movement is "*inspired by the idea of verifying dreams*" (Porter, 1987: 61). The essayistic inserts are the product of the protagonist's reflections and isolation.

In American literature, on the other hand, the passage from literary Naturalism to Modernism also represents the explosion of space dynamics. American Modernist literature is closely associated with the phenomenon of expatriation in Europe, too. This suggests an even stronger presence of movement both in the authors' lives and in their works. Plots will thus abound with space dynamics, flights, and especially the raising role of the elsewhere, as I will show in the following chapter.

Going back to *À Rebours*, we may look at des Esseintes' organisation of his daily life in order to better understand his "journey." In the second chapter of the book, the reader is given detailed information about the hero's daily routine and the rooms' furnishing and decoration. The rigorous division of the meals and the orders to his servants are important in outlining the temporal aspect of the novel. Indeed, in his against-nature lifestyle, des Esseintes escapes temporality, too, as a means to further contradict his society's customs.

"*Cette salle à manger ressemblait à la cabine d'un navire*" (Huysmans, 2014: 56), we read in the same chapter. And the narrator goes on (*ibid.*: 58):

Il se procurait ainsi, en ne bougeant point, les sensations rapides, presque instantanées, d'un voyage au long cours, et ce plaisir du déplacement qui n'existe, en somme, que par le souvenir et presque jamais dans le présent, à la minute même où il s'effectue, il le humait pleinement, à l'aise, sans fatigue, sans tracas, dans cette cabine dont le désordre apprêté, dont la tenue transitoire et l'installation comme temporaire correspondaient assez exactement avec le séjour passager qu'il y faisait, avec le temps limité de ses repas, et contrastait, d'une manière absolue, avec son cabinet de travail, une pièce définitive, rangée, bien assise, outillée pour

le ferme maintien d'une existence casanière. [...] Le mouvement lui paraissait d'ailleurs inutile et l'imagination lui semblait pouvoir aisément suppléer à la vulgaire réalité des faits.

This passage perfectly exemplifies the contrast I have explained. The dining room looking like a cabin inserts des Esseintes' neurosis in a privileged position, that of the imagination. The tendency to digress into excursus and essays, indeed, goes along with the power of the protagonist's imagination, which allows him to travel and explore without moving. Movement is thus useless because des Esseintes would then abandon his retreat. On the contrary, through imagination, he can create his own specific dandy world, dominated by his whimsical neurosis.

Why, then, does he perceive the study room as such a tidy and strict room? The dining room allows him to wander freely, whereas the study room stops his imagination. One could argue that the two rooms represent two aspects of des Esseintes' mind, the neurotic and the "sane." It is true that, when suffering from his nightmares, he does find relief in tidying his library, but can we actually divide the two rooms and assign them such defined functions? The following events in the novel, and especially the case of the turtle in the third chapter, will show that des Esseintes' neurosis, just like his dining room, is unorganised and complicated.

Moreover, we cannot talk about movement and escape in *À Rebours* without mentioning Brombert's study on Huysmans. In discussing the author's poetic, Brombert claims that *"This self-relish suggests a refusal of freedom, the fear of spending oneself. Huysmans' characters wish to 'close the cage' from within; they seek a guarantee*

against disintegration. Huysmans contrives the word *s'évagner*, punning on the resemblance with *s'évader* (to escape), but playing on the etymon *vague* (errant, ill-defined, imprecise)" (Brombert, 1978: 155). *S'évagner*, meaning to wander, to be lost in one's dream, is thus paired with the act of fleeing in Huysmans' works.

It goes without saying that des Esseintes' retreat thereby assumes these three features, which truly give shape to the novel itself. The protagonist flees Paris to be able to finally wander, to be free, and let his neurosis spring. Also, if des Esseintes' retreat and Huysmans' aesthetic interlace with the literary twist of the *fin de siècle*, then his really is an escape, and could such an escape be successful in Huysmans' world or relate to the Deleuzian elements we used so far?

4.1.3 Circular Movement

One of the first yet most significant moments of the novel is the decoration of des Esseintes' turtle and its consequent death. Pasco claims that the turtle is a *mise en abîme* of des Esseintes' own destiny, and, drawing from Biedermann, that the turtle is usually a symbol for circular movement and thus stativity. It has no role in transcendence, and this may be the reason why des Esseintes covers it in gold, to elevate it. The turtle represents the ground while the gold is a metaphor for the sky (Pasco, 2009: 631-633; Biedermann, 1992: 358; Huysmans, 2014: 78-79):

Cette tortue était une fantaisie venue à des Esseintes quelque temps avant son départ de Paris. [...] Possédé par cette idée il avait vagué, au hasard des rues, était arrivé au Palais-Royal, et devant la vitrine de Chevet s'était frappé le front : une énorme tortue était là, dans un bassin. Il l'avait achetée : puis, une fois abandonnée sur le tapis, il s'était assis devant elle et il l'avait longuement contemplée en clignant de l'œil. [...] Décidément, la couleur tête-de-nègre, le ton de Sienne crue de cette carapace salissait les reflets du tapis sans les activer ; les lueurs dominantes de l'argent étincelaient maintenant à peine, rampant avec les tons froids du zinc écorché, sur les bords de ce test dur et terne. [...] Il se détermina, en conséquence, à faire glacer d'or la cuirasse de sa tortue.

The turtle can thus be easily seen as a metaphor for des Esseintes himself and for all the efforts he makes to distinguish himself from the crowd.

However, the gold is not enough and des Esseintes' satisfaction with the golden turtle does not long last. He therefore decides to have the turtle covered in gems and stones, symbols of richness, truth, and spirituality (Pasco, 2009: 633). The choice of the stones goes accordingly to his aesthetic: des Esseintes seeks uniqueness and avoids commonness—for instance, he avoids diamonds since “*le diamant est devenu singulièrement commun depuis que tous les commerçants en portent au petit doigt*” (Huysmans, 2014: 80). Instead, “*il finit par trier une série de pierres réelles et factices dont le mélange devait produire une harmonie fascinatrice et déconcertante*” (*ibid.*: 80).

Des Esseintes is perfectly happy with the outcome: “*Ses yeux se grisait à ces resplendissement de corolles en flames sur un fond d'or*” (*ibid.*: 82). This shows that the novel really is carried on by his neurosis. The turtle, on the contrary, cannot move anymore: “*La tortue [...] s'obstinait à ne pas bouger*” (*ibid.*: 82). Indeed, if the turtle

represents circular movement, that is a repetitive, habitual movement, then her new coat cannot but damage her. She eventually dies because of that very coat: *“Elle ne bougeait toujours point, il la palpa ; elle était morte. Sans doute habituée à une existence sédentaire, à une humble vie passé sous sa pauvre carapace, elle n’avait pu supporter le luxe éblouissant qu’on lui imposait, la rutilante chape dont on l’avait vêtue, les pierreries dont on lui avait pavé le dos, comme un ciboire”* (ibid.: 88).

The turtle, thus, represents des Esseintes’ new life. He forced himself to be too different than everyone else, thereby creating a narrative that would lead to his end, were it not for his final return to Paris. However, what he sees in the turtle’s death is her normality. The passage above suggests that des Esseintes perceives the turtle as an ordinary animal who could not bear the weight of being special. In a sense, we may claim that des Esseintes feels superior to the turtle and takes its death as a prove of his own uniqueness.

What do we make, then, of the notion of circular movement? The passage quoted above cites the sedentary existence of the turtle as the element that did not allow her to be ready for the new coat of stones. If we are to take the turtle as a *mise en abîme* of the hero, then we may gather that des Esseintes’ journey is destined to fail. He might feel superior in that moment, then, but des Esseintes will soon be confronted with the outcomes of circular movement on himself. Indeed, he is closing himself into an extremely sedentary and circular life.

Circular movement in the novel entails no developments but only repetition: des Esseintes is “*dominated by a repetition compulsion*” (Porter, 1987: 52-53). This is relatable to the role of active synthesis discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, des Esseintes continuously remembers episodes of his past. However, whilst Jacques Lantier’s memory led to the activation of his *fêlure* and to his attempt to escape, des Esseintes’ memories bring him back to his present (it happens just before the death of the turtle, for instance) and push him to tidying his library. Memory thus fuels the repetition of his routine.

The final conclusion is the same for both novels: there is no movement. In Zola, as we have seen, it is controlled by the system, whilst in Huysmans the movement is circular. It is all a repetition: “*The new milieu that the Duke creates for himself at Fontenay is [...] a place where des Esseintes, under the influence of a truly spectacular and encyclopaedic disease, experiences the totality of all possible sensations and savors the entirety of the essences of things,*” and his story is thus characterised “*as a repetitive one*” (Gasché, 1988: 195-196). The novel’s absence of space dynamics is actually a restriction of the space dynamics to the house in Fontenay, with the exception of the attempted travel to London.

Des Esseintes’ renounce to movement is the consequence of his flight from Paris and Parisian society, of course, but it is also necessary for his synesthetic experience. As hinted at, when his neurosis makes him have nightmares, des Esseintes does not think of leaving, rather he changes room in the house, namely

going to the library. This is the representation of a perfect circular movement, because des Esseintes only repeats actions. As Pasco argues, when des Esseintes' thoughts are no longer ordered, when he begins to feel lost, he finds refuge in his books and in cataloguing his library (Pasco, 2009: 634).

His habitus, thus, is functional to his keeping apart from society. The circular movement is therefore an element used to attain stability. Metaphorically, des Esseintes moves around the rooms of his house not to see the reality. His meticulously decorated home is an artificial refuge where he can repeat his routine against nature and society, being also allowed to wander without moving. As Brombert says, these artificial spaces allow des Esseintes to oneirically dream, "*cultivate the delights of clausturation,*" and the novel entails "*a terror of space*" typical of Huysmans' writings (Brombert, 1978: 153-157).

4.1.4 The World of the Individual: Nightmares, Repetition, and Escape

It is clear, at this point, that the real change from Naturalism is the perspective shift, from one that considered social classes as a whole to one where the individual is the focus in the novel. As I have quoted above, Ercolino points out the importance of the free indirect speech in the novel-essay, which we can use to back up such claim. Indeed, the narrator is now interested not in delivering a story important to society as a whole inasmuch as he cares to recreate the universe of the protagonist. *À Rebours* indeed consists of des Esseintes' reflections on himself

and his contemporary society: *“Quelle singulière époque, se disait des Esseintes, que celle qui, tout en invoquant les intérêts de l’humanité, cherche à perfectionner les anesthésiques pour supprimer la souffrance physique et prépare, en même temps, de tels stimulants pour aggraver la douleur morale !”* (Huysmans, 2014: 199-200).

In the passage just quoted, des Esseintes, symbolically in the garden of his house, is reflecting about procreation and the need to put a stop to society’s growth. There is no more preoccupation regarding what will happen next, the only concern being the present and the self (as Mickelsen points out, too: Mickelsen, 1978: 51). Des Esseintes’ flight is a withdrawal from society inasmuch it allows him to be his own society. The stativity that characterises his stay at Fontenay, then, is necessary to the survival of his experience.

This claim makes even more sense if we connect it to the concepts of repetition and refuge in the library and if we bear it in mind whilst reading the following passage where des Esseintes reflects upon his education and his rebelliousness towards rules (Huysmans, 2014: 112):

Son caractère rebelle aux conseils, pointilleux, fureteur, porté aux controverses, l’avait empêché d’être modelé par leur discipline : [...] une fois sorti du collège, son scepticisme s’était accru ; son passage au travers d’un monde légitimiste, intolérant et borné, ses conversations avec d’inintelligents marguilliers et de bas abbés dont les maladresses déchiraient le voile si savamment tissé par les jésuites, avaient encore fortifié son esprit d’indépendance, augmenté sa défiance en une fois quelconque. [...] Il s’estimait, en somme, dégagé de tout lien.

Clearly, des Esseintes sees himself as a unique character, different than everyone else and special. Interestingly enough, this acknowledgement is followed by a refuge in books, which caused his neurosis: *“Il s’était exalté les nerfs et par une association d’idées, ces livres avaient fini par refouler les souvenirs de sa vie de jeune homme”* (*ibid.*: 113). The neurosis is thus even more interlaced with active synthesis. Des Esseintes will seek refuge in his library when he has nightmares because the nightmares bring him back to his reality. The library is thereby a symbol in the symbol: it represents a flight from the house in Fontenay, when the latter is not sufficient enough to provide the protagonist an escape from reality.

