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An Analysis of the novel  
"Against Nature" by J.-K. Huysmans

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## INTRODUCTION

"Against Nature" is not a novel that was created in a vacuum, a solitary symbolist piece adrift within a sea of stark realism and the bleak nature of man.

Written in France in 1884, it was a reaction to the Naturalism of the literature and painting near the end of the nineteenth century but some of its influences date back to well before this time.

Roman literature at the time of the fall of the Roman Empire was the first example of a Decadent style, a style that delighted in the "perverse and artificial, craved new and complex sensations and desired to extend the boundaries of emotional and spiritual experience"<sup>1</sup>. The new Decadence of the late nineteenth century was therefore likened to its Roman predecessor by being described as an "agonisingly beautiful lament of the dying civilisation", by critic George Ross Ridge in his book "The Hero in French Decadent Literature"<sup>2</sup>.

Later influences or JK Huysmans' pivotal Decadent creation were the writings of Edgar Allan Poe and Baudelaire in which they represented the "imaginary according to the logic of the visible world"<sup>3</sup>. Naturalist author Emile Zola whose novels dissected the "seamier side of human existence"<sup>4</sup> was another literary influence, due to his "scientifically clinical"<sup>5</sup> methods

of writing. In the world of visual art Rudolphe Bresdin, Gustave Moreau and Odilon Redon all created fantastical works which leave their mark within the novel with emphasis on Redon's ambiguities of subject matter and general strangeness.

In Chapter one the struggle between the Naturalist movement, of which Zola was a main player and Huysmans a one time member, and that of the Symbolists is discussed. Zola's group of Naturalists, the Medan group, had a sombre, unimaginative approach to the depiction of the commonplace mundanities of late nineteenth century life, whereas the Symbolists built upon the observed world with their elements of fantasy and supernatural atmospheres. The Industrial Revolution in this period and the shifts in the status quo are also an important part of the background of "Against Nature"s creation and are therefore included in the portrayal of the time in this chapter.

Chapter two highlights the two main influences on Huysman's novel : Redon, for his "visual suggestive ambiguities"<sup>6</sup> that allowed Huysmans' hero Des Esseintes' imagination to free itself from the mundane restraints of modern life and Baudelaire for his equally evocative use of language. Synaesthesia, (defined as being "the concurrent appeal to more than one sense; the response through several senses to the stimulation of one e.g. "hearing" a colour, "seeing" a smell"),<sup>7</sup>

plays a major role in each man's of their work and this is reflected in the novel by Des Esseintes various multi-sensual inventions.

Chapter three goes into these ingenious inventions in more detail, discussing various events in the novel with regards to the preceding chapters. This chapter therefore provides the culmination of the thesis in the indepth portrayal of depravity and "cultivated languor"<sup>8</sup> of the Decadent hero Des Esseintes, in terms of his artistic and literary preferences, his deliberate use of synaesthesia to create greater and more perverse pleasures and his underlying fears for the future.



## CHAPTER 1

After the age of Romanticism, in the eighteenth/early nineteenth century, when painting and literature was very much involved with Religious and mythological subject matter, there was a shift back in art to the depiction of real life, to the concerns of contemporary society and to leave behind the sentimentality and idealism of Eugene Delacroix and Gustave Moreau in French art.

Society was changing, the industrial revolution had arrived and new scientific discoveries such as Darwin's theories of the origin of man were making people question religion.

The new Naturalist movement with its adherence to the ugly truths of society, which included in the literary world Emile Zola and Paul Alexis and from the visual arts Gustave Courbet and Armand Gautier decided it was time to pull society's head out of the sands of Romanticism and airy mysticism and to realign it with what was really going on.

At the time of Romanticism art was remote from everyday life using Biblical subject matter or that of mythology. Now the Naturalists were denouncing this approach to art, condemning those who painted imaginary subjects as mere dreamers, blind to the "real issues of the day"<sup>9</sup>.

The Naturalists dealt with discussing the new industrialised reality in terms of logic and scientific proof rather than spirituality and the supernatural. Nature was the foundation on which they built their belief system; the seen, given world their subject matter to explore and represent with ruthless honesty. The seamier the reality portrayed was, the more sensational the novel, therefore the more successful. Emile Zola headed a group of naturalists, of which Jk Huysmans was a member, short term. Zola's books, which include "The Drunkard" ("L'Assommoir"), "Germinal" and "Nana", his novel about prostitution, were positively riddled with poverty and unfortunate afflictions.

The Naturalists studied, generally working class, life in the late nineteenth century with the scrupulousness of a surgeon dissecting and recording the anatomy of a diseased carcass. Every social malaise examined and noted, every malignancy of character analysed.

The cause of social problems was understood by the Naturalists to be the environment in which they lived. This was seen to have shaped men and women and it was the sudden change in the social environment that was at the root of the new concerns about contemporary nineteenth century society.





Fig.1 Gustave Courbet "Une Apres-dinee a Ornans"





Fig. 1. Diagram of the structure of the system.

The Naturalism in art and literature was based on the study of society with reference only to the one plane, the secular plane of reality.

The mundane commonplaces of life at this time were depicted by Gautier's work and Courbet's, such as "Une Apres-dinee a Ornans"(Fig.1), with startling accuracy but with few imaginative twists and certainly no time was wasted on anything other than the finite possibilities within the secular world.

The Naturalists had rejected religion in favour of reason and logic. They had denounced the vagaries of intuition and soul for the unequivocal, black and white absolutes of science and nature. There was no room for the romance of an imagination, what was happening on the streets of Europe was anything but romantic in situation. Life was endured, poverty was expected, disease was there to inflict suffering and death was undoubtedly a welcomed relief. Gloom was all pervading through the Naturalists' work.

They saw life as a dead end street that simply ended with no question of another plane to move on to once the world had doled out its final tortures. What was able to be seen, studied and therefore proved was accepted by the Naturalists, anything that required any amount of faith such as life after death, was dismissed on the grounds of insufficient evidence.

But the shadows of doubt were creeping into society's unconscious at this time and the finite possibilities at this new scientific age did not answer all the questioning minds.

There was growing restlessness in Zola's group due to some, including Huysmans and Alexis, no longer finding satisfaction in this limited range of secular inspirations. In fact the transcendence of this plane, the concept of surpassing this limited range of secular inspirations to move on to another level, maybe beyond human limitations, was now becoming far more appealing than the constant production of "bleak social documentaries"<sup>1</sup>.

The mundane aspects of the commonplace no longer held JK Huysmans interest so he left the Naturalist camp. He had become increasingly individual in his work anyway to be a good Naturalist writer. The characters in his works which preceded "Against Nature" were involved in indulging themselves in increasingly "odd fancies"<sup>2</sup>, deemed even odder because of their grim, working class contexts.

Ornate fantasies were expressed by his heroes even though the surrounding environments showed no promise of satisfying them. Exotic desires where worlds mingled together to bring together "Japanese silks" and women dressed as "rich circus artistes" peppered Huysmans' novels, such as "Les Soeurs Vatarde" and "A Vau-l'Eau"<sup>3</sup> and caused his breaking away from the Naturalism of the working class novel.



