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WHEN SPACE RENEWS THE LITERARY WORKSHOP: THE OULIPO MOVEMENT'S SPATIAL LITERARY PRACTICES

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For quite a long time, the field of geography has focused on spaces depicted in literature. More recently, it has begun to expose the relationships that literary works nurture with the settings that serve for their production and acceptance. The groundwork was primarily laid by a number of seminal works announcing a “geography of literature” (Brosseau and Cambron 2003, Molina 2010). This approach has taken on greater legitimacy in light of the tendency of contemporary literary practices, like that introduced by the Oulipo movement, to engage in a special relationship with a given place (Schilling 2003, 2006, 2011). Initiated at the beginning of the 1960's, the OuLiPo movement (l'Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle: French acronym for a workshop of potential literature) assembles writers, mathematicians and musicians collaborating on the same project: exercising language through entertaining and experimental means, inventing constraints in order to forge new literary dynamics. Among the devotees of Oulipo, or Oulipians, space becomes occupied not merely as a literary topic, but moreover as a field of experimentation for new ways to create literature.

¹ In alphabetical order, a big round of thanks for their proofing and valuable input goes out to: Pauline Guinard, Magali Hardouin, Kelly Harrison, Thierry Paquot and Anne Volvey, as well as to Jacques Jouet for verifying the details regarding his approach.

By highlighting the emblematic case of the Oulipian Jacques Jouet², this article proposes an exploration of how contemporary literary practices yield a renewed relationship with space that contrasts with the traditional process for producing literature. As of the 1990's, Jouet embarked on literary experiences with a distinct spatial component. An analysis of his work, as proposed in this article, will seek to assess how occupying a space within a given time frame, in association with emerging social relations, actually catalyzes new literary dynamics. This reliance on geographic settings in literary production lies squarely within a more general trend influencing contemporary artistic practices. Since the 1960's, contemporary plastic arts have tended to be more heavily aligned with a "contextual art" form through a creation process both *within* and *with* the environment (Ardenne 2002). The analytical model and concepts proposed by the geographer-turned-artist Anne Volvey to study this movement, which favors adding a spatial component to contemporary artistic activity (2008, 2010), will be visited herein to shed light on the production dynamic behind such Oulipian literature. However, the works of Jacques Jouet proceed by forming an immediate bond with a place, where the writer stakes out a position and interacts with his audience and residents. This body of work entails not just "spatial building blocks" (Volvey 2008), but a temporal and social construct as well (Bourriaud 1998). Probing the areas of art sociology and literary critique will also provide a valuable backup to better comprehend the three-pronged approach (spatial, temporal and social) used by Jouet to produce his works.

An initial analytical time allocation will be devoted to tracing the evolution in literature production conditions. The term "literary workshop" will be used to designate the entire set of activities, actors, spaces and temporal frames that mesh to build a literary work. The traditional literature production process involves a succession of actors and activities

² Born in 1947, Jacques Jouet became acquainted with Oulipians Georges Perec and Jacques Roubaud towards the end of the 1970's (he joined OuLiPo in 1983). He conducted polymorph literary and artistic activities through a practice of the poetic genre, novels, short stories, theater, essays and collage. His body of work is drawing increased attention in the field of literary studies, to such an extent that an international symposium has recently been dedicated to him in Poitiers ("Jacques Jouet: An Oulipian disciple", held June 27th through 29th 2013), organized by Marc Lapprand (UVIC, Canada) and Dominique Moncond'huy (Poitiers) within the scope of the ANR Agency's DifePo project and with the support of FORELL (MSHS, Poitiers).

that play out chronologically within different spaces. The relationship between an author and his readers thus appears to be *remote* in both space and time, with this separation being *bridged* by a series of actors, activities and objects that participate in composing the literary work. The first part of this article will demonstrate how, with these Oulipian writers, literature has taken a “spatial turn” (Volvey 2010, 7) by thoroughly altering these production steps. The second part will detail how Jacques Jouet deftly experiments this new approach to creating a literature assembled for the *here* and *now*.

1. When literary production adds a spatial component

The research stemming from literary theories (Jauss 1978, Eco 1965, Genette 1991, 1994), much like that inspired by the sociology of art (Escarpit and Bouazis 1970, Becker 2010, Dirx 2000, Heinich