However, the nightmares, which are a metaphor for the push to go back to Paris and real life (Porter, 1987: 60), keep on ruining des Esseintes’ retreat. He therefore structures his routine to keep them away. Huysmans’ hero, indeed, lives a continuous process of identification, repetition, and active synthesis. He creates a house he can identify himself in. Likewise, he repeats his whimsical lifestyle in order not to succumb to his nightmares, which haunt him like the murderous instinct that haunted Jacques Lantier. The repetition, howbeit, is not enough: *“Ces cauchemars se renouvelèrent ; il craignit de s’endormir. Il resta, étendu sur son lit, des heures entières”* (Huysmans, 2014: 134).

The memory of past events is therefore important both in the sense that it causes Huysmans to be pushed towards his society —and thence it prepares him for his return— and in the sense that it opens the narration to new ways. Through

the active synthesis of events, indeed, des Esseintes delivers more soliloquys and excursus, which create the novel and allow it to go on. By giving more importance to the protagonist's feelings and reflections, the novel anticipates the Modernist canon.

The perspective shift, therefore, is essential to the novel and it gives even more importance to the role of memory and imagination. Des Esseintes has become the whimsical master of his own time and space, which, on the contrary, were in the hands of the railway company in *La Bête humaine*. The active synthesis of des Esseintes' *souvenirs* and his neurosis allow him to wander even from within his house. Let us take, as an example, his wandering free through an hallucination in the tenth chapter: "*Il rumina ces souvenirs. [...] Cette scène déjà lointaine se présenta subitement, avec une vivacité singulière. [...] Une hallucination l'emporta loin de Fontenay*" (*ibid.*: 154).

Likewise, we can analyse his "travel" to London from the same point of view. Porter sees it as "*inspired by the idea of verifying dreams*" and as a "*rehearsal for when he accepts to return to Paris to live among his fellows*" (Porter, 1987: 61), but this trip is more than this. It is the utmost of des Esseintes' experience. It confirms the idea that he rejects time and enters a dimension of atemporality: "*Il déclara au domestique qu'il ne pouvait fixer la date de son retour, qu'il reviendrait dans un an, dans un mois, dans une semaine, plus tôt peut-être*" (Huysmans, 2014: 159-160). Time is clearly not even a notion in his mind, and we can associate this moment to des Esseintes'

leaving Paris: nobody is informed of anything, nobody knows when he will be back, everything is caused and commanded on by his neurotic whims.

Des Esseintes, furthermore, has ideas about the city he will visit. The reading of Dickens gave him a sense of what England is like (*ibid.*: 160-161):

La lecture de Dickens [...] commença lentement à agir dans un sens inattendu, déterminant des visions de l'existence anglaise qu'il ruminait pendant des heures ; peu à peu, dans ces contemplations fictives, s'insinuèrent des idées de réalité précise, de voyage accompli, de rêves vérifiés sur lesquels se greffa l'envie d'éprouver des impressions neuves et d'échapper ainsi aux épuisantes débauches de l'esprit s'étourdissant à moudre à vide.

Des Esseintes hither seems to feel the need to get away, at least momentarily, from his life and experience new things. Such an escape, though, is not territorial. Huysmans, indeed, creates a mental escape, which once again operates on the concepts of identification and repetition: des Esseintes goes to an English bookshop in rue de Rivoli to buy a guide and thither feels like he is already elsewhere.

His travel, thus, is a sensorial experience. He observes a Baedeker guide and plombs into his memories: “Il [...] s'arrêta sur une page du Baedeker, décrivant les musées de Londres. [...] Son attention dévia de l'ancienne peinture anglaise sur la nouvelle qui le sollicitait davantage. Il se rappelait certains spécimens qu'il avait vus, dans les expositions internationales, et il songeait qu'il les reverrait peut-être à Londres” (*ibid.*: 163-164). Thus, what des Esseintes is actually interested in is his own idea of London. There is no

interest in the actual city or in the experience of travelling. It is just another means to get away from his nightmares.

Des Esseintes' escapes are therefore not territorial. Rather, he erases his social figure, an action that follows in Deleuze's reading of vertical movement in French literature. Likewise, he does not need to actually be in London to satisfy his need for escape. He simply needs to experience England. Hence, the trip to the bookshop and then to the restaurant are enough for him. The travel takes place in his mind, through memories, reading, and other sensorial experiences.

The chapter, indeed, ends with his renounce to the travel (*ibid.*: 171):

Il n'avait plus le temps de courir à la gare, et une immense aversion pour le voyage, un impérieux besoin de rester tranquille s'imposaient avec une volonté de plus en plus accusée, de plus en plus tenace. [...] Puis, se répétant, une fois de plus : En somme, j'ai éprouvé et j'ai vu ce que je voulais éprouver et voir. Je suis saturé de vie anglaise depuis mon départ ; il faudrait être fou pour aller perdre, par un maladroit déplacement, d'impérissables sensations. [...] Et il revint avec ses malles, ses paquets, ses valises, ses couvertures, ses parapluies et ses cannes, à Fontenay, ressentant l'éreintement physique et la fatigue morale d'un homme qui rejoint son chez soi, après un long et périlleux voyage.

This last passage shows exactly everything I argued above. Des Esseintes has travelled even without leaving Paris. There is, in his experience of London, everything he sought from it. Moreover, the passage clarifies the relationship toward space dynamics. In the new landscape of the individual, movement is still primarily vertical, the cultural constant remains unchanged, however there is more and more need for escape, a need that is satisfied by a fictitious escape.

4.1.5 Conclusions on Movement and Absence of It

In order to grasp the conclusion of this reflection, we may look at the finale of the novel, when, under an ultimatum of his doctor, des Esseintes gets ready to go back to Paris (*ibid.*: 247):

Qu'allait-il devenir dans ce Paris où il n'avait ni famille ni amis ? Aucun lien ne l'attachait plus à ce faubourg Saint-Germain qui chevrotait de vieillesse, s'écaillait en une poussière de désuétude, grisait dans une société nouvelle comme une écale décrépite et vide ! [...] Après l'aristocratie de la naissance, c'était maintenant l'aristocratie de l'argent ; c'était le califat des comptoirs, le despotisme de la rue du Sentier, la tyrannie du commerce aux idées vénales et étroites, aux instincts vaniteux et fourbes.

This passage is useful in two ways. On the one hand, it shows des Esseintes' take on his society and allows a wider discussion on French social history as the hero expresses his disdain toward Parisian money-driven bourgeoisie. He sees it as mere imitation of the aristocracy. His view is that of a deluded dandy, one who has seen the troublesome political history of Nineteenth-century France and cannot contain his despise for it.

On the other hand, the passage offers the possibility to reason on the concept of territory. Des Esseintes, indeed, wonders what is going to be of him in Paris, a place where he has no family or friends. Whilst some might argue this is an index of his coming to the end of his whim, this concept really is useful in enhancing the idea that Fontenay was the hero's escape. There is no link binding des Esseintes to the *faubourg* Saint-Germain, but there is also no link binding him

to Fontenay. Truly, he could have easily done what he did either in Fontenay or Paris.

The *lien* attaching him to a place or the other also brings the discussion on the Deleuzian theories. Des Esseintes left Paris in the form of an escape, not providing any specific information regarding his whereabouts, and he retired in a house where he avoided interaction as much as possible. As a consequence, he did deterritorialise Paris—hence the absence of attachment in the finale. According to this reading of the novel and to the quoted passage, his was an absolute deterritorialisation. He left and erased himself from society. However, was this erasure actual or was it just a product of his neurosis, that is: did he only think he erased himself?

Indeed, the whole story is told from his point of view. It would not be inexact, then, to assume his society is waiting for him to come back. A false and merely formal link, of course, but des Esseintes would still have something in Paris. This further suggests that Fontenay was even more so a flight. And his attempt at reterritorialising in Fontenay was a failure. His retreat was caused by his neurosis but was also a strong stand against French society. The movement was therefore vertical, social: he fled his society. Thus, he could not reterritorialise, because he really was the master of his routine only. Nonetheless, the novel is an interesting example of the importance of the elsewhere. The flight his functional to the hero in providing him a secluded location where he can live

his life like art. In Fontenay, des Esseintes tried to live unbound from anything, almost like the *corps sans organes*, but could not succeed, because his flight was a critique of society and not an actual attempt at conquering territory.

4.2 Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*

4.2.1 Modernism and Movement: The Lost Generation

Comparing Huysmans to Hemingway means, essentially, comparing two moments of the cultural twist to Modernism. Indeed, as David Trotter argues, the evolution from Naturalism to Modernism took place through the halfway point of Decadence (Trotter, 2005: 74). Therefore, we can assume *À Rebours* to be a Decadent interlude that brought to the complete cultural twist, as we can gather from Nicholls' definition of it as a "*breviary of decadence. [...] The model of the Symbolist self will ultimately collapse under the pressure of the very devices in which it originated*" (Nicholls, 2009: 54). Nicholls also defines the novel as being "*obsessed with modernity as a state of transition*" (*ibid.*: 55). Trotter also argues that "*Ernest Hemingway [...] started a lot closer to the center of Modernism*" (Trotter, 2005: 89), relating this to Hemingway's closeness with Gertrude Stein: Hemingway is thus the arrival point in the analysis of this chapter, whereas the actual arrival point of Modernism will be taken under consideration in the next chapter.

Of course, Modernism implies different important aspects, but for reasons of brevity I will focus on its relationship with space dynamics. Huyssen argues

that “*The geography of classical modernism is determined primarily by metropolitan cities*” (Huysen, 2005: 17), giving importance to the rising phenomenon of urbanism. This also suggests the central role played by movement and migration. If we read Malcolm Cowley’s *Exile’s Return*, a memoir of his Parisian years, we will find a confirmation to this in the Lost Generation: “*A whole generation of American writers [...] had been uprooted, schooled away, almost wrenched away, I said, from their attachment to any locality or local tradition. For years the process continued, through school and college and the war; always they were moving farther from home*” (Cowley, 1994: 206).

With Modernism, escape and movement become means of finding a new America and new ways to write. Cowley clearly states that the Lost Generation’s “*was lost because it tried to live in exile. [...] The generation belonged to a period of transition from values already fixed to values that had to be created*” (ibid.: 9). Its movement, though, had a definite trajectory: “*In Paris or Pamplona, writing, drinking, watching bull-fights or making love, they continued to desire a Kentucky hill cabin, a farmhouse in Iowa or Wisconsin, the Michigan woods, the blue Juniata, a country they had ‘lost, ah, lost’ [...]; a home to which they couldn’t go back*” (ibid.: 9).

The intent is that of conquering territory. After the Great War and a first-hand experience of European life, the future expatriates are back in their hometowns and feel alienated: “*Feeling like aliens in the commercial world, they sailed for Europe as soon as they had money enough to pay for their steamer tickets*” (ibid.: 6). Hence, the first wave of expatriates leaves and will later inspire more to follow in

their footsteps, benefitting and learning from Europe: *“The idea of changing place. [...] By expatriating himself, by living in Paris, Capri or the South of France, the artist can break the puritan shackles, drink, live freely and be wholly creative”* (ibid.: 61).

The trajectory is thus double—the expatriates leave the U.S. to go to Europe and come back: *“We had come three thousand miles in search of Europe and had found America, in a vision half-remembered, half-falsified and romanced”* (ibid.: 83). If we are to describe it in Deleuzian terms, we will clearly see that their deterritorialisation from America ultimately led to a reterritorialisation of their country. It was necessary for them to build a new myth, that of the American writer, which also enabled American literature to get rid for good of its traces of provinciality (ibid.: 93-97).

Furthermore, Cowley even pondered over the meaning of escape (ibid.: 236):

There is a danger in using the word ‘escape.’ It carries with it an overtone of moral disapproval; it suggests evasion and cowardice and flight from something that ought to be faced. Yet there is no real shame in retreating from an impossible situation or in fleeing from an entity that seems too powerful to attack. [...] Escape was the central theme of poems, essays, novels by the hundred; it was the motive underlying many types of action that seemed impulsive and contradictory.

We can interestingly compare this passage with Deleuze’s idea of French and American flights, hence assuming the one described by Cowley rejects the “French” flight. Rather, such escape is a freeing act, a creative act, in the words of

Deleuze. The expatriates rejected the past of America to impose a new poetic of literature and art. Moreover, this enhances the importance of the elsewhere as a potential and creative place.

4.2.2 Moveable Memories

Published in the 1960s long after the described facts, Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* is a precious text for our understanding of the Lost Generation. Though not exactly a novel but a memoir, it chronicles the author's early Parisian years, when he was still struggling to be reckoned as a writer, thus making this text interesting for our comparison. Indeed, movement is ever-present in the novel. Every chapter tells the reader about a different spot where Hemingway was a habitué in Paris. Interestingly, just like in *À Rebours*, in *A Moveable Feast* too nothing really happens. There is no real plot, the chapters follow one another in a more or less linked chain of events and meetings, rather focusing on the protagonist's thoughts. The central element of the novel, therefore, is not Paris as much as Hemingway's Paris.