He wanted to introduce art, science and history into his work "extend the scope"<sup>4</sup> of the Naturalist novel rather than merely reflecting unimaginatively the world before him with its crippling limitations. He wanted to create "magic scenery"<sup>5</sup>, to transform the "sad, sluggish world"<sup>6</sup> of his former concerns and transcend the nature of the given world, allowing free rein to his imagination creating a "refuge in extravagant illusions"<sup>7</sup>, an idealised reality.

This renewed romanticism with its links with the observed reality inherent in Naturalism found little favour with Zola who announced that this new literary style was "a mere reaction against the modern world"<sup>8</sup>. It was a reaction as he had said, but one that was more than a trivial literary whim since it exposed the true "cultural fantasies of the time"<sup>9</sup>. People, lost, stranded in the changing environment and the shifting status quo of the new industrialised age, insecure about their place in society, yearned for an idealised reality, "a greater and more permanent reality"<sup>10</sup>, "far from the present day"<sup>11</sup>.

An idealised reality was something which the French Catholic community could easily relate to due to having been taught to aspire to heaven all their lives. Now there was an artistic movement that allowed them to aspire

"towards an ideal, towards an unknown universe, towards a distant beauty as utterly desirable as that promised by the scriptures"<sup>12</sup>.

The whole philosophy behind aspiring to a new idealised, "romanticised" environment was the complete antithesis to the ideas embraced by the Naturalists. Down with tradition and down with religion was their manifesto and it left no room for the soothing balm of spirituality and mere stories of other fictitious realities to ease society's insecurities, acting as an "opiate of the masses" and allowing people to become indifferent and oblivious to the plight of the working classes.

It must be discussed at this point that the people who were most effected by the shift in the status quo and of new discoveries in science, in opposition to the religious beliefs, were the well off. They did not have military service or everyday jobs to take their mind of the changes in society. Military service and other activities that the working classes were involved in restored the lacking order that had been lost in the upheaval of society in Europe in the late nineteenth century.

This order, now replaced by military organisational systems, factory work or the Brave New World of technology and progress, was based before hand for centuries on symbols inherent in religious beliefs and also in the structure of the rural communities' hierarchical feudal systems.

Symbols which represented security to the people in rural communities belonged to the workings of a feudal system where the landlords doled out the law and dictated to the tenants on the land. Therefore everything was looked after with out the lesser men having to worry about it, a dictatorship basically. Since this system did not allow individual rights to the people the status quo had a very definite structure and every one within it understood their role. In medieval times the hierarchy consisted of the king, then the landholders and then the peasants. The more powerful men under the king would protect the people within the system from invaders and danger and thus succeeded in bringing safety for all, from the peasants right up to the king.

This safety was being threatened by the Industrial Revolution due to the people in the rural communities leaving for the new jobs in the cities. This is why the ones left behind felt that the feudal system, now in its weakened, abandoned state, would no longer provide security for them. The "medieval courtly style"<sup>13</sup> allowed people a security in their standing in society. The moral perimeters had been firmly in place for centuries leading up to the industrial revolution and meant that there was little room for doubt in the men and women of this feudal system if they adhered and believed in the values and meanings inherent in the system.



Industrialisation saw an end to these medieval values where the people worked for the landowners and simply paid their rent and taxes and mostly went on about their work unworried. When the lower classes left the rural communities to work in the cities it was mainly the upper classes left, questioning their place in society and with nothing to take their minds of the social changes.

The rich and therefore jobless, such as the aristocracy, abandoned by the shifts in their structured reality were unconsciously aware of a sense of loss of something indefinable, of some quality which they had in the former cultural system. They were the people who were the most receptive to the art of the Symbolists.

Like JK Huysmans, other Symbolist writers, such as Charles Baudelaire and Stephane Mallarme and painters such as Gustave Moreau and Odilon Redon, were concerned with creating "an atmosphere suggestive of more cordial epochs and less odious surroundings"<sup>14</sup>; resurrecting an era when the world was not in such social turmoil and people were not confronted with the unknown. As Michael Gibson commented in his book "Symbolism", "Symbolism is thus the negative imprint of a bygone age rich in symbols and the expressions of yearning and grief at the loss of an increasingly idealised past"<sup>15</sup>.



In other words the "symbols" in this "bygone age" such as the medieval era refer to how the feudal system symbolised safety and the King and other rich men symbolised power. These were symbols that everyone understood at the time and little questioning or doubt was involved.

The "Symbol" referred to in the name of the movement is a real, concrete, perceptible thing, in a poem or painting, that evokes something that is far more oblique, intangible. Ideal situations are therefore evoked by Symbolist works through the use of symbols within them.

"Against Nature" is a symbolist novel since it uses particular elements in the book to signify certain other less straightforward ideas such as disillusionment and longing. But it also incorporates into its structure other Symbolist work such as the paintings of the aforementioned Redon and the poetry of Baudelaire.

## CHAPTER 2

Redon and Baudelaire are referred to numerous times in "Against Nature" so it is made obvious in the text just how influential the two have been to Huysmans and to the creation of *Des Esseintes*. Both aspire to evoke in their work emotions, memories, all that cannot be expressed through paint and pen alone: the "indeterminate"<sup>16</sup>.

In Redon's paintings and charcoals idealised realities, "more cordial epochs" and fantastical situations are evoked by his "suggestive ambiguities" conveyed through his deliberate vagueness of detail and tonal variations. Colour was also used in his work but only towards the later part of the artist's life; the blackness of his favoured medium of charcoal was predominant in his earlier "noirs". Redon believed black to be far superior colour at this time, "(black) is an agent of the mind far more than the fine colour of the palette or prism"<sup>17</sup>. And it was to the mind, not merely the aesthetic pleasure hungry eyes of the spectator that Redon appealed.

The aestheticism did not stop there; it continued through to more sensory depths so that the spectator was left finally with an indefinable evocation of feeling induced by the image.

Redon's deliberate vagueness in his works was there to bring the invisible world of the imagination, of emotion, of longing into the realm of the given, accessible world. He studied the visible world with great care so that when he added his elements of mystery to his charcoals and oils they would still be seen to have their roots firmly in reality.

He always based his work on what was observed, scientific in order for the evocative nature of his work to be more easily perceived by the spectator, but perceived in a way that was indirect, that work on a more unconscious, intuitive level.

Redon explained this suggestiveness by comparing his work to another extremely evocative art form,

"Like music, my drawings transport us to the ambiguous world of the indeterminate"<sup>18</sup>.

His paintings have typically equivocal titles: "The Smiling Spider", "The Ball", as Redon offers few clues as to the true meaning of his drawings as there is no one true meaning.

The one thing consistent with the underlying themes of his "noirs" are the evocations of melancholia, fear and uncertainty running through them. One of his



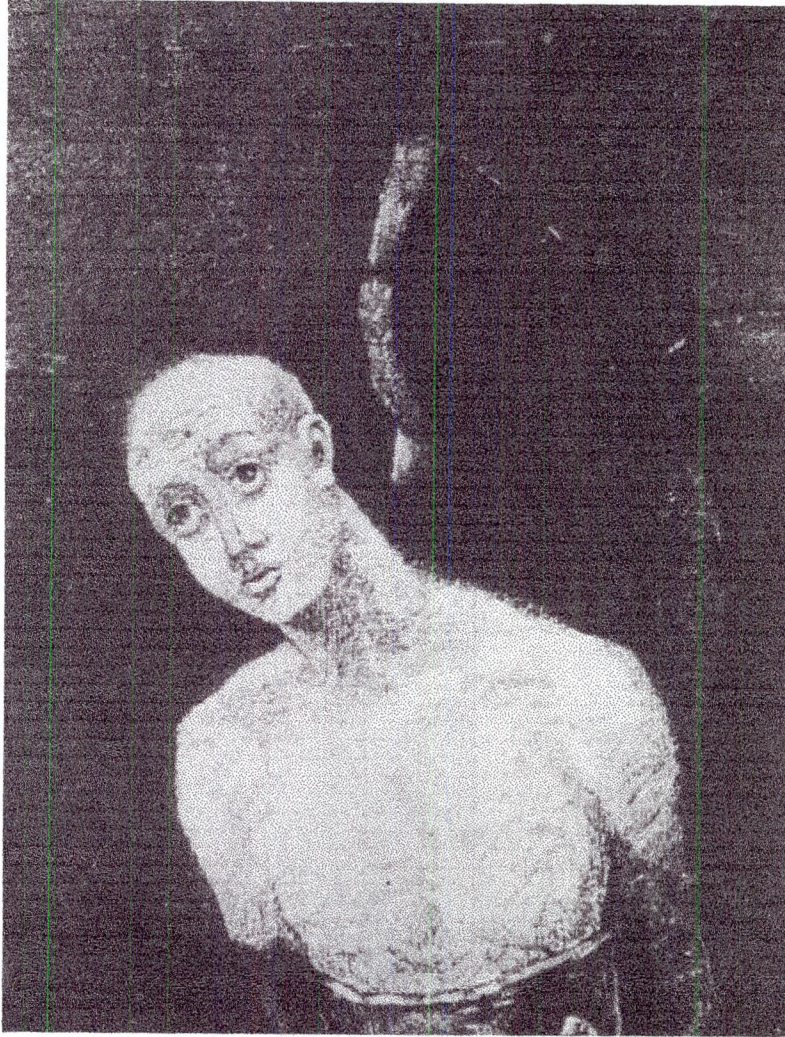


Fig.2 Odilon Redon "The Fallen Angel"

earliest noirs "The Fallen Angel"(Fig.2) has the symbolic image of the angel to express "personal suffering and pessimism"<sup>1</sup>.

"The captivity and the melancholy of the angel are not reducible to an objective interpretation although they do disturb the subjective responses of the spectator"<sup>2</sup>.

Pessimism and the subtle suggestions of it are very important elements in the Symbolist's work manifesto. They were always more inclined to evoke the moon rather than the sun, autumnal decay rather than the new life of spring and they constantly complained of "sorrow and ennui, of disillusionment with love, of impotence, weariness and solitude and they lamented their birth into a dying world"<sup>3</sup>.

Redon was more inclined to evoke more elusive concepts that defied categorisation, the mystery of the human psyche of the observer alone would hold the truth. Emotions, experiences, moods and the "deliberate cult of the inexplicable and the ambiguous"<sup>4</sup> were all used by Redon to play with the spectator's imagination. He coaxed people in to a "world of indefinite time and space dimensions"<sup>5</sup>.

Huysmans' *Des Esseintes* held a particular fascination with Redon's work and found himself, whilst gazing on some of the artist's "noirs" such as "The Smiling Spider"(Fig.3) and "The Ball"(Fig.4), "overcome by an indefinable malaise"<sup>6</sup>. The latter "noir" is evocatively described by



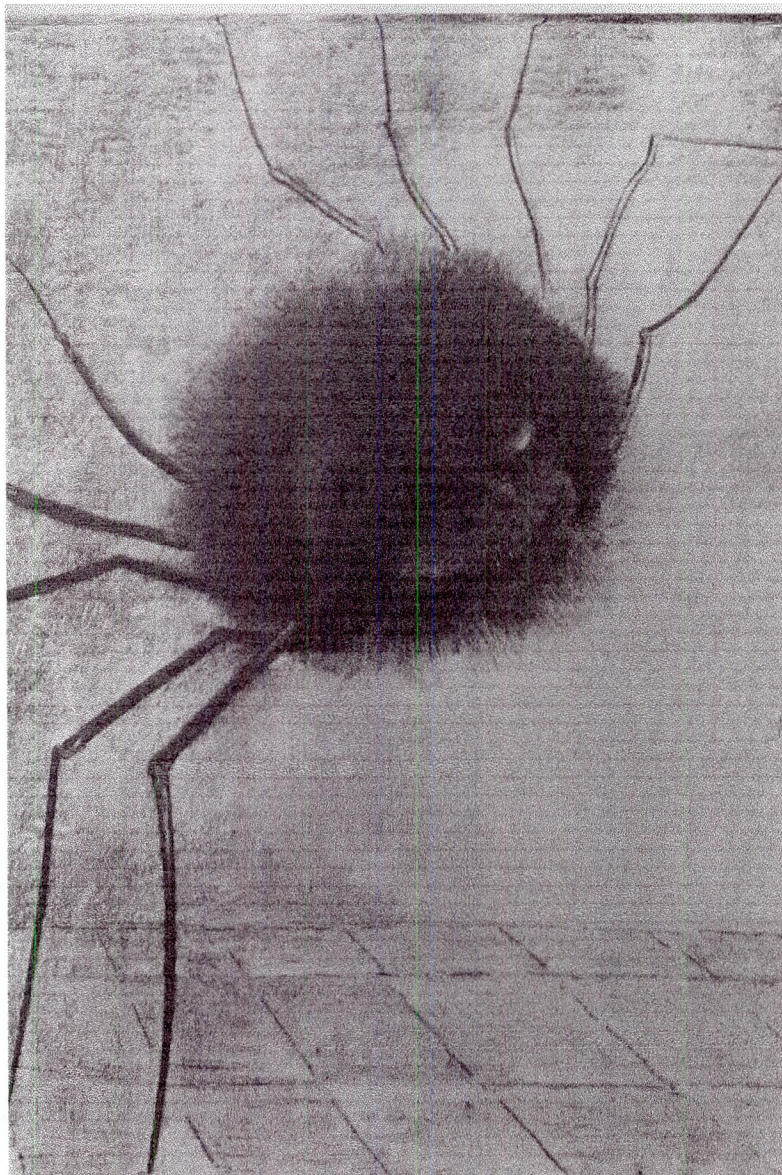


Fig.3 Odilon Redon "The Smiling Spider"





Fig.4 Odilon Redon "The Ball"



Huysmans in "Against Nature" as depicting "a bearded man, at the same time part bonze and part speaker at a public meeting, touching with his finger a colossal cannon ball"<sup>1</sup>. This again reflects Redon's "irreducible ambiguities"<sup>2</sup>.