Hence, Hemingway's going away makes a potential elsewhere of Paris, where he inserts himself in the French tradition of the aspiring writer. The book, indeed, opens with a description of the *Quartier Latin*, where the Balzacian heroes started their social climbing and Strether was so inspired. However, Hemingway's description is focalised not so much on the city itself than on the *Café des Amateurs*, where he would go to write: "I walked down past the Lycée Henri Quatre and the ancient

church of St.-Etienne-du-Mont and the windswept Place du Panthéon and cut in for the shelter to the right and finally came out on the lee side of the Boulevard St.-Michel and worked on down it past the Cluny and the Boulevard St.-Germain until I came to a good café that I knew on the Place St.-Michel” (Hemingway, 2011: 16-17).

The narrator takes the reader with him along his walks, showing a very different approach to the territory. If Strether walked, observed, and linked the places he saw to other people (for instance, the *Montagne Sainte Geneviève* to Chadwick’s first arrival in Paris), Hemingway only refers the territory to himself. He is much more in control of the story and of the city, thereby showing a complete reterritorialisation in Paris. The potentiality of the elsewhere hither finds a confirmation, as we can also see from the inspiration Hemingway gains from it: *“I was writing about up in Michigan, and since it was a wild, cold, blowing day it was that sort of day in the story. I had already seen the end of fall come through boyhood, youth and young manhood, and in one place you could write about it better than in another. That was called transplanting yourself” (ibid.: 17).* As Cowley wrote, America was found in Europe.

Moreover, other Deleuzian theories find confirmation in the first chapter of the book, such as the creativity of the act of flight and reterritorialisation: *“You belong to me and all Paris belongs to me and I belong to this notebook and this pencil” (ibid.: 18).* Whilst looking at a girl in the café, Hemingway is inspired and reflects upon his writing. Paris belongs to him and yet he belongs to literature, therefore the

importance of writing is clear. Through writing, the author, who has already deterritorialised America and reterritorialised Paris, can also virtually deterritorialise again and wander freely by imagining and reminiscing different places.

The author is also “*happy to make plans*” (*ibid.*: 18), a feeling provided by the act of writing itself. Just like Deleuze said, Americans are able to change their plans, to continuously live according to a new programme. Another example in the very same chapter is the decision to leave taken by Hemingway and his wife. Through this attitude, the writer is enriched by his experiences and is uplifted from the ground: “*We did not think of ourselves as poor. We did not accept it. we thought we were superior people and other people that we looked down on and rightly mistrusted were rich*” (*ibid.*: 43).

Movement is thus a central theme in the book, namely because it titles it. Hemingway benefits from Paris as from a playground, a place he has to explore and conquer in order to gain the most from it. The passage to American Modernism thereby takes place in Europe, a far and potential place. As Cowley wrote, “*The exiles ended by producing a type of writing that was American in another fashion than anyone had expected*” (Cowley, 1994: 300).

4.2.3 Movement and Literary Inspiration in Paris

The movement directly described in *A Moveable Feast*, thus, is mostly circumscribed to the author's walks around the city. Indeed, the moments he *flâne* in the *Cinquième* and the *Sixième* are the moments offering him the chance to reflect upon his experience. The most utilised point of view is the sidewalk, a place used not only to think and talk about Paris but also to remember America. The eighth chapter, for instance, offers an interesting example. The whole narration follows Hemingway in a *promenade* around the *Sixième*: he goes to the Luxembourg Gardens in order not to suffer from hunger, skipping lunch in order to save money. He also says one gets a much deeper glimpse into art, when “*belly-empty*” and “*hollow-hungry*” (Hemingway, 2011: 65).

Hemingway keeps walking, exploring and making the territory his. Indeed, his description of all the places he encounters, such as the Shakespeare & Co. library in rue de l'Odéon or the place Saint Sulpice, can be seen as a reterritorialisation of the author in them because he gains creativity from them. It must be added also that at the end of the chapter Hemingway comes to the realisation that he has to write a novel, “*I knew I must write a novel*” (*ibid.*: 71), just before describing his way to the *Closerie des Lilas*.

Furthermore, Paris is not only the place where Hemingway finds America, but it is also the place where he discovers and learns about the classics of literature: “*From the day I had found Sylvia Beach's library I had read all of Turgenev, what*

had been published in English of Gogol, the Constance Garnett translations of Tolstoi and the English translation of Chekov” (*ibid.*: 101). He also mentions reading Stendhal and Dostoyevsky, also adding an important consideration: “To have come on all this new world of writing, with time to read in a city like Paris where there was a way of living well and working, no matter how poor you were, was like having a great treasure given to you” (*ibid.*: 102).

The definition of Paris as a literary city where one can dedicate to literary work is pivotal for this dissertation’s argument that the elsewhere is of extreme importance in American Modernism. The writer finds in Europe a place where he can be unbothered as he plunges into literary work, reading, learning, and then applying this new knowledge to his own work, which is moreover enriched by the inspiration gained both from his readings and his travels. This connotes movement as a creative act. Hemingway takes all he can from Paris and transforms it into art, being able to reterritorialise wherever he goes.

4.2.4 Movement and Escape: Un-rootedness

Before confronting *A Moveable Feast*’s relationship to movement with *À Rebours*’, it is interesting to look at two more passages from the novel. The seventeenth chapter sees the introduction of another important figure of the 1920s’ literary scene, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, who invites Hemingway to go to Lyon together, where he and Zelda had left a car a few time therebefore. Fitzgerald asks

Hemingway to “go down to Lyon with him on the train to pick up the car and drive up with him to Paris” (*ibid.*: 130). It is interesting that even in this case the travel is seen as an opportunity, that is an encounter with a fellow writer: “I was enthusiastic about the trip and my wife thought it was a splendid idea. I would have the company of an older and successful writer, and in the time we would have to talk in the car I would certainly learn much that it would be useful to know” (*ibid.*: 131).

The trip is then described as a lesson (*ibid.*: 133) and the characterisation of the two writers suggests that their point of view is that of the expatriate, of course. We can see it from details such as their ordering an American breakfast (*ibid.*: 136) or Fitzgerald’s hatred of French people and pretence to be taken to the American hospital of Neuilly (*ibid.*: 143-144). The encounter with French culture stimulates their artistry yet they remain essentially American. Therefore, when Hemingway walks around the *Cinquième*, he is not simply trying to be inscribed in the French tradition, he is taking from it what he believes can enhance his own work. For him, Paris is not the capital of France, but a literary city, a freeing elsewhere.

4.3 Conclusions

Before grasping the conclusions to this chapter, we might want to take a step back and observe the two books from a distance. In Huysmans, we found an opposition to movement. The hero fled Paris and retreated in an isolated castle where he was

able to live his life like a piece of art. Everything was extremely thought about and represented the product of his neurotic critique of his contemporary society. As a result of this stativity, des Esseintes found the opportunity to wander in his fantasy. Even though the protagonist never speaks against movement as an ideal, we cannot but notice it.

The room outfitted as a cabin, his whimsical lifestyle leading to fantasies and memories, and his hatred towards his society, all these elements concur in enhancing the idea that his retreat is an escape. Taking this claim further on, we can easily analyse it through a Deleuzian optic and interlace it to *Illusions perdues*, another novel that saw the protagonist flee his society. Indeed, des Esseintes, described in the *Notice* to the novel as a clever and peculiar personality, does not feel similar to his peers and decides to leave, in a creative act: his flight truly allows him to fulfill his whimsical fantasy. Differently, Lucien de Rubempré, who also did not feel part of Angoulême's society, clandestinely fled to Paris.

These two opposite trajectories (one from Paris outward, one from the province to the capital) reveal the real twist in the literary canon: Huysmans rejects it by having his protagonist revert such trajectory. Balzac's hero, an ambitious young man with artistic inclinations, inscribes in the tradition of many more like himself: he arrives in Paris, lives in the *Quartier Latin*, struggles, and is finally attracted by fame and social triumph rather than his literary ambitions. Des Esseintes, on the contrary, is not interested in writing a novel, because he wants

to enthuse his artistry in his own life. This can also be seen as a further prove of his exile: a novel is, in the end, communication, but des Esseintes is not interested in communicating.

Des Esseintes' flight eventually resolves in his return to Paris. Depicted as a neurosis, he is not strong enough to stay away. We can therein see a final confirmation to Deleuze's claims: there is a return and thereby an acceptance of the verticality of French society. Therefore, if Lucien had to escape Paris because he was not able to reterritorialise it, did des Esseintes deterritorialise from Paris and then from Fontenay?

As I mentioned above, he did deterritorialise from Paris, but because he did not reterritorialise in Fontenay, he did not need to deterritorialise from it—hence, the doctor's order to go back to Paris. Nevertheless, the important element hither is the emergence of the elsewhere as a creative and potential location. Fontenay is the place where des Esseintes gives the best of his whimsical artistry. The narrator places in every room important essayistic excursus to display des Esseintes' aesthetic and reflections.

However, the potentiality of the elsewhere is not strong enough to contrast the cultural constant of vertical movement. There is a necessary return, which also justifies, in a sense, des Esseintes' experience. As Dorian Gray had to die at the end of Wilde's novel, so des Esseintes has to go back to Paris, so that his story can be told. Indeed, it becomes "acceptable" to French society, reinforcing the

meanings of Paris and of bourgeois values. Des Esseintes' movement to Fontenay was not inspired by career or societal aspirations and was therefore not permitted.

Completely different is the development of American Modernism and of Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*. The trajectory therein depicted is indeed almost inexistent. This means that there is not a fixed trajectory. Hemingway moves around Paris and Europe without a definitive plan. There is no manifesto but only a programme. For the time of the narration, the programme is to constantly live pay-check to pay-check, saving the money necessary to travel, and write. There seems to be no preoccupation regarding the future if not the success in writing and the possibility of travelling more and more.

The distress of the Lost Generation, similar to des Esseintes' neurosis but essentially different, is focused on the contrast of the ante and post bellum world. As we will see more in-depth in the following chapter and as hinted at by Malcolm Cowley, the expatriates' approach to Europe and at large to the elsewhere is new and central to the discourse of Modernism. Europe is the place where they can not only be free to experiment their artistic inclinations but also gain a new perspective. As Laurent Jeanpierre argues, there is nothing exclusively Anglo-American in Anglo-American Modernism (Jeanpierre, 2010: 386): the elsewhere is also the pivotal place where the encounter with another literary tradition takes place.

Hemingway lives and takes strolls in the same Latin Quarter that hosted Lucien and many others, but he is able to plane on it. That is, Hemingway takes in only a part of that huge tradition, which he uses in favour of his own national literature. The sojourn in Europe is the outcome of a flight, yes, since the author wanted to escape a country he did not feel at home in, but it contains a return, because of the constant research of America in the works of expatriate writers.

What do we make, then, of Hemingway's relation to movement? Surely it is much freer than Huysmans'. Hemingway leaves and wanders, has no cage in which he closes himself, and writes about it because the escape is not a total erasure from society as much as an attempt at changing it. Expatriates' reterritorialisation is the outcome of a collective deterritorialisation, guided by some leaders, of course, but completely individual, for there was no literary manifesto. Hemingway, thus, can reterritorialise in Paris and thence easily deterritorialise once again, showing the American cultural constant of movement.

Once again, the ability to reterritorialise in a much more creative way is what differentiate American Modernism. Because horizontal movement is permitted, authors can move around without difficulties, freer to explore and grow. The Paris moment in American literature is pivotal exactly because of this. By taking from possibly the most established literature there is, they transformed and elevated their national literature, still bearing what makes them unique and, according to Deleuze, superior: their capacity to geographically become.

In conclusion, travels, flights, departures are all occasions to grow in American literature. Stories are enriched by moving around, interrupting the plot in a place and resuming it in another. Likewise, new and different worlds are thereby created, through the rupture of ordinary life's micro-fascisms. Hemingway's experience in Paris in *A Moveable Feast* is this. He creates a new layer on Paris, where he can operate as his true self, discovering and cultivating his art. He makes Paris his inasmuch as he wants to, but he also knows how to easily detach himself from it.

Chapter 5: Modernism in France and in America: Proust and Fitzgerald

This last chapter is the point of arrival of this dissertation. Indeed, the Modernist moment represents both a conclusion and a new beginning in literary theory. If we look at scientific literature about it, it is mostly described as a change of paradigms, an aesthetical renewal (Levenson, 2005: 3). The aftermath of the Great War, indeed, pushes authors not only towards a new sensibility, but also towards finding new ways of expressing it, with the “*aim [...] to challenge an unfreedom*” (*ibid.*: 2, 77). Should we therefore consider Modernist works as a search for freedom? Nonetheless, Modernist literature is said to look for concentrations, an in unity, conglomeration, (*ibid.*: 78), both abstract —art— and physical —urbanism— (see also Brooker, Thacker, 2005: 6).