The mystery created by these ambiguities is also in Redon's prose poems, the form of poetry that the character of Des Esseintes found the most appealing. Thoughts on a single adjective in these poems would leave the reader to dream, as Des Esseintes reflected, "for weeks at a time, about its meaning, at the same time precise and multiple"<sup>3</sup>.

In "Homage to Goya", one of Redon's prose poems, the meaning is unclear, but the poem still evokes such images in the mind of the reader.

"In my dream, I saw in the sky a FACE OF MYSTERY,  
the MARSH FLOWER, a human and sad head, a MADMAN in a  
bleak landscape. There was also EMBRYONIC BEINGS, a strange  
JUGGLER. On waking, I saw the GODDESS of INTELLIGIBLE  
with her severe and hard profile".<sup>4</sup>

In this poem he summons up the world of dreams, of the unconscious exactly, but the poem still has no meaning, like a dream.

Because of the artists drawings and poetry lurking in the "world of the indeterminate" it was easy for his work to be interpreted or swayed in a particular direction. Huysmans, a friend of Redon, made use of this quality when writing "Against Nature" by suggesting in the novel that the images created in Redon's "noirs" described the inner world of Des Esseintes. The "neuropathic delights and agonies" which Des Esseintes is constantly haunted by can be likened to the artist's "new type of fantasy..." which Huysmans stated as being "...born of sickness and delirium"<sup>5</sup>.

Huysmans also interpreted from Redon's work an advocacy of synaesthesia: how images and colours can evoke sounds, memories and emotions through concrete symbols and the subtle syntheses of the senses. Huysmans therefore compared Redon to another of his great influences, the poet Baudelaire.

Baudelaire, like Redon, in order to evoke the intangible wrote of concrete perceptible concepts such as beautiful jewels or gruesome disease. To bring a completeness to his ideas total sensory inclusion, that of the principles of synaesthesia, was employed to induce images in the mind of the reader so overwhelming that the reader would be emerged in a new "magic scenery" of the soul.

Redon and Baudelaire were both Romantic Symbolists since their work not only involves the use of symbols but used these symbols to create strange, or picturesque lands, remote from the mundanity of every day life and full atmosphere and emotion.

Redon was introduced to Baudelaire's work through a friend and it was here that he learnt the principles of synaesthesia that would tie in with the already established ideas of his own.

In "Correspondences" Baudelaire wrote the quintessential synaesthetic poem. He wrote,

"Perfumes, sounds are fresh as the flesh of children,  
Sweet as the sound of oboes, green as pastures...."<sup>6</sup>

This is exactly what synaesthesia is about, how different senses correspond to each other and therefore create a more complete overall experience than could ever be evoked through words alone. Language can only suggest so much but the evocations of the total sensory images are what creates the "links between the sensory and the spiritual"<sup>7</sup>.

Also in the poem "All, All" Baudelaire wrote,

"My senses seem to merge in one;



The harmony that rules her being  
 Is all my knowledge - I have none  
 Of heaving, smelling, touching, seeing.  
 No, no. I cannot make a choice  
 In this sublime bewilderment.  
 Perhaps the music of her scent!  
 Perhaps the perfume of her voice!"<sup>8</sup>

This is a very deliberate kind of synaesthesia that the poet uses but it nonetheless induces the reader to feel that all has become one, all the senses merge and become entangled in the overall evocation of the poem.

But "All, All" illustrates more than a simple love of combining all the senses. It highlights Baudelaire's "insufferable yearning"<sup>9</sup>, a yearning for what cannot be. There is pleasure experienced in his "sublime bewilderment" but a pleasure that cannot be associated with contentment. This ultimate pessimism is always at odds with even the merest hint of happiness.

The pessimism of the symbolist is all pervading in their work and of course this pessimism is constant throughout "Against Nature". The world is a terrible place full of what Des Esseintes describes as "the base and servile riff raff of the age"<sup>10</sup> and the "American manners"<sup>11</sup> of the self made man.

So even though the Symbolists created otherworldly realities out of their romantic imaginations everything was still overshadowed by the suggestion of a dying world. The old world with its old manners and high culture was giving way to the philistinism of the industrial age and all was going to be lost, or so the sensitive souls of the Symbolists saw it.

Therefore with this "end-is-nigh" feeling looming over writers and artists of the Symbolist movement there was the compulsion to "return to past ages, to vanished civilisations"<sup>12</sup> or to pursue dreams and fantasies.

Due to the anachronistic nature of the Symbolists' attitudes there was a certain air of complacency, even of irresponsibility about their work. In complete contrast to the Naturalists' social commentaries which they viewed as constructive, as they were trying to make a difference in society there was nothing so informative and constructive in the Symbolists' manifesto.

## CHAPTER 3

The aim of the Symbolists' work was to suggest an "elusive ideal"<sup>13</sup> and to create an escape for those who desired one. There was nothing particularly constructive or earnest in the creation of their work and it is easy therefore to see how the Decadent era firmly embraced Symbolism. And no other character can be said to embody the Decadent era than Huysmans' Des Esseintes since he seems to embody all the irresponsibility and languor associated with the fin de siècle.

The total solipsistic, egocentric nature of Des Esseintes, as he "resolutely rejected everything that lay outside his little world"<sup>14</sup>, and his sole aim in life to feed his insatiable pleasure palette make him the quintessential Decadent figure.

Unusual activities and extravagant past times make the long night hours pass less slowly, Des Esseintes concocting even odder and more extreme pleasure experiments as he tries to retreat further from the boredom and mediocrity of modern reality.

Many episodes with "Against Nature" illustrate Des Esseintes' predilection for perverse pleasures such as his dabbling with his "mouth organ".

What actually lies behind the concept of the "mouth organ" are Baudelaire's "Correspondences"; the interrelation of sense impressions that are brought to extremes when Des Esseintes compares the taste of individual liqueurs with an elite selection to particular instruments.

He was "able to perform upon his tongue silent melodies and mute funeral marches" with violas "simulated by rum" and violins "represented by an old brandy"<sup>15</sup>.

The taste of the liqueurs and the sound of each instrument correspond to each other and create a greater understanding of what Baudelaire was suggesting in his poem. The difference between the violas and the violins in Des Esseintes' oral orchestra is explained through the description of the different liqueurs: the brandy illustrating the "biting and delicate" sound of the violins and the rum simulating the "stronger, heavier and quieter"<sup>16</sup> tones of the violas.

The ideas conjured through the nuances of taste and the other senses have far more depth than can ever be evoked through words alone.

Smell, even, maybe, more so than any other senses, can play upon the mind, calling up images and replaying memories.



Des Esseintes was an expert in the science of perfumes believing that the "sense of smell could procure pleasures equal to those obtained through sight or hearing"<sup>17</sup> and if all the senses were "co-ordinated" they could "compose the whole that constitutes a work of art"<sup>18</sup>. One sense alone has the power to evoke ideas, all the senses can evoke "art". Because of this concept Des Esseintes experimented with the fine senses to try to achieve the "elusive ideal".

The perfumes he created were "as subtle as any human tongue, yet wonderfully concise under its apparent vagueness and ambiguity"<sup>19</sup>.

Because of this "conciseness" the images created by the perfumes mixed by Des Esseintes have a surprising vividness to them. He is suddenly visited by mental scenes of eighteenth century, "gowns with panniers and trounces danced before his eyes..."<sup>20</sup> and other thoughts and images haunt him.

All this is very reminiscent of what I mentioned before concerning Redon's work and prose poetry, "its meaning, at once precise and multiple". The evocations of both examples having much in common with the evocative power of the senses.

At this point Des Esseintes compares his work with perfume to the arrangement of certain poems by Baudelaire, illustrating directly how the poet is an influence within the book.

The "dream inducing suggestiveness"<sup>21</sup> of "Le Balcon" with its "aromatic stanzas" and "fragrant orchestration" within the poem would "drown the soul in infinite depths of melancholy and languor"<sup>22</sup>. Again the links between the sensory and the spiritual are reaffirmed in Baudelaire's poem with lines such as,

"Night thickened like a wall and my  
eyes, in the darkness, guessed at  
your pupils and I drank in your  
breath, o sweetness!, o poison!"<sup>23</sup>

and we are merged into Des Esseintes' nocturnal world of "sweet sadness"<sup>24</sup>.

The ubiquitous pessimism of the time is the predominant mood of "Against Nature" and its hero, but you can tell that Des Esseintes takes pleasure from this particular characteristic of the time and of himself through his extravagant behaviour.

Thoroughly relishing his pessimism and therefore creating a reputation for himself as being an eccentric, which of course instilled within him great pride, Des Esseintes would invite "men of letters"<sup>25</sup> to funeral feasts.

Decorating the dining room with black sheets he would organise all sorts of darkly coloured foods, ranging from olives, to plum puddings and black heart cherries, to be laid out on a black shrouded table with coffee and stout to round the proceedings. The adjoining garden would be strewn with charcoal and the pond filled with ink.

Like the eighteenth century romantics where Symbolism has its roots, Des Esseintes wallowed in his pessimism, taking great delight in "these extravagant caprices"<sup>26</sup>.

The emotive use of black at the dinners is typical of Des Esseintes' perverse nature, but it is also mirroring the "malaise" he experiences whilst gazing on his Redon "noirs" of the 'Smiling Spider' and his "realms of bad dreams and fevered visions"<sup>27</sup>. Black plays with the mind and Des Esseintes understands the unnerving nature of it and this only magnifies his pleasure at the black feast.

It is also a very unnatural colour, for very little actual black exists in nature, it is usually simply a dark tone of another colour i.e. dark purple etc.

It also implies death, decay which again are very much in keeping with the Symbolist/Decadent sensibility - the cult of the artificial and constantly lamenting "their birth into a dying world".



Taking as a starting point the limited scope of nature and extending it through the extravagance of the imagination, Des Esseintes uses "combinations of alcoholates and essences"<sup>28</sup> to reproduce the aroma of real flowers.

At one point in the novel his craving for the unnatural, through the natural, reaches new depths of cruelty. In order for a tortoise to accessorise a carpet he guilds the shell of the creature with gold and encrusts it with precious and artificial gems. Yet another capricious whim that instead of being used over in the mind and abandoned the irresponsible, selfish Des Esseintes carries out to its ridiculous and callous conclusion.

The extreme nature of this cruel act, which eventually kills the tortoise, is an exaggerated form of the principles behind the Symbolist thinking. As in Redon's attitude to his work, nature is always there to start off, to build on, but it is the imagination of the artist that takes the work of art to the realms of the soul. Transcending the prosaic by alluding to the strange, the monstrous, the supernatural. This is Des Esseintes' quest as well.

And not only was there the grotesque encrustation of the tortoise to try to rid the creature of any of its natural state, Des Esseintes had also planned

each precious stone where it was to be placed over the shell and in which particular design.

If a particular gem had evocations of vulgarity due to associations with the common businessman or of cheapness due to its popularity with "butchers' wives whose ambition is to deck themselves out at little cost"<sup>29</sup> it was immediately dismissed. Others such as the sapphire, which had remained "unsullied by contact with commercial and financial stupidity"<sup>30</sup> was still deemed unsuitable because "unfortunately in artificial light its flame's brilliance"<sup>31</sup> is lost and what good was this to a man whose world was shrouded in darkness and who relied on artificial light.

The eventual decision to acquire a more unusual effect through the incorporation of artificial gems and real stones again highlights the Symbolist's manifesto at play here in the guise of "Against Nature's hero; of how the observed world is always incorporated into Symbolist work but with added elements of fantasy and artifice that heighten the overall mood of the piece. Nature in the Symbolist's eyes, can only offer so much, but when combined with the unnatural or supernatural the result carries nature beyond its limiting, secular world onto the same level as dreams.

More nightmarish though was the treatment of the tortoise, which was exacerbated by the matter of fact actual mentioning of its death and by its

demise having been so completely unnecessary. This adds to the essential Symbolist ideas a definite note of irresponsibility which is more in keeping with the behaviour of the unashamedly Decadent.

The selfish actions of Des Esseintes are carried out solely for the purpose of alleviating his boredom with the modern world. Feeling sorry for a dumb creature would not be within his emotional vocabulary, since he no longer cared about "ordinary emotions"<sup>32</sup> and had "no room for anything other than superfine sensations, religious doubts and sensual anxieties"<sup>33</sup>.

Acting superior to the world that he was trying to escape from Des Esseintes would throw "lofty scorn"<sup>34</sup> down upon the triviality of life and feel that he was being compelled to conduct his life as he did.

As the "waves of human mediocrity"<sup>35</sup> seemingly closed in on his sanctuary he felt more and more indignant towards it and more inclined to lose himself in the depths of his unconscious, diseased and twisted as it is.

The perversity of his character would not endure the triteness of a story of love or other banal narratives so he yearned for sources of a "disquieting vagueness that would give him scope for dreaming"<sup>36</sup>. Basically he wanted "a work of art both for what it was in itself and for what it allowed him to bestow on it"<sup>37</sup>.



Music has this indefinable quality to it which Redon, as mentioned earlier, likened to his own work. It exudes an ambiguity of meaning, a vague, amorphous idea like that residual feeling experienced when waking after a dream.

Des Esseintes' taste in music was again dictated by his intense compulsion to avoid having to deal with the contemporary banality of an artistically lacking age. Melodies he remembered from years past would haunt him and leave the usually emotionless man "choking with hysteria"<sup>38</sup> tormented by visions that excited his tired nerves. "Desolate music.." that played upon the hidden self and tore at the wretched soul of the listener "...terrified and fascinated (Des Esseintes) at the same time"<sup>39</sup>.