Places such as cities, thus, assume a rising importance and become the central scenery of novels. Of course, characters have always interacted with their city, anyway. The previous chapters of this dissertation give exhaustive examples, especially regarding Paris. However, in American literature, the modernisation of the world and the experience of the *return* from the war changed the perspective of the city and of territory. Likewise, this is the period of American expatriates, as mentioned in the previous chapter. American authors are then in a renewed situation, in which they are able to play with spaces in a different way than the previous generations.

At the same time, France is also experiencing the aftermath of the Great War. What will be interesting to study is what happens in the two national literatures in the specific moment of the immediate post-war. In the United States, writers are fleeing to Europe, where they meet and interact with European artists. This encounter produces fascinating influences on both sides and an international space that has been deeply studied by Laurent Jeanpierre, who has theorised the importation of a Modernist consciousness to the French literary space from America (Jeanpierre, 2010: 384).

Jeanpierre goes on focusing his study on the analysis of the reception of American literature in France, but for the purpose of this dissertation we shall put these other theories aside. Indeed, the text I will take under consideration for the French side of this chapter, Marcel Proust's *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, has been written not after but during the War and published in 1919. The reason for this text to be in this dissertation is the strong presence of spatial elements therein, of course. With the narrations of the protagonist's trips around Paris and of his holidays in Normandy, the element of the elsewhere assumes more and more importance. Nevertheless, I will show that the presence of an elsewhere in the narration does not entail that the French rootedness argued on by Deleuze disappears. Instead, Proust's elsewhere is temporary, it simply implies a holiday, after which the protagonist will go back. There is no abandonment, no flight, no deterritorialisation.

On the other hand, *The Great Gatsby*, the novel that will represent American Modernism, is full of deterritorialisations and reterritorialisations, suggesting that even in a time of change and shift, America's free relationship to the territory is not influenced. I will show that the novel contains important spatial and dynamic elements, which enhance the importance of territory and movement. Flights and moves are indeed central to the plot and can be analysed to further delve into the topic of this dissertation in its moment of arrival.

5.1 Marcel Proust's *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*

5.1.1 Deleuze on Proust and Modernism

The second book of Proust's *Recherche*, *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* is composed of two parts, the first, *Autour de Mme Swann*, focuses on the protagonist's attendance of the Swann's salon and his juvenile love for their daughter Gilberte, whereas in the second part, *Noms des pays : le pays*, the narrator tells the events of his sojourn in Normandy and his meeting of and falling for Albertine. Before we get to the analysis of space and movement in the novel, though, it is important to remember what Deleuze has written about Proust in his *Proust et les signes* (1964).

The philosopher argues that "*La Recherche est tournée vers le future, non vers le passé,*" (Deleuze, 2014: 10) and that its main theme is the "*aventure propre de l'involontaire*" (*ibid.*: 116-117), meaning the involuntary memory. As we will see, by saying that the *Recherche* looks at the future, Deleuze means that Proust is able

to create solutions to his problems through his work. In other words, writing offers the author relief from his struggles and projects him towards the solution already.

According to Deleuze, the Proustian world is divided into three circles: the mundanity circle, deceiving and cruel, the love circle, which generates jealousy and distress, and finally the circle of impressions and sensitive qualities (*ibid.*: 12-18). These circles taint and influence the plot, which is, indeed, a research. Whilst the first circle is the one one is most likely to waste time on (*ibid.*: 30), the second leads the way to the third, which is related to involuntary memory and thus analogous to art itself, since memory triggers Proust's artistry (*ibid.*: 68-75). This system of signs created by Proust is therefore pluralist, because "*nous devons conjuguer deux points de vue distincts dans l'établissement de ces critères*" (*ibid.*: 103).

This last feature helps Deleuze in defining the *Recherche* as a Modernist novel: "*La Recherche est une machine. L'œuvre d'art moderne est tout ce qu'on veut, ceci, cela, et encore cela, c'est même sa propriété d'être tout ce qu'on veut, d'avoir la surdétermination de ce qu'on veut, du moment que ça marche : l'œuvre d'art moderne es tune machine et fonctionne à ce titre*" (*ibid.*: 175). Moreover, Deleuze writes that "*La Recherche est bien production de la vérité cherchée*" (*ibid.*: 178). We can therefore assume that a Modernist novel, in the eyes of Deleuze, is a novel that creates a world and the answers it asks in the first place. It is no surprise, then, that he would see the American novel, especially the Modernist novel, as superior to the French, since

he thought America as the potential of the Original Man, the man with no particularities (Deleuze, 2012: 37).

The signifying distinction between French and American Modernism can moreover be thought based on territoriality. The French novel now creates world, even though through and within the imagination of the author. Proust's *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* actually contains an important reflection on social space, as we will see, and travel. The American novel, on the other hand, becomes schizophrenic (*ibid.*: 16). The creation of new worlds goes along the constant and obsessive movements and flights from place to place.

5.1.2 Spatiality in Proust: Stativity and Elsewhere

Though stativity is a major feature of Proustian narration, we cannot believe it to be the leitmotiv of the novel. When the protagonist is about to see Berma perform in the *Phèdre* for the first time, it is the occasion for his imagination to wander (Proust, 1988: 12-13):

La Berma dans Andromaque, dans Les Caprices de Marianne, dans Phèdre, c'était de choses fameuses que mon imagination avait tant désirées. J'aurais le même ravissement que le jour où une gondola m'emmènerait au pied du Titien des Frari ou des Carpaccio de San Giorgio dei Schiavoni, si jamais j'entendais réciter par la Berma les vers :

*On dit qu'un prompt départ vous éloigne de nous, Seigneur, etc.
Je les connaissais par la simple reproduction en noir et blanc qu'en donnent les éditions imprimées ; mais mon cœur battait quand je pensais, comme à la*

réalisation d'un voyage, que je les verrais enfin baigner effectivement dans l'atmosphère et l'ensoleillement de la voix dorée.

Clearly, the protagonist seeks the revelation of a truth belonging to a world much more real than his own, that of his imagination: *“Mais –de même qu’au voyage à Balbec, au voyage à Venise que j’avais tant désiré– ce que je demandais à cette matinée, c’était tout autre chose qu’un plaisir : des vérités appartenant à un monde plus réel que celui où je vivais” (ibid.: 14).*

This is easily connected with Deleuze’s claims, of course, but it also allows us to question space dynamics in the novel from its very beginning. The narrator tells the story with the consciousness that he is looking for a truth he cannot find in the world he lives in. The elsewhere is thus represented by the world of art and by the dimension of the travel. It is an important element within the narration, but there is no flight, no escape (at the beginning of the same chapter –page 12– the narrator is happy with M. de Norpois’ intercession with his parents in order to convince them to let the boy follow his literary aspiration and thereby *“rester toujours à Paris”*).

The novel, thus, follows the protagonist’s search for truth, which is set out to be found somewhere else, whether it be in art or travel. There is no escape, since once the narrator will find the truth he will be able to “come back.” However, if we interlace this idea with Deleuze’s claims that the Modernist novel is a machine that creates the truth it looks for, then does writing become a flight

(something Deleuze himself hinted at in his essay *De la supériorité de la littérature anglaise-américaine* when discussing the concept of disappearance of the writer)? Though answering this question is tough, we can certainly ponder over the role of writing and reminiscing in Proust's work.

The whole *Recherche* is an act of active synthesis. The narrator remembers and comments his youth. His memories explore the signs he has come across along his life. The different places, thus, are in the same way signs for something he is yet to discover. In order to better understand this concept, we may look at Proust's definition of his own work as a cathedral and Deleuze's commentary on it: the effect a church has on its surrounding landscape is that of emerging from it and partitioning it (Deleuze, 2012: 193-195). We can therefore suppose that the memory work undergone by Proust is for him to discover something from his reminiscences and organise it. Among these, the truth shall then emerge in his art.

A church is also the first element mentioned by the narrator when the idea of going to Balbec is introduced: "*L'église de Balbec est admirable, n'est-ce pas, monsieur ?*" (Proust, 1988: 36). Balbec would then hold an important role in the novel's mission, thereby also giving importance to the elsewhere itself. Space is conceived both as an imaginative, artistic place and as a social place. The artistic one, we have seen, is where the narrator's mind can wander and explore and create

new worlds. This is also the space of the narration itself, a space that allows the writer to alienate from his own life and gain a new perspective.

The social space also holds importance in the novel. Indeed, the narrator carefully describes the houses he visits, especially Swann's, of course, and the people he meets. The *milieu social* is indeed central to his work, creating a fascinating counterpart to physical space. We cannot really separate one from the other, sociality being firmly rooted in the salons and in the gardens of Paris. Hither, the narrator experiences his infatuation for Gilberte, whom he only sees through the social space. Indeed, he has to find a way to be invited to the Swann's to spend time with her, once the season gets cooler and the two do not meet at the Champs-Élysées anymore.

This is also the occasion for the narrator to introduce the theme of delusion towards one's own society. In certain passages of the novel, the protagonist gradually realises that the *milieu social* is only a construction. We can find an example to this in his reaction to New Year's Day (*ibid.*: 58):

J'eus la sensation et le pressentiment que le jour de l'An n'était pas un jour différent des autres, qu'il n'était pas le premier d'un monde nouveau où j'aurais pu, avec une chance encore intacte, refaire la connaissance de Gilberte comme au temps de la Création, comme s'il n'existait pas encore de passé, comme si eussent été anéanties : [...] un nouveau monde où rien ne subsistât de l'ancien... rien qu'une chose : mon désir que Gilberte m'aimât.

This passage also clearly shows the protagonist's intention to find a way of governing the social rules and conventions. Indeed, he decides to change the situation to his own favour. He is thus not passive at a social-space level. At the same time, spatial dynamics are present inasmuch as the protagonist keeps strolling around the Champs-Élysées, remembering Gilberte through the palaces: *“Je continuais à aller aux Champs-Élysées les jours de beau temps. [...] Plongée, dans un sommeil agité, mon adolescence enveloppait d'un même rêve tout le quartier où elle le promenait”* (ibid.: 60).

After this moment, the narrator starts attending Swann's home, a place that immediately becomes symbolic of the family itself. The descriptions of it are tainted by Proust's synesthetic point of view. Indeed, he perceives spaces and people through smells and visibility. When he first goes to their house, he is immediately struck by the smell in the staircase: *“Alors je connus cet appartement d'où dépassait jusque dans l'escalier le parfum dont se servait Mme Swann, mais qu'embaumait bien plus encore le charme particulier et douloureux qui émanait de la vie de Gilberte”* (ibid.: 74). We can therefore say that the *milieu social* and physical space are united in Proust. The limit among them is blurred, as evidenced by Swann's residence becoming a place that activates the narrator's imagination and projections.

Thither, he meets new people and forgets about his “old” life (ibid.: 76):

Dès l'escalier j'entendais s'échapper de l'antichambre un murmure de voix qui, dans l'émotion que me causait la cérémonie imposante à laquelle j'allais assister, rompait brusquement bien avant que j'atteignisse le palier, les liens qui me

rattachaient encore à la vie antérieure et m'ôtait jusqu'au souvenir d'avoir à retirer mon foulard une fois que je serais au chaud et de regarder l'heure pour ne pas rentrer en retard.

This passage separates Swann's home from the rest of the city. The house becomes a place other, almost an elsewhere. Therein, the young protagonist is fascinated by everything belonging to the Swann's and builds an identity on these objects: *"En général je ne savais ni le nom ni l'espèce des choses qui se trouvaient sous mes yeux, et comprenais seulement que quand elles approchaient les Swann, elles devaient être extraordinaires"* (ibid.: 76).

The fact that the last quotation is actually referred to objects brought to the Swann's house from far away makes it even more interesting for this dissertation's purpose, thereby highlighting not only the otherness of M. Swann and his family and residence, but also the importance of the elsewhere itself. Indeed, entering a different social circle becomes almost synonymic of travelling to another space: *"Le royaume dans lequel j'étais accueilli était contenu lui-même dans un plus mystérieux encore où Swann et sa femme menaient leur vie surnaturelle"* (ibid.: 79). And, from being in this space, the narrator improves: *"Ce n'était pas la beauté intrinsèque des choses qui me rendait miraculeux d'être dans le cabinet de Swann, c'était l'adhérence à ces choses [...] du sentiment particulier, triste et voluptueux que j'y localisais depuis tant d'années et qui l'imprégnait encore"* (ibid.: 81).

The importance of spatiality is hither clear as an activator both of the narrator's artistic point of view in the moment he experiences the places and of

the memory when he reminiscences it: *“Chaque fois dans une période autre de l’existence, nous nouons, ou renouons, des liens avec un certain milieu, que nous nous y sentons choqués, nous commençons tout naturellement à nous y attacher en y poussant d’humaines racines”* (*ibid.*: 85-86). What do we make of the ending of this quotation? If we are to read it from a Deleuzian point of view, we shall relate it to concepts of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.

Indeed, rooting into a place is easily associated with the concept of (re)territorialisation, but the discourse hither becomes more complicated than before. Proust characterises places in a much denser fashion than Zola or Balzac. He makes them personal, both from his own experience and that of the characters. Taking the Swann’s residence as an example, we shall notice that the place has been tainted firstly by them and then it has been rendered to the reader from Proust’s experience of it.

The details he sees and reports are pivotal for our understanding of the plot, because they represent what he admires and wants to imitate. Space thus becomes a place of the mind, really. Proust’s will to root in these places denotes thus a desire to imitate, to belong to a different social circle, rather than a will to conquer and possess territory. Swann’s home also becomes a place where Proust experiences foreign culture, at some extent, as they often use English terms to indicate events and holidays (e.g. pp. 96-98).

Certainly, we cannot say that Proust deterritorialises his own home to then reterritorialise in Swann's residence. His will to root truly is only a wish, for all his expectations are also the reasons for his delusion. Proust charges the Swann's with his idealisations, but *"on ne trouve jamais aussi haute qu'on avait espéré une cathédrale"* (ibid.: 98). He cannot reterritorialise, thus, because the spaces are mainly imaginative. Proust narrates a different world than the real one, for he tells the story of spaces he has superimposed his sensibility on, *"car nous seuls pouvons, par la croyance qu'elles ont une existence à elles, donner à certaines choses que nous voyons une âme qu'elles gardent ensuite et qu'elles développent en nous"* (ibid.: 110).

5.1.3 The Voyage

In the second part of the book, Proust tells the story of his summer in Balbec, two years later. The narration opens with the intertwining of his desire to travel with his desire for love: *"Quand je subissais le charme d'un visage nouveau, quand c'était à l'aide d'une autre jeune fille que j'espérais connaître les cathédrales gothiques, les palais et les jardins de l'Italie, je me disais tristement que notre amour, en tant qu'il est l'amour d'une certaine créature, n'est peut-être pas quelque chose de bien réel"* (ibid.: 211). Once again, the otherness of space is used to enhance a feeling. The narrator's love for a girl is compared to something unreal and evanescent, experiencing both art and love in the elsewhere of his imagination.

The opening also discusses the narrator's increasing indifference toward Gilberte, obtained through habit. He thinks about the influence of the change of scenery onto his attempt at forgetting Gilberte, too: "*Le changement d'habitude, c'est-à-dire la cessation momentanée de l'Habitude, paracheva l'œuvre de l'Habitude quand je partis pour Balbec. [...] À Balbec un lit nouveau, à côté duquel on m'apportait le matin un petit déjeuner différent de celui de Paris, ne devait plus soutenir les pensées dont s'était nourri mon amour pour Gilberte*" (ibid.: 213). Movement and habit intertwine, making the case interesting in comparison with Zola's *La Bête humaine*. Indeed, in both novels habit is used to get rid of an uncomfortable feeling. In Proust, however, the change completes the work of the habitus.

Proust even compares his voyage to "*la première sortie d'un convalescent qui n'attendait plus qu'elle pour s'apercevoir qu'il était guéri*" (ibid.: 213). We can almost suppose habitus to be a palliative, whereas travel is the actual cure. This moment represents an important step in this dissertation, because the protagonist finds a new point of view in the different place. Nevertheless, we cannot say that he escapes or moves horizontally, for his holiday in Balbec is not at all a flight or a free exploration.

Proust, indeed, introduces Balbec as the place where he gained a new perspective on his problems and from where he gained serenity, at least for the time span of that summer. The pleasure of travelling and the relief it will give the protagonist are then described, though voyage is not portrayed as something he

absolutely had to do or he specifically decided to undergo. Instead, he leaves for Balbec with his grandmother (which suggests it is a well-established path), knowing he will come back to Paris. Nonetheless, he is able to find a new meaning to the voyage and create an artistic experience out of it.

As mentioned above, the pleasure of travelling is also discussed. The narrator mentions he would rather travel by car, even though he will end up going to Balbec by train. Of course, we could link the element of an automobile to a different relationship to territory than the one with the train, as I will further discuss in the second part of this chapter. A car represents exploration, modernity, but also conquer and freedom. The train, on the other hand, as we have already seen in the chapter on *La Bête humaine*, is commanded upon, and the passenger does not decide where to go, simply embarking.

The narrator is quick in underlying, however, what the real pleasure of travelling is according to him (*ibid.*: 213):

Mais enfin le plaisir spécifique du voyage n'est pas de pouvoir descendre en route et s'arrêter quand on est fatigué, c'est de rendre la différence entre le départ et l'arrivée non pas aussi insensible, mais aussi profonde qu'on peut, de la ressentir dans sa totalité, intacte, telle qu'elle était dans notre pensée quand notre imagination nous portait du lieu où nous vivions jusqu'au cœur d'un lieu désiré, en un bond qui nous semblait moins miraculeux parce qu'il franchissait une distance que parce qu'il unissait deux individualités distinctes de la terre, qu'il nous menait d'un nom à un autre nom, et que schématise [...] l'opération mystérieuse qui s'accomplissait dans ces lieux spéciaux, les gares, lesquels ne font pas partie pour ainsi dire de la ville mais contiennent l'essence de sa personnalité de même que sur un écriteau signalétique elles portent son nom.

Proust creates a relation between the result of a voyage (the *différence entre le départ et l'arrivée*) and the idea one had of such a voyage “*dans notre pensée quand notre imagination nous portait du lieu où nous vivions jusqu’au cœur d’un lieu désiré.*” Though travelling is something that may provide one with new perspectives, the protagonist also insists (in this passage and before in the book) on the importance our preconception of the voyage has on how we experience it. This vision is extremely French if we think about Deleuze’s essays, where he argues that the American concept of travelling is that of just going. The *lieu désiré*, then, is not a territory to be conquered but the imagined space mentioned above, where Proust is able to fully experience his fantasies and ideas.

Moreover, the passage comments railway stations. The narrator says they do not really belong to cities, though they represent them. Magnificent and tragic places, they almost scare the narrator, who is afraid of losing himself, for one abandons themselves a little when departing (*ibid.*: 214). However, he wants to experience Balbec as a new place. In a sense, at this point in the novel, he is like the station: projected outward yet not actually moving. He sets himself to his voyage knowing he will change but he has already made up an idea of how he wants to change.

5.1.4 Elsewhere, Perspectives, and Imagination

Once in Balbec, the narrator not only thinks about the names we give to cities and their meaning but also about the hotel he is staying at as a Pandora's box: "*Cette boîte de Pandore qu'était le Grand-Hôtel*" (*ibid.*: 234). All the guests and staff of hotel are described by Proust as "*indéniables, inamovibles et [...] stérilisants*" (*ibid.*: 234). Though Balbec is far from Paris and has been described by the very narrator as a place one has to reach through a voyage, it seems to contain in itself the same society of Paris. Why is the *Grand-Hôtel* a Pandora's box, then?

We can find an answer to this question in the text (*ibid.*: 235):

C'est notre attention qui met des objets dans une chambre, et l'habitude qui les en retire et nous y fait de la place. De la place, il n'y en avait pas pour moi dans ma chambre de Balbec (mienne de nom seulement), elle était pleine de choses qui ne me connaissent pas, me rendirent le coup d'œil méfiant que je leur jetai et sans tenir aucun compte de mon existence, témoignèrent que je dérangeais le train-train de la leur.

Proust gives a soul to objects and spaces and then takes it back from them. It is us, in his idea, that shape spaces. Nonetheless, he writes that his room was not really his. The objects do not know him and he feels like he is disturbing the quotidian of the place. This proves that the protagonist is not able to reterritorialise. He travels, leaves his home, to find himself in a world he does not belong to. Of course, as I have said, the change of place activates, or, rather,

invigorates, his artistic point of view and his sensibility, but he is still unable to conquer places.

Moreover, this is evidence for the discomfort towards one's *milieu social*. Indeed, the protagonist feels like an outsider in Paris, when he visits the Swanns and again in Balbec, where, even in the hotel room reserved for him, he feels like he is bothering the furniture. He does not belong to places, a common thread of Modernist literature. This is a very interesting theme that I will analyse more in-depth in the second part of this chapter, as it reaches full completion in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and in its within-and-without aesthetic.

For Proust, this is caused by his not feeling like everyone else (*ibid.*: 250):

Malheureusement pour ma tranquillité, j'étais bien loin d'être comme tous ces gens. De beaucoup d'entre eux je me souciais ; j'aurais voulu ne pas être ignoré d'un homme au front déprimé, au regard fuyant entre les œillères de ses préjugés et de son éducation, le grand seigneur de la contrée, lequel n'était autre que le beau-frère de Legrandin qui venait quelquefois en visite à Balbec et, le dimanche, par la garden-party hebdomadaire que sa femme et lui donnaient, dépeuplait l'hôtel d'une partie de ses habitants, parce qu'un ou deux d'entre eux étaient invités à ces fêtes et parce que les autres, pour ne pas avoir l'air de ne pas l'être, choisissaient ce jour-là pour faire une excursion éloignée.

Observing people and their gatherings, the narrator excludes himself from the crowd of Parisian tourists. Even though there is a change of place, social manners and, especially, habitudes are still present. Habitude is indeed central in the passages I have quoted. Proust uses it both as a shield to fight his discomfort (as in his feelings for Gilberte, for instance), both as an indicator of the *milieu social*.

Socialites in Balbec highlight his being an outsider, which in turn enhances Proust's artistry.

In a sense, the narrator prides himself about not being part of that crowd, though he clearly wishes he could be one of them. When he writes "*Malheureusement pour ma tranquillité,*" he means that his artistic perspective is both a gift and a weight. He makes art out of his being excluded, but he would enjoy his holidays if he were not. This is interesting when we also think about Proust's mixed feelings about leaving Paris. Railway stations are magnificent for they offer hope and potentiality, but at the same time they will lead people like Proust to places that are, in the end, the same as the starting point, because, as Proust himself wrote in the passage above, it is our mind and imagination that shape places.

We can therefore think that the protagonist is not able to deterritorialise, merely because his travel implies a return. Instead, Proust's innovation in terms of spatiality is his ability of conferring a soul to places, which thereby represent his personality. Before him, places had already been used to describe the characters who lived therein, namely as it happened in Zola's novels. Proust, however, adopts a new sensibility. Zola describes places as they are in order to characterise his characters and their actions, whereas Proust describes places through the character's characterisation.

Proust's places change as the character seeing them changes, for they are the reflection of the narrator's state of mind. When he feels like an outsider, he will consider his hotel room's furniture unfriendly. Howbeit this may lead us to thinking that the narrator experiences several deterritorialisations, there are no actual escapes or definitive moves in the narration. If Proust's narrator deterritorialised, then he would be able to conquer and possess a place, to be sure of himself in that place, and to steadily be in it, instead of changing according to it.

Deleuze therefore analyses signs in Proust's work because their interpretation is shifting. Moreover, as we have seen, Proust uses signs to connotate his spaces. This is important in defining space dynamics within this novel. Clearly, this is what he is interested in, rather than spatiality per se. For reasons of brevity and because it would not fit into this dissertation's topic, I will not delve in discussing Proust's signs as discussed by Deleuze, but it is important to ponder on this last argument about spatiality in the novel before analysing its conclusion.

5.1.5 Conclusions on Proust's Elsewhere

Throughout this dissertation's chapters, I have shown what Deleuze meant when he said that French novels have a more rooted relationship with territory and how this theoretical claim acted on novels. Proust's work is no exception to the rule,

of course. In the previous paragraphs we have seen that he does not abandon his society and that even when leaving it for the holidays he is still doing it accordingly to social customs and being surrounded by the same people. Of course, themes and elements of the novel change, Proust being a Modernist writer. Indeed, movement and travel assume a different connotation than the previous French tradition.

Insofar I have shown that Balzac, Zola, and Huysmans connotate their character's movements as vertical. Whether they are actions leading to success or to peril, there was always a concrete or social reason for someone to go from a place to another. Lucien fled Angoulême to pursue his literary dreams in Paris; Jacques escaped his *felûre*; and Des Esseintes fled his society. Proust's narrator, on the other hand, follows someone in the movement— this suggests that he did not seek it, and uses it as any other occasion as an artistic hint. Travel is imposed onto him, in a sense, and he finds a significance to it afterwards.