The images conjured would evoke such melancholia with the "mysterious intensity"<sup>40</sup> of the twilight scenes in which they were set, "shabby...wastelands" with men and women "bent double..." as the "...cares of life"<sup>41</sup> dug into their spirits.

This "desolate" music would remove Des Esseintes from himself for long periods as his mind and imagination played host to these ghostly lamentations of the soul. "Mournful melodies"<sup>42</sup> seeped into his unconscious and drowned out his modern day anxieties with an "anxiety

that was all the more irresistible in that he could no longer discover its course"<sup>43</sup>.

A state of mind in which it is pleasurable to be haunted by anxieties other than your own is surely a perverse state. Des Esseintes languors in imagined sorrows as well as his own very real ones, but prefers the unreality of the sorrows and terrors in his mind, for the dream is better than the reality. And the dreams, illusions, hallucinations, or whatever, that engulf Des Esseintes free him of any responsibility he would have to them if they actually existed around him.

Instead of paying attention to his failing health Des Esseintes loses himself in exotic sensual pleasures and artificial realities. He seeks unusual diversions to mask the tedium of life and his worsening nervous disorders. But the sensual pleasures he often indulges in only manage to aggravate his illnesses even more until medical assistance is eventually required.

Even at this low ebb Des Esseintes' love of usurping reality and nature is still at play. When the doctor prescribes a "nourishing peptone enema"<sup>44</sup> to be injected three times a day Des Esseintes realises that "his taste for the artificial had now...attained its supreme fulfilment"<sup>45</sup> and also with very little energy expended. "Nourishment in this way was undoubtedly the ultimate deviation from the norm"<sup>46</sup>.

The idea that man could survive on a diet of three "nourishing"<sup>47</sup> injections a day would eradicate the necessity and boredom of having to create meals from the same "limited choice"<sup>48</sup>.

It seems a little paradoxical that Des Esseintes, who abhorred the modern world of the new industrialised age and longed for the old world would delight in the progress of science and medicine, but then if it aided his Decadent lifestyle it would be accepted.

"Recipes of a perverse epicurism"<sup>49</sup> were worked out by the convalescent highlighting the flippancy of his character when faced with the weaknesses of his own flawed flesh. There is little responsibility shown even to himself and to Des Esseintes this is what his life had been planned for, life through suffering and "sweet sadness", not health and happiness. Having little regard for the preciousness of life and understanding that nothing did really matter because the old world is dying and so is everybody else in the "waves of human mediocrity".

Decadence is the "dark side of Romanticism in its flaunting of forbidden experiences"<sup>50</sup> and its insistence on the "superiority of artifice to nature"<sup>51</sup>.



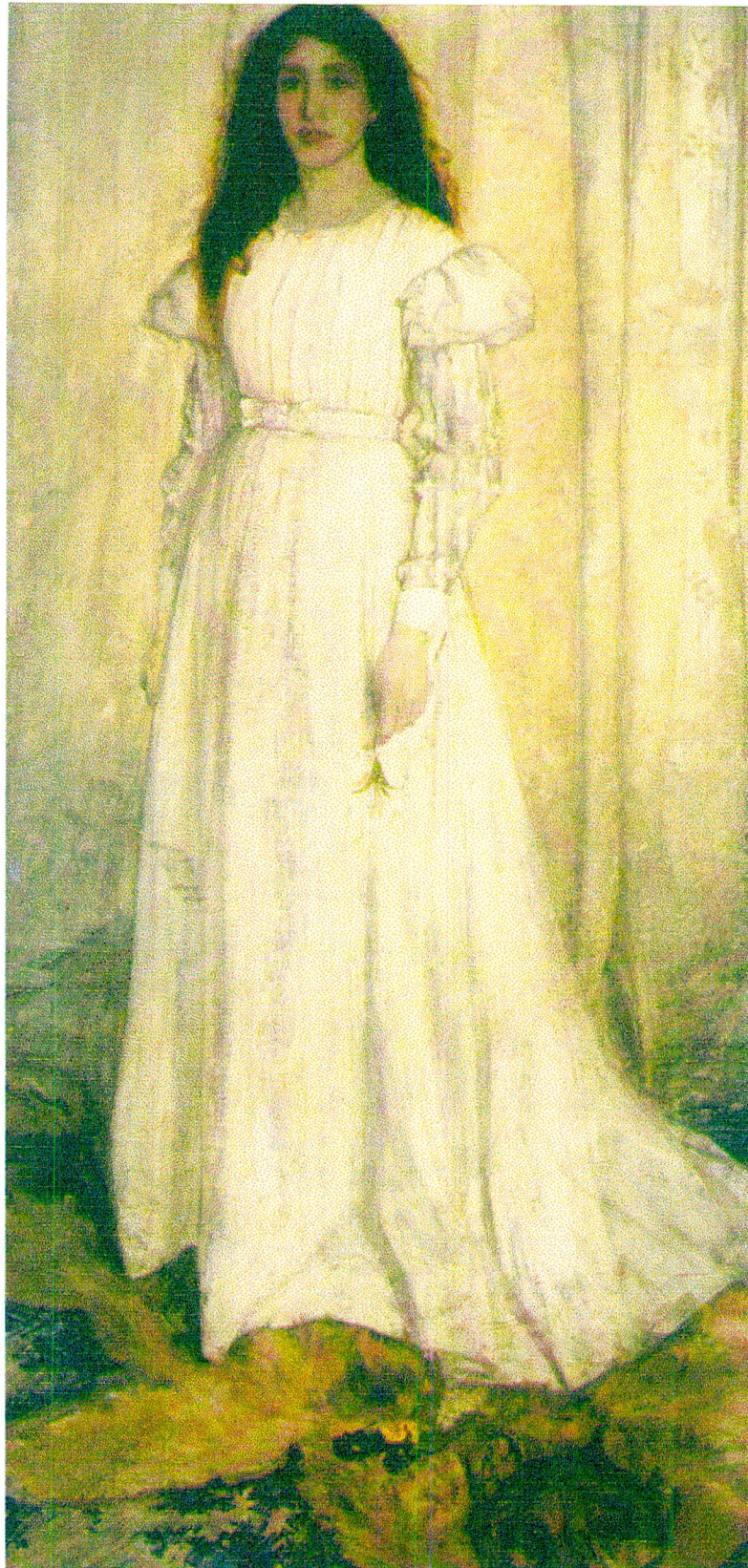


Fig.5 James McNeill Whistler "Symphony in White: The White Girl"



The Romantic movement in France, around the beginning of the nineteenth century, had turned increasingly towards the arts and away from the given, outside world in the pursuit of inspiring images and ideas. Painting, literature, music, and poetry therefore became involved in an incestuous play off of each other. This strongly influenced the Symbolist and Decadent era of the late nineteenth century which Oscar Wilde's poem "Symphony in Yellow" and James McNeill Whistler's painting "Symphony in White"(Fig.5) illustrates.

This cross-referencing between the arts highlighted a move away from the limiting aspects of merely observed nature. The arts therefore layered on each other more and more variations on the theme of nature moving further and further from the natural to the artificial.