Though modalities and reasons are different, the relationship to territory does not change—there is no flight nor conquer. This is the reason why it is important to conclude this dissertation with the analysis of Modernist novels. They show that even through the paradigm shift of the aftermath of the Great War the difference argued by Deleuze between American and French novel is still standing. Of course, the next section of this chapter will show it better, but it is interesting to notice how the only thing changing is the perspective on movement.

These arguments find further evidence in the following sections of the novel. The narrator's artistic point of view regarding the elsewhere is enhanced in the successive descriptions of his hotel room. For instance, one may want to notice that the protagonist will eventually look outside the window, instead of focusing on the objects inside the room: *"J'entrais dans ma chambre. Au fur et à mesure que la saison s'avança, changea le tableau que j'y trouvais dans la fenêtre"* (ibid.: 368).

This is an occasion for the narrator to think about Combray, too: *"Pareille à celle que je voyais à Combray, [...] une bande de ciel rouge au-dessus de la mer compacte et coupante comme de la gelée de viande, puis bientôt, [...] le ciel du même rose qu'un de ces saumons que nous nous ferions servir tout à l'heure à Rivebelle ravivaient le plaisir que j'allais avoir à me mettre en habit pour partir dîner"* (ibid.: 369). This is very interesting because it further backs up the argument that places are not so much important as spaces rather than as signs.

Indeed, space and memory interlace in Proust's work, the former triggering the second. There is no firm relationship to territory because the narrator uses spaces to wander with his imagination. Space activates his memory and thereby his artistry. This is also another evidence for Proust's point of view on movement and on the elsewhere. These two are therefore much less important spatially and, instead, assume a high significance as signs, for they represent something other and personal, elements that only the narrator's descriptions can reveal to the reader. Likewise, the protagonist adds to places his own personal experience, as

we can see in another passage from the novel: “Autrefois j’eusse préféré que cette promenade eût lieu par le mauvais temps. Alors, je cherchais à retrouver dans Balbec « le pays des Cimmériens »” (*ibid.*: 459).

Further in the novel, we find more evidence to the argument that places are signs in another description of the hotel room. After the narrator has met and fallen for Albertine, he goes to meet her in her room: “À la place d’un lieu de transition où je passais un instant avant de m’évader vers la plage ou vers Rivebelle, ma chambre me redevenait réelle et chère, se renouvelait car j’en regardais et en appréciais chaque meuble avec les yeux d’Albertine” (*ibid.*: 486-487). Hither, the room is no longer an indicator for the protagonist’s unwelcomeness, but it makes him reflect on his holiday and the people he met—it triggers the main core of the novel, memories and their recollections.

Nonetheless, the protagonist keeps not reterritorialising. When he is invited to Albertine’s hotel room, he walks slowly: “Ces quelques pas du palier à la chambre d’Albertine, [...] je les fis avec délices, avec prudence, comme plongé dans un élément nouveau, comme si en avançant j’avais lentement déplacé du bonheur, et en même temps avec un sentiment inconnu de toute-puissance, et d’entrer enfin dans un héritage qui m’eût de tout temps appartenu” (*ibid.*: 492-493). Though it may seem like he is owning the place, the very next page sees him thinking about death, that he compares to what is happening to him and to being refused by Albertine (*ibid.*: 494).

Moreover, we find evidence to the claim that the protagonist is not able to possess or act on the territory in another passage, when he is describing the closure of the *Grand-Hôtel* at the end of the summer. Even the railway stops working (*ibid.*: 511). This entails a forced return to Paris and, in a sense, a forbidden return to Balbec—similarly, in Zola’s *La Bête humaine*, the railway company controlled people’s movements. Hence, Balbec, and so the hotel room, becomes *désiré*, in light of the impossibility of reaching it (*ibid.*: 512-514).

The artist now feels misunderstood and unappreciated by his society, and so Proust’s narrator is an outsider to his own peers, wandering in his memories and in his imagination, which seem to float free until he is forced to return to Paris. Of course, such a claim gives importance to space, but what is important to bear in mind in order to fully understand the difference between French and American Modernism is that Proust’s spaces are characterised as elsewhere by his imagination, not by society. He does not escape, he does not renounce his role or his *milieu social*. He simply sees places through his artistic perspective, which allow him to live them differently.

5.2 Francis Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*

A counterpart to French Modernist Proust is Francis Scott Fitzgerald, “a representative figure of the age” (Cowley, 1953: 133). Both their works are now considered classics and thus make for a perfect case study in this dissertation:

indeed, both writers lived in Paris at the beginning of the Twenties and offer interesting views on the post-War world, even though none of them directly participated in the conflict. As we have seen, the value of the elsewhere begins to surface in Proust, but it will really spring in Fitzgerald, whose *The Great Gatsby* is a relevant novel to study this period.

5.2.1 Within and Without: A Point of View

This first section takes its title from a famous passage of the novel: “*Yet high over the city our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I saw him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life*” (Fitzgerald, 1990: 37). Nick, the narrator, is hither reflecting whilst at a party at the apartment Tom Buchanan keeps in Manhattan for his mistress. Drunk, he observes the landscape from a window. The passage is interesting because it perfectly epitomises the perspective of the narration in the novel.

Indeed, a within-and-without point of view is that of the very narrator. His narration follows only the events he has witnessed or has been told, because he is not the protagonist of the story. He is friends with them, follows them around, and reports to the reader with his comments. Likewise, this is the perspective of all the other characters. None of them is actually at the centre of the novel except for Gatsby, who does not know everything either, nonetheless. A fitting example

for the narrator's outsider point of view is his participation in the final confrontation between Tom and Gatsby and the following realisation that it was actually his birthday: "*I just remembered that today's my birthday*" (ibid.: 129). Even though he is there, his presence is essentially superfluous.

Moreover, the very location of much of the novel, Long Island, is exemplar of this particular perspective. The characters are in New York, but they live outside of the city, on two hills, West Egg and East Egg: "*Twenty miles from the city a pair of enormous eggs, identical in contour and separated only by a courtesy bay, jut out into the most domesticated body of salt water in the Western hemisphere, the great wet barnyard of Long Island Sound. [...] I lived in West Egg, the – well, the less fashionable of the two*" (ibid.: 10). Indeed, these two places seem like a world in itself to the narrator: "*I had [...] grown to accept West Egg as a world complete in itself*" (ibid.: 100).

Furthermore, another example is found in the description Nick gives of his arrival in Manhattan from Long Island with Gatsby: "*The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world. [...] 'Anything can happen now that we've slid over this bridge,' I thought; 'anything at all...' Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder*" (ibid.: 67). This passage portrays Long Island as separated and different than Manhattan, of course, but it especially shows Manhattan as a potential elsewhere. The city is seen for the first time every time one crosses the bridge.

This passage suggests that it renews itself continuously, changing and offering different settings for different happenings and potentiality for anyone arriving.

Characters do conquer the land, in a simple reterritorialisation. The examples of it are multiple. We may think of the moment Nick is first asked to give directions on the street, for instance: *“How do you get to West Egg village?” he asked helplessly. I told him. And as I walked on I was lonely no longer. I was a guide, a pathfinder, an original settler. He had casually conferred me the freedom of the neighbourhood*” (*ibid.*: 9). Nick has just moved to the village, yet he is ready to take onto himself the role of the guide, possessing the territory and showing he has been able to reterritorialise. Indeed, with American Modernism, movement becomes almost schizophrenic (Cowley, 1994: 61 and following), and the characters’ ability to deterritorialise and reterritorialise is such that flights and moves become even more frequent in the works of the Lost Generation.

We can also think about the Buchanans having wandered around before settling in East Egg (*ibid.*: 11-12):

Why they came East I don’t know. They had spent a year in France for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together. This was a permanent move, said Daisy over the telephone, but I didn’t believe it – I had no sight into Daisy’s heart, but I felt that Tom would drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game.

I will delve later in the chapter as to why the Buchanans flee and constantly move away, but it is clear from the passage that there seems to be a push leading the characters to a continuous migration—hence, the easy deterritorialisation. If we think about it, indeed, the novel actually photographs a moment of pause in the lives full of moves and flights of the characters. They all happen to be in Long Island for the time span of a summer, after which they will all drift away.

This, of course, can be easily linked to the Great War and its aftermath. Though Tom did not fight in the War, the adjective “*restless*” in the previous passage mirrors another restlessness in the novel, that of the narrator after coming back from Europe: “*I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that I came back restless. Instead of being the warm centre of the world, the Middle West now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe – so I decided to go East and learn the bond business*” (*ibid.*: 9). Nick thus represents the Modernist writer, deluded and unsettled, drifting from a place to another, trying to find a cure to his internal disease.

Nick has lost all certainties and is now in New York looking for new ones, trying to thereby take care of his struggles. Hence, the story he tells is pivotal because it is through the encounter with Gatsby and the subsequent events that he gets his cynical yet pondering point of view, as suggested by the very incipit of the novel: “*I’m inclined to reserve all judgements. [...] And, after boosting this way of my tolerance, I come to the admission that it has a limit*” (*ibid.*: 7). The novel thus offers us

elements of disillusion, loss of certainties, as I have just mentioned, delusion towards upper classes and a newly gained respect for the new rich, but, most interesting for this dissertation, a continuous, schizophrenic movement.

5.2.2 Flights in the Novel

As I have mentioned, the novel portrays a moment of pause. All the characters happen to be in New York for one summer and scatter around at the end of it. Tom and Daisy leave to flee the consequences of another crisis in their marriage. They abandon everything and do not even leave an address. Of course, it is also a way for them to save their respectability. They deterritorialise once again in order not to be involved in the case of Myrtle's hit and run and, especially, associated with Gatsby's name.

Of course, they used movement even during their stay in Long Island with significant meanings. Tom lives in East Egg, yet he keeps an apartment for his mistress in New York City. His home, indeed, represents a certain and respectable place, whereas the elsewhere, herein represented by Manhattan and the valley of ashes, where Myrtle lives, is the place for unrespectable actions. It is no case, then, that, upon realising that Daisy and Gatsby are having an affair, he is so decided to have the final confrontation in a hotel room in Manhattan: "*Come on! [...] What's the matter, anyhow? If we're going to town, let's start*" (*ibid.*: 114). Something similar could not happen in his home, a place he keeps to show his respectability.

Likewise, Daisy has become cynical after her moves: “*You see, I think everything’s terrible anyhow. [...] Everybody thinks so – the most advanced people. And I know. I’ve been everywhere and seen everything and done everything. [...] Sophisticated – God, I’m sophisticated!*” (*ibid.*: 22). Her feeling is deeply Modernist, too. She is deluded for no particular reason other than her having done everything. Indeed, her character uses flights to run from her feelings and her existential boredom. All the moves she has done with her husband helped her escape the one mistake she made, that is abandoning Gatsby.

Moreover, we can find a link between this last passage and the ending of the novel, which shows her and Tom leaving carelessly, as if they did not really consider what effect their actions have (*ibid.*: 170):

I couldn’t forgive him or like him, but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean the mess they had made...

Hence, through their escape and by thereby detaching themselves from the events of the summer, they are able to preserve themselves as respectable members of the upper class. This deterritorialisation therefore does not happen so that the characters evolve but so that they can remain the same. One could easily argue that this goes against Deleuze’s argument that “*le devenir est géographique*” (Deleuze, Parnet, 1996: 48). Indeed, there is no becoming hither, only preserving.

However, we have to bear in mind that the couple are not exactly positive characters in the novel. The narrator himself describes them as “*a rotten crowd*” (Fitzgerald, 1990: 146).

Careless and undecided, Daisy and Tom spend their time wandering around. I have already quoted the passage in the first chapter in which Nick wonders why they had moved to West Egg after several peregrinations. Thither, Tom even suggested he shall not leave West Egg: “*Oh, I’ll stay in the East, don’t you worry. [...] I’d be a God damned fool to live anywhere else*” (*ibid.*: 15). Likewise, Jordan remembers their travels immediately after their wedding and, obviously, the letter from Gatsby about his situation (*ibid.*: 74-75):

We gave her spirits and ammonia and put ice on her forehead and hooked her back into her dress, and half an hour later, when we walked out of the room, the pearls were around her neck and the incident was over. Next day at five o’clock she married Tom Buchanan without so much as a shiver, and started off on a three months’ trip to the South Seas. I saw them in Santa Barbara when they came back. [...] The next April Daisy had her little girl, and they went to France for a year. I saw them one spring in Cannes, and later in Deauville, and then they came back to Chicago to settle down.