The chapter in "Against Nature" in which Des Esseintes receives the "bizarre and magnificent blooms"<sup>1</sup> he has ordered illustrates the decadents' love of the artificial. Even though the flowers are real each one has a very unnatural appearance and even though they resemble cheaper, fake flowers the real extravagance is that Des Esseintes' unusual flora is real and therefore very expensive.

A plant that resembled bits of "stoke pipe cut into a pike head pattern"<sup>2</sup> was a "supreme masterpiece of artifice"<sup>3</sup>. Others opened their "sword shaped

petals to reveal gaping wounds..." and others resembled "...a sort of German pipe in porcelain"<sup>4</sup>.

The descriptions of "gaping flesh wounds..." and other flowers that look like "...stumps of amputated limbs"<sup>5</sup> mirror the disease and degeneration in the novel, emphasised by Des Esseintes own illnesses.

But this was an "extreme Decadent ideology"<sup>6</sup> at play in the characterisation of Des Esseintes taking in the Decadent dandy's love of extravagance and therefore his superiority of mind. According to Baudelaire "an immoderate taste for fine clothes and material elegance"<sup>7</sup> only symbolised "the aristocratic superiority of (the dandy's) mind"<sup>8</sup>. Superiority over the plebs and the stupidity of the bourgeois.

A superiority that was made more offensive to others because of the "cultivated languor and calculated irresponsibility"<sup>9</sup> that accompanied it.

The Dandy, which Des Esseintes characterises perfectly as he is the quintessential Decadent hero, cares about very little other than himself and how he appears. From the clothes down to the posturing all is affected to imply the superiority of mind.



Des Esseintes not only carries himself well and dresses in the finest silk shirts, but the whole superiority picture is completed with fine perfumes, food, liqueurs, flowers, books covered in "Japanese felt as white as curdled milk....fastened with two silk cords"<sup>10</sup>.

But Des Esseintes' character was more than a mere affectation. There was a depth to his aestheticism that was not there for show, a psychological complexity that filled out the dandy image. His taste in painting, poetry and literature was in keeping with the Decadent sensibility and ideology. Artists he favoured such as Redon and Moreau mirrored his interest in the artificial and the supernatural with their strange monsters and mythological allusions, but there was a more soulful longing in Des Esseintes' admiration of the artists' work.

The Symbolist ideology runs deeper than that of the Decadents. I believe that Decadence is the affectation of the Dandy, all artifice and superficial depravity; Symbolism goes behind the beliefs of the Decadents and goes deeper below the surface into the very soul of the age and its art, "an age of universal suffrage and a time of commercial greed"<sup>11</sup>.

Another French Symbolist poet who tried to summon up the very soul of art was Stephane Mallarme, whose work was described in "Against Nature" as "taking pleasure... in the caprices of the mind and the visions of the

brain"<sup>12</sup>. Again this seems to articulate Des Esseintes own concerns to blot out reality.

While the world around Des Esseintes changes and falls foul of "American manners" and the "self made man" he is reminded of Latin works that described the Roman Decadence and how the Roman Empire became corrupt and thus its "doomed life ...was extinguished"<sup>13</sup>.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century an analogy between contemporary western civilisation and the Roman Empire was very much playing on the minds of historians, such as T.H. Huxley<sup>14</sup>. Worries about corruptive influences caused increasingly anxieties about the future and everything felt doomed. Nero, a Roman Emperor whose excesses led to his downfall, was picked up on by the historians who saw the Roman Decadence personified in this one man. The Decadence of Huysmans' hero is mirrored by Nero's even more extreme notions of pleasure and amusement : "he lighted his gardens by having live Christian captives covered with wax and set on fire"<sup>15</sup>.

The fall of the Roman Empire is said to have begun in the time of Nero, this new Decadent sensibility was therefore interpreted as a sign that the end was nigh.

While others worried, Oscar Wilde took grooming tips from the Roman Decadent hero, Nero, and fashioned his hair in the same style.

Wilde, a major player, of course, in the Decadent era, had been greatly influenced by Huysmans' "Against Nature" and this influence can be seen in "The Picture of Dorian Gray". But where "Against Nature" is a study of the "artistic temperament in an inartistic age"<sup>16</sup>, "The Picture of Dorian Gray" portrays a "narcissist who trifles with art"<sup>17</sup>, then distorts advice, to search for new sensations, to evil ends.

This is another extreme of the Decadent ideology, but the character of Dorian Gray does not have the depth of aesthetic discernment that Huysmans' hero has.

The aesthetic pleasure in "Against Nature" is all pervading, seeping out to every well constructed concision and forming a very rounded view of Des Esseintes.

We learn to understand why he lives the way he does, why he has chosen to live out his days away from the trappings and commonplace sorrows of modern life, indulging in unusual diversions and fine artistic tastes.

In the last chapter of the novel Des Esseintes reluctantly resigns himself to the idea of returning to Paris. This advice from his doctor "to lead a normal



life again..." and to "...enjoy the same pleasures as other people"<sup>18</sup> was met with strong protestations. Des Esseintes had not decided to retreat from the corruption of the society around him only to have to return to it.

Having to deal with the mainstream mediocrity of painting and literature, full of their lifeless inanities, was torture enough but to be placed in the centre of it, in the city was an utterly contemptible concept.

No more his life of "dreamy contemplation"<sup>19</sup> was to be enjoyed, his mind drifting in all direction, exploring all sides of literature, poetry, religion, past epochs. He was returning to the "tyranny of commerce...with narrow-minded ideas and its rascally instincts"<sup>20</sup>.

The refinement of his solitary life would be infected by the rotten society with its lack of respect for the way things used to be, with corruption even infiltrating the ranks of the church.

The hypocrisy of the members of Christianity, with not even the intelligence to change their ways to be deliberately deprave, flowing through the foundations of society and washing away the emblematic order of the old world.

The elements of the Christian service that symbolised Christ's body and blood, the bread and the wine, were all being watered down metaphorically and literally.

The mal du siècle of the end of the century had set in and the disillusioned, of which Des Esseintes was an embodiment, were trying to believe in a hopeful future, as impossible as it seemed to them as they clung on to the glory of past days.

## CONCLUSION

"Against Nature" came about as a result of Naturalism and its limitations; to continue on from where the bleak realism of Zola and Courbet left off, to where the line between the natural and the supernatural blurred. Symbolism which shaped Huysmans' novel, transcended the real and made the unreal much more captivating and appealing.

It had particular resonance at the time due to a shift in the status quo that was happening in the late nineteenth century caused by the industrial revolution and people were looking for an escape from the paradoxical new world of science and uncertainty.

Huysmans' hero Des Esseintes is caught between this beckoning new world and his longing for the old. It is his vague longing for what no longer exists and his realisation of this that cause him to live his solitary life. Each day, alone, he pursues pleasure to save him from the crushing pessimism and disillusionment he feels towards the outside world only to be faced again with reality. Until the end of the novel when he gives in to the "waves of human mediocrity". Salvation is not granted.

It is as if Des Esseintes is on a one man religious crusade, each day offering up his senses to seek a higher plane, richer than the secular plane he so



desperately craves to transcend, cruelly trapped in a world full of corruption and greed. Viewed in this way he is the complete antithesis to the hermetic monk who, too, seeks salvation and for his soul to reach that higher plane but, as opposed to Des Esseintes, indulges in prayer, not hedonism and depravity. Though the amount of effort put into each man's search for salvation is equal.

The fin de siècle, or more accurately, the mal du siècle that Des Esseintes is so characteristic of was a time of great hope and therefore disillusionment but also of great anxiety and this anxiety bred fear and pessimism. These emotions fuelled the works of Redon as he created his monstrous, suggestive images and also of Baudelaire with his melancholic "voice" soothing the uncertain mind of the nineteenth century reader.

For the Symbolists and Decadents the old world was dying and even though their days were overshadowed by pessimism, their hearts still contained a shard of hope that cut further and further, deepening their wounds of disillusionment and eventually causing them to give in, as Des Esseintes had done.

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## FOOTNOTES

### Introduction

- <sup>1</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, Introduction p.13.
- <sup>2</sup> London in the 1890's : A Cultural History, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.44.
- <sup>3</sup> Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, 1969, p.575.
- <sup>4</sup> Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, 1969, p.574.
- <sup>5</sup> Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, 1969, p.575.
- <sup>6</sup> Odilon Redon, Richard Hobbs, 1977, p.51.
- <sup>7</sup> Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, 1969, p.943.
- <sup>8</sup> London in the 1890's : A Cultural History, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.35.

### Chapter 1

- <sup>9</sup> Symbolism, Michael Gibson, 1995, p.13.
- <sup>10</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, Introduction, p.6.
- <sup>11</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, Introduction, p.6.
- <sup>12</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, Introduction, p.6.
- <sup>13</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, Introduction, p.7.
- <sup>14</sup> Selected Poems, Charles Baudelaire, 1995, p104.
- <sup>15</sup> Selected Poems, Charles Baudelaire, 1995, p104.
- <sup>16</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, Introduction, p.7.
- <sup>17</sup> Symbolism, Michael Gibson, 1995, p.39.
- <sup>18</sup> Symbolism, Michael Gibson, 1995, p.39.
- <sup>19</sup> Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, 1969, p.941.
- <sup>20</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, Introduction, p.7.
- <sup>21</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.89.
- <sup>22</sup> Symbolism, Michael Gibson, 1995, p.14.
- <sup>23</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, Introduction, p.7.
- <sup>24</sup> Symbolism, Michael Gibson, 1995, p.24.

### Chapter 2

- <sup>25</sup> Symbolism, Michael Gibson, 1995, p.59.
- <sup>26</sup> Odilon Redon, Richard Hobbs, 1977, p.26.
- <sup>27</sup> Symbolism, Michael Gibson, 1995, p.59.
- <sup>28</sup> Odilon Redon, Richard Hobbs, 1977, p.16.
- <sup>29</sup> Odilon Redon, Richard Hobbs, 1977, p.16.
- <sup>30</sup> Symbolism, Michael Gibson, 1995, p.15.
- <sup>31</sup> Odilon Redon, Richard Hobbs, 1977, p.16.
- <sup>32</sup> Odilon Redon, Richard Hobbs, 1977, p.28.
- <sup>33</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.73.
- <sup>34</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.73.
- <sup>35</sup> Odilon Redon, Richard Hobbs, 1977, p.61.



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- <sup>36</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.199.  
<sup>37</sup> Odilon Redon, Richard Hobbs, 1977, p.45-46.  
<sup>38</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.73.  
<sup>39</sup> Symbolist Art Theories, Henri Dorra, 1994, p.11.  
<sup>40</sup> Symbolist Art Theories, Henri Dorra, 1994, p.10.  
<sup>41</sup> Baudelaire in English, Charles Baudelaire, 1997, p.55.  
<sup>42</sup> Baudelaire in English, Charles Baudelaire, 1997, Introduction, p.xviii.  
<sup>43</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.219.  
<sup>44</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.219.  
<sup>45</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.181.

### Chapter 3

- <sup>46</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, Introduction, p.8.  
<sup>47</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.159.  
<sup>48</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.59.  
<sup>49</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.59.  
<sup>50</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.119.  
<sup>51</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.119.  
<sup>52</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.120.  
<sup>53</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.123.  
<sup>54</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.183.  
<sup>55</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.123.  
<sup>56</sup> Selected Poems, Charles Baudelaire, 1995, p.35.  
<sup>57</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.74.  
<sup>58</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.27.  
<sup>59</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.27.  
<sup>60</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.73.  
<sup>61</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.119.  
<sup>62</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.55.  
<sup>63</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.55.  
<sup>64</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.55.  
<sup>65</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.190.  
<sup>66</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.190.  
<sup>67</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.96.  
<sup>68</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.221.  
<sup>69</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.150.  
<sup>70</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.150.  
<sup>71</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.205.  
<sup>72</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.205.  
<sup>73</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.200.  
<sup>74</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.205.  
<sup>75</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.106.  
<sup>76</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.206.  
<sup>77</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.208.



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- <sup>78</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.208.
- <sup>79</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.208.
- <sup>80</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.208.
- <sup>81</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.208.
- <sup>82</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.209.
- <sup>83</sup> London in the 1890's, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.33.
- <sup>84</sup> London in the 1890's, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.33.
- <sup>85</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.97.
- <sup>86</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.99.
- <sup>87</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.99.
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- <sup>89</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.99.
- <sup>90</sup> London in the 1890's, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.37.
- <sup>91</sup> London in the 1890's, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.35.
- <sup>92</sup> London in the 1890's, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.35.
- <sup>93</sup> London in the 1890's, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.35.
- <sup>94</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.197.
- <sup>95</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.196.
- <sup>96</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.196.
- <sup>97</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.49.
- <sup>98</sup> London in the 1890's, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.43.
- <sup>99</sup> London in the 1890's, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.43.
- <sup>100</sup> London in the 1890's, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.47.
- <sup>101</sup> London in the 1890's, Karl Beckson, 1990, p.47.
- <sup>102</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.211.
- <sup>103</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.213.
- <sup>104</sup> Against Nature, J.-K. Huysmans, 1959, p.217.



Fig.6 G.Baldini "Comte de Montesquiou"





George, 1905, at the age of 10 years.



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2. In the second part, the results of the calculations

are presented and discussed.

3. The third part contains the conclusions and

references.

4. The fourth part contains the appendix.

5. The fifth part contains the bibliography.

6. The sixth part contains the index.

7. The seventh part contains the list of symbols.

8. The eighth part contains the list of abbreviations.

9. The ninth part contains the list of figures.

10. The tenth part contains the list of tables.

11. The eleventh part contains the list of references.

12. The twelfth part contains the list of symbols.

13. The thirteenth part contains the list of abbreviations.

14. The fourteenth part contains the list of figures.

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