Daisy is suggested to be a weak and careless character, promising yet not able to carry out, using flight as a means to forget something bad that happened to her, whereas Tom uses it to cover “*the mess they had made.*”

Moreover, the first words she utters in the novel are “*I’m p-paralysed with happiness*” (*ibid.*: 14), as she entertains Nick and Jordan at her home. This further

suggests that she is more interested in entertaining and appearing rather than being happy or friendly. Likewise, in chapter seven Gatsby comments that “*Her voice is full of money.*’ [...] *That was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it... High in a white palace the king’s daughter, the golden girl...*” (*ibid.*: 115). The words uttered by Gatsby, right after Nick commented on Daisy’s voice as being indiscreet, additionally shows Daisy as a careless character, giving out information that should remain private (this is the moment in the novel where Tom understands about the affair between Daisy and Gatsby). The fact that her voice is full of money means that it is charming yet dangerous, as it makes promises even though she is unable to keep them. And, of course, it suggests that to Gatsby Daisy is a symbol of the life he had dreamed for himself.

Their lives are as fluctuating as the curtains in their dining room: “*The windows were ajar and gleaming white against the fresh grass outside that seemed to grow a little way into the house. A breeze blew through the room, blew them up towards the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling, and then rippled over the wine-coloured rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea*” (*ibid.*: 13). The final simile is no surprise: indeed, Tom and Daisy seem to float, in charge of their destiny, smashing other people’s lives in order to save theirs. Hence, movement is for them a means of preservation. They need to move in order not to change or lose.

On the other hand, Nick flees New York because the city becomes haunted for him. He cannot speak the truth: “*There was nothing I could say, except the one*

unutterable fact that it wasn't truth" (*ibid.*: 170). And he goes back to the Middle West feeling as if he had come back from the war: "*When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever*" (*ibid.*: 8). These passages enhance the association of Nick with the figure of the Modernist writer: deluded both by his hopes and the upper classes, he cannot express his internal disease nor recover from it.

Writing becomes a purge, whilst at the same time the author seeks new paradigms and, notably, a new country, one that could understand and appreciate them. Nick's flight, thus, is functional to his survival. However, it is also not far from the American model theorised on by Deleuze, since it changes him, too. Nick, which indeed represents the Modernist writer, as I have just shown, evolves in order to survive and preserve himself. His flight is functional to this and to the American instinct and allows him to write down the story of Gatsby.

On the contrary, Gatsby does not seek escape or movement. He is obsessed with a certain idea of himself and Daisy and refuses to come to terms with it, as we understand from a conversation he has with Nick after one of his parties (*ibid.*: 105-106):

He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you.' After she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house – just as if it were five years ago.

Affectionate to a certain idea, he seeks respectability and an “old beginning,” if we may say so. Indeed, he wishes to pretend the last five years of Daisy’s and his life did not exist.

Furthermore, he had gone to New York to follow her. His move was not a flight or a deterritorialisation but a chase. Gatsby moved to New York with the intent of repeating the past and finding again Daisy. However, Nick warns him, “*You can’t change the past*” (*ibid.*: 106)—this is the reason Gatsby dies in the end, as we shall see later. Gatsby’s plan cannot work out, because it is not a programme but a manifesto. He had a vision of his life and did not accept to come to terms with it.

However, since both Gatsby and Tom and Daisy want to change the past (even though in different ways), can we compare their moves and flights? Tom and Daisy leave Chicago to cover up one of Tom’s sprees: “*Do you know why we left Chicago? I’m surprised that they didn’t treat you to the story of that little spree*” (*ibid.*: 125); in a different manner, Gatsby follows Daisy and feels like he has come to his destination once in New York. Of course, even Tom and Daisy do so, but Gatsby is the only one to actually keep that promise, for he is intentioned to gain Daisy’s trust and build a life with her. There is nothing fugitive in his intentions, whereas Tom and Daisy flee scandals in order to save their good name.

They both deterritorialise from the Middle West to then reterritorialise in New York, yet we must notice that Gatsby’s reterritorialisation is more solid and

rooted than Tom and Daisy's. One could easily argue that Gatsby's move is more similar to French movement as described by Deleuze: he has a motive, he quickly roots in the new location, and he does not intend to leave soon. This is not wrong, Gatsby is not American in the way he moves to New York, though we also have to remember that his character is not successful in the novel.

The confusion created about his character by the narrator mirrors the loss of certainties typical of Modernism. We do not know if we can like him for being pure or if we should despise him for being a bootlegger, nor how to feel about the events in the novel. Nevertheless, movement is pivotal and central in many ways. Gatsby could not be the character he is in a French novel as read by Deleuze, merely because his becoming was actually geographical, since he has learned how to be a gentleman during his sailing years with Dan Cody.

5.2.3 Automobiles and Characterisation

The automobile is an important element in the novel. Representing modernity and movement, it has obviously been taken under analysis by several critics, but it is important to delve into the topic in order to better consider how it relates to the novel's space dynamics. Jacqueline Lance argues that Fitzgerald creates "*a trope in which the automobile stands for a larger social ill*" (Lance, 2000: 26), meaning that the author intertwines the possession of a car and its characteristics to specifics of the novel's characters and events.

For instance, quoting Schneider, Lance argues that “*yellow becomes the symbol of money, the crass materialism that corrupts the dream and ultimately destroys it*” (ibid.: 26-27). Indeed, Gatsby’s car is of a “*rich cream colour*” (Fitzgerald, 1990: 63), which Seiters argues to be the “*combination of the white of the dream and the yellow of the money, of reality in a narrow sense*” (Seiters, 1986: 58). The car’s colour, thus, represents a mixture of Gatsby’s American dream and his corruption for material world. “*After this car becomes the vehicle of Myrtle Wilson’s death, it is simply described as a yellow car,*” (Lance, 2000: 27) we also read, finding a confirmation to these theories.

Therefore, “*the car itself further reflects each driver’s socio-economic status in the world of West and East Egg. The most obvious example of this is Gatsby’s own car, the Rolls Royce described by Tom later in the novel as a ‘circus wagon’*” (ibid.: 27). And, moreover, according to Seiters (Seiters, 1986: 58), Gatsby’s automobile suggests his “*arrested development in adolescence. [...] It is the very vehicle for one who formed his ideals as a teenager and never questioned them again.*” This particular theme will be particularly interesting when we will later discuss Gatsby’s manifesto.

Through the use of automobiles, characters in *The Great Gatsby* have a much freer relation to movement than, for instance, Zola’s characters or Proust’s protagonist. They can truly *create* it and governate it. There is no repetition of a set movement as we had seen in *La Bête humaine*, no bittersweet goodbye to Balbec

because the railway leading there is closing. These characters dispose of the territory as they want to.

In a sense, if in the French tradition characters would *flâne* around Paris, then in American Modernist literature it is the car that allows for characters to wander around aimlessly, to simply move through somewhere, without concerns or the necessity to take too much interest in the place. We find an example to this in the description of the valley of ashes, a wasteland lying between West Egg and New York City (Fitzgerald, 1990: 26):

This is a valley of ashes – a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the form of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of ash-grey men, who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. Occasionally a line of grey cars crawls along an invisible track, gives out a ghastly creak, and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-grey men swarm up with leaden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud, which screens their obscure operations from your sight.

Roger Pearson argues for similarities and overtones between the valley of ashes and T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land*, claiming that "*The valley of ashes is the result of Jay Gatsby's testament, the dust of a corrupted and perverted American dream*" (Pearson, 1970: 642).

Of course, the valley thus represents the world of the post-war period, but, most importantly, the car allows the characters to act in a certain way towards it and therefore towards the afterwar situation. Indeed, Gatsby, the Buchanan's, and Nick all own a car and can thereby simply cross the valley, occasionally stopping through it to enjoy its benefits—this is the case of Tom's affair with Myrtle. On

the other hand, the Wilsons seek the possession of an automobile, as Lance argues. Wilson tries to buy one from Tom, and Myrtle uses taxicabs and Tom's car to try and elevate her social position (Lance, 2000: 27-28). Indeed, "*Throughout the novel, Fitzgerald consistently uses the automobile as a vehicle to reveal the carelessness and materialism of his characters and he extends the scope of the automobile to that most feared and mysterious human condition of all, death*" (*ibid*: 30).

The valley is thus a symbol for a place, both physical and mental, where characters do not necessarily want to go. Like Myrtle, the people there try to elevate themselves, perhaps inspired by the American dream, but the dream will prove to be corrupt and cut short these hopes. The fact that some of the characters can simply cross the valley suggests both the disillusion of the American dream, which is actually offered only to those who have certain possibilities, and the consequent better relationship with territory of these characters. Indeed, they can wander freely and settle down where they choose to, as represented by the two Eggs portraying two sides of the new world.

The car is an important element in many more situations, namely Tom's unfaithfulness which is portrayed by his car accident with a chambermaid (Fitzgerald, 1990: 75) and, mostly, Daisy running over of Myrtle (*ibid.*: 137). All these elements contribute in showing that the car gives territorial power to characters. They conquer it and can thus operate, choosing what is best for them. It is no surprise that Daisy runs away with Tom after the accident, then. Why does

Gatsby not run away, though? Because, as mentioned above, his dream and image of himself were moulded in his teenage years and were not changed. His idealism and hope kill him, because he cannot accept to go on. Similarly, Nick also struggles to go on, but he copes by leaving New York, the place he associates with his disease.

5.2.4 A Story of the West

Another important element for this dissertation is the Middle West. While the car is a symbol for movement and modernity, the Middle West epitomises the origin of the characters, the place they all come from and that unites them, as Nick himself points out at the end of the novel: *“I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all – Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life”* (*ibid.*: 167).

As I have already mentioned, the main characters happen to be in New York for a summer and then scatter around, except for Gatsby, whose dream leads him to death. The Middle West, thus, represents an origin, possibly the only certainty left. Indeed, in the beginning of the novel Nick says he has come back home from the East deluded and alienated. In the same passage, he talks about his upbringing, describing his family as *“prominent, well-to-do people in this Middle*

Western city for three generations” (*ibid.*: 8). Coming from a stable household, Nick decided to leave his world of certainties to move to New York and seek fortune.

For Gatsby, the Middle West of his hometown, that is North Dakota, was a starting point he had to forget and abandon forever, as we can gather from the passage in chapter six where Nick tells us the real story of Jay Gatsby (*ibid.*:94-95):

James Gatz – that was really, or at least legally, his name. he had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career – when he saw Dan Cody’s yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior. It was James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat, pulled out on the Tuolomee, and informed Dan Cody that a wing might catch him to break him up in half an hour. I suppose he’d had the name ready for a long time, even then. His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people – his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God – a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that – and he must be about His Father’s business, the service of a vast, vulgar, meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end

This long quote shows just what has been said insofar. Gatsby’s path followed an idea of it he himself constructed in his teenage years, thereby suggesting it is a manifesto rather than a programme, which, instead, would have allowed for Gatsby to flee the night of the hit and run, forget or at least come to terms with the loss of Daisy, and, ultimately, to start over.

Therefore, Gatsby represents the American dream as far as his intentions are concerned, yet, when he is to develop his story according to events, he is unable to do so. It is to be underlined that what is American, in Deleuzian terms, hither is Gatsby's escape from North Dakota. Indeed, his social climbing happens geographically: he escapes on Dan Cody's yacht, taking on himself the tradition of the sailor that I have taken under analysis in the chapter on *Martin Eden*, and builds his fortune moving away. Thus, even though in the end Gatsby is unable to deterritorialise and abandon his hopes and New York, space dynamics play a pivotal role in his story.

This is also evident in the fake life story Gatsby tells Nick (*ibid.*: 64-66):

I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West – all dead now. I was brought up in America but brought up in Oxford. [...] My family all died and I came into a good deal of money. [...] After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe – Paris, Venice, Rome. [...] I usually find myself among strangers because I drift here and there trying to forget the sad things that happened to me.

Movement is omnipresent. His fake story is connotated by exploration and even his justification for his wild parties is intertwined with movement. His hole existence is thus founded on a lie, a delusion, as Pearson argues too: "*His presumption extends to a belief that he can even transcend the natural boundaries placed upon human beings. He will win Daisy by recapturing the past*" (Pearson, 1970: 640-644). Hence, we can assume that his manifesto does not succeed also because it implies

conquering time, not only space. Gatsby needs to repeat the past in order to be satisfied, something that obviously cannot happen and thus dooms him to failure.

Gatsby therefore has no interest in going back to North Dakota seeking comfort, for he could not find it there. Indeed, he is delusional and obsessed with his manifesto to the point that he will risk everything not leaving New York. These claims find evidence respectively in the description of Gatsby's romantic readiness in the first chapter: "*It was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness*" (Fitzgerald, 1990: 8); and in the thoughts of Nick after Gatsby's death: "*He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city*" (*ibid.*: 171).

Finally, Tom and Daisy's Middle West is another element for their carelessness. As I have mentioned before, the couple move around from town to town renewing their marriage, an extremely American act because they survive by wandering. Similarly, for them, going back to Kentucky or moving to France has the same meaning: it is going away, it is survival. They are clearly able to reterritorialise anywhere as long as people are rich and they can entertain, as the narrator puts it.

5.2.5 The Finale: Boats Borne Back

Coming to discuss the finale of the novel, we shall notice how the last sentences of it resume and relate to the rest of the story, concluding and giving a sense to it (*ibid.*: 171-172):

*Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter – tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further... And one fine morning—
So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.*

This passage also comes right after the reflection on the Middle West previously quoted. We are then presented with all the elements of the novel: Gatsby's dream, Westerners in New York, colours (the green light representing Daisy and thereby Gatsby's manifesto), the delusion yet hope for a better fortune, and a hunting past.

The orgastic future is explained by Pearson as the period of fulfilment of the long prophesied American dream, that is the post-World-War-I period, the Roaring Twenties (Pearson, 1970: 638). This future, however, is not the present time of the narration, which is instead characterised by the waste land left by the new values of materialism and greediness, a culture that found in Gatsby a fake God: "*Gatsby is characterized as an 'inverted Christ'*" (*ibid.*: 639-640). The corrupted and perverted American dream finds a testament, argues again Pearson, in the valley of ashes (*ibid.*: 641). Another argument for this is present in Lance's article:

indeed, she argues that the valley, being surrounded by modernisation and urbanisation, represents the lost America of the Roaring Twenties (Lance, 2000: 33).

The very final sentence is even more complex to analyse. The narrator compares “them” to boats rocking against the current. These boats are described to be trying to go against the current yet being borne into the past. This metaphor is easily associated with the post-War world. The new generation tries to create a new world, or at least a new America, yet the burden of the past is too heavy to scroll, causing delusion and distress. Similarly, the metaphor is relatable to Gatsby’s story. This would back up the argument that Gatsby dies because he pretended to change the past. This would suggest that his is a manifesto, because he was unable to change it and not be so conditioned by the past.

5.3 Conclusions: Proust vs Fitzgerald

This final chapter was very important as a point of arrival. Indeed, we are presented with the literary outcome of the Great War on the two countries, disillusionment being now a strong element for both. Of course, this was already the case for French literature—hence Deleuze’s argument that “*Les Français [...] passent leur temps à faire le point*” (Deleuze, Parnet, 1996: 48). This allows us to ponder on this feature. On the one hand, we can assume American literature was influenced by the French, as it happened already in the Nineteenth century and as

Jeanpierre also argued. On the other hand, the attitude of Proust toward delusion is different than it was before: the work of art now seeks a new reality that it creates (Deleuze, 2014: 175).

Therefore, French literature has gained a new perspective. Indeed, Deleuze himself writes that the *Recherche* looks at the future (*ibid.*: 10). While this is extremely interesting, the attitude of Proust toward movement and space dynamics does not differ much from the other novels we have taken under consideration. Indeed, there are still no free explorations, no positive flights, and different types of spatiality still intertwine (the physical space is always united with the social space), howbeit the characterisations of these spaces are now carried out in a different fashion. Proust makes places personal and intimate by describing them through his point of view and his experience of them. Space thereby becomes a place of the mind, activating Proust's imagination. Hence, we cannot deny the newly gained importance of the elsewhere in the *Recherche*.

Nevertheless, Proust follows the rules of French literature argued by Deleuze since his desire to be rooted in places does not really succeed –we can think of his hotel room, for instance. He cannot reterritorialise because the space he describes is primarily an imaginative space and therefore a sign. In his work, memory and space interlace, and Proust is thus unable to conquer territories, because he only uses them to trigger his artistry.

On the other hand, space dynamics in *The Great Gatsby* are pivotal in themselves other than being symbols for other elements. Namely, the elsewhere is important from the very beginning of the novel, when we realise that the narrator has a within-and-without point of view. Moreover, it characterises the action in several points of the novel, because it creates symbolical spaces, like the valley of ashes or Manhattan, places that can give or take opportunities to the characters. Movements and flights are also central in the novel, which, as we have seen, portrays the characters in a moment of pause in the middle of several movements. They all come from the West and find in New York the theatre for the events of a summer. After said summer, some will escape to renew their lives and survive, some to flee a haunting conscience, whereas Gatsby dies exactly because he refuses to leave.

Indeed, Gatsby dies because he refuses to change his plans, which suggests his is not a programme –a flexible agenda, we can say, that Deleuze argued to be typically American– but a manifesto, a together of firm ideals and wishes he created in his youth and he is unable to modify. Therefore, he will succumb exactly because of it and because he will refuse to flee. Nonetheless, his becoming, his rise-to-fame has been geographical, even if his instalment in Long Island was a firm and rooted action. Gatsby therefore follows the scheme idealised by Deleuze, but his view of himself as a God and his desire to change the past spoil his American dream, as we have seen, and make for his failure.

Another important difference in the novels regarding space dynamics is easily detectable if we look at the representation of travel. Proust's journey to and from Balbec happens by train. His movement is controlled and commanded upon, for he cannot but follow a path already decided and has to come back eventually, because the railway closes at the end of summer. There is no push for exploration, and even the pleasures of travelling described by him, that is the difference between the outcome of the voyage and the idea we had of it, albeit being somehow a sort of discovery, is shadowed by the fear of losing oneself.

On the other hand, the travels in *The Great Gatsby* take place on cars. Automobiles hither represent their owner, indicating their socio-economic situations and their characters. Moreover, cars offer a way freer relationship to land. One can travel at their own pleasure, stop whenever they want, go wherever and whenever they want. Characters can thereby *create* movement, because owning a car means having territorial power.

In conclusion, all these elements show how *The Great Gatsby's* space dynamics are much more developed and central to the plot of the novel. Spaces characterise the actions, making it possible for a character to have an affair because he is far from his home, for instance. American Modernism has thus incorporated them in its main features, making it even more interesting to analyse and necessary to understand a novel in its whole. The elsewhere is pivotal because it represents the place where the author looks for modernity, for answers, and

certainties, whereas in Proust the elsewhere is a place that inspires the author to truly create an imaginative world where he will create the answers to his questions, too.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Throughout this dissertation, I have applied Gilles Deleuze's theories to a series of representative texts. Deleuze argued that American literature operates through geographical lines, suggesting the importance of elements such as flights and discovery. Lines of flight create deterritorialisation, a process of decontextualization of a together of relations with territory, and escape is a creative moment. However, European flights, he argues, are non-creative moments, for they entail leaving one's world. Hence, Deleuze theorises the difference between French and American *recommencement*. The French is a *table rase* new beginning, whereas the American interrupts one's line to simply move it somewhere else.

In Balzac's *Illusions perdues*, I have shown how French *recommencement* applies to Lucien's destined failure. Because his flight to Paris is clandestine and he is driven by a manifesto, he cannot reterritorialise and thus corrupts his ambitions. Not reterritorialising in Paris, he is not in control of his journey. On the other hand, we have seen that in Jack London's *Martin Eden* the protagonist, whose ambitions are similarly deluded, resumes his individuality and his need for horizontal movement, which had been stifled by his attempted career. The horizontal movement, indeed, represents exploration, a free relation to territory.

Lucien's movement was vertical, instead, being focused on society. He was driven by a desire for fame and affirmation and accepted his society by deciding to run for politics. On the contrary, Martin's delusion started when he realised there was no real difference other than money between the upper and lower classes. He needed horizontal movement as part of his identity as a sailor and was alienated when deprived of it. Whilst his suicide was a final escape, a creative moment when he imposed himself, Lucien's attempt at fleeing and his later suicide (in another volume of the *Comédie humaine*), denote that he really was unable to conquer territory and master his reterritorialisation.

The third chapter was then focused on social coding and social machine. According to Deleuze, a social machine is a society that creates a together of codes, that is rules, through habitus and knowledge, to better control its subjects. I have shown how space dynamics interweave with Deleuze's concepts of the social machine in Zola's *La Bête humaine* and Henry James' *The Ambassadors*. In Zola, movement is codified and controlled by the Empire. Characters are indeed stifled and alienated by the social machine and become the first victims of its failure. We saw this in the final scene. Therein, Jacques and Pecquex falling from the train represented it, whereas the train, running headless towards the battle of Sedan, represented the *Second Empire* going towards its ruin. One's destiny is unescapable in Zola, for lines of flight become impossible to be drawn, since movement is

codified by the social machine. The train thereby only repeats a trajectory, a habitus, and characters cannot but adapt to it.

On the other hand, in James' novel, characters are given the illusion of being able to escape their own destiny. Chad, by fleeing to Paris, was able to dismantle the social machine, whereas Strether, even though failing in escaping, gains a new open-mindedness from his Parisian experience. James' critique to American imperialism and capitalism, then, is in Strether's vexed return and his final succumbing to the social machine. He is given a new point of view, a wider consciousness, but the task of realising it is left to the next generation. The elsewhere is thus gaining importance as a place to grow in and is clearly central to American becoming as described by Deleuze.

In the fourth chapter, I have applied Deleuzian theories to texts representing the turn to Modernism. In Huysmans' *À Rebours*, we saw the twist in the literary canon: the protagonist fled Paris to avoid his society and live his life like art. He retreated in a house in the country showing no intention of going back, even if he will eventually return to Paris. His strong and artistic persona suggests a raising individualism in literature. Indeed, whilst Lucien moved to Paris and dreamed of becoming a famous writer, des Esseintes did not care to write or communicate his ideals. He was only concerned in satisfying his whimsical critique of Parisian society. Because of this, however, his movement was vertical—

hence, he could not reterritorialise in Fontenay. Though the elsewhere is a potential space, thus, his retreat had to come to an end.

In Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, instead, there is no trajectory at all. The text, a memoir of the author's Parisian years, presents a constant programme, that is a plan one can continuously change. Europe has become an important elsewhere for American writers after the Great War. They can take what they like from European culture and use it to enhance their national literature. Likewise, Hemingway planes over Paris, making the city his space in a constant deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. He over-imposes himself and his thoughts to the streets he walks around and, most importantly, to the tradition of the aspiring artist in Paris that was so important not only in Balzac but also in James.

The final chapter then represents the point of arrival of this dissertation, analysing Modernist novels. In Proust's *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, we find a new perspective; indeed, Deleuze too wrote that the *Recherche* is turned towards the future. Proust's relationship to movement does not change much from the past (think of the controlled movement of the train to Balbec). However, the characterisation he makes of spaces is interesting. He makes them personal and intimate, by describing them through his point of view and his experience of them. They become spaces of the mind, activating his artistry. Hence, though Proust

wants to be rooted in places, he cannot reterritorialise, because places are foremost in his mind and he cannot conquer them.

In Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, instead, space dynamics are fundamental to the plot. The elsewhere is central and not only as an artistic trigger. Characters are depicted in a moment of pause in the middle of several moves and flights, and Gatsby is the only character who does not want to move, dying also because of this. Nonetheless, his becoming has been geographical, thus fitting in Deleuze's theory. Gatsby's vision of himself as a God spoils his American dream, making it a manifesto—hence his failure. Movement is therefore much freer, allowing to grow, escape, survive, and improve. Characters themselves control it, by driving automobiles instead of trains.

In conclusion, we can see that movement in the American texts always presents a strong horizontal component, whereas in the French novels vertical movement prevails and the horizontal, if present, is controlled. Flights, described by Deleuze as creative acts, in the American texts are mostly individual: either one is trying to improve or escapes to survive (still moving on, though). In the French novels, instead, when there is a flight, it has social reasons. It is thereby clear that characters in American novels present a strong ability of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. They can leave, explore, discover new territories and conquer them, mastering their movements. This is the cultural constant I argued at the beginning of this dissertation. Differently, French novels present an opposite

constant. Characters do not know how to reterritorialise, because they move vertically.

With the turn to Modernism, then, space dynamics become even more central to American literature, characterising the plots of the novels and the story of the authors. Studying space therefore becomes necessary in order to understand American culture in its entirety. French novels also show a change in the relationship to movement, but, even though the elsewhere becomes more important as a symbol and sign, Deleuze's theories still find evidence in French Modernism. Space is used to reflect, think, ponder, and there always is a return. This suggests that the main difference between the movement created by American and French authors is that the former is horizontal while the second is vertical.

This dissertation has thus explored the Deleuzian theories in a series of texts representative of the two national literatures, suggesting that the schemes he argued find evidence. It has also suggested the importance of the space turn in literary studies, showing that place and space are essential to our understanding of Modernism. Indeed, throughout the chapters of this study, we have seen the rising role of territory and movement in plots, analysing its effect on both French and American literature.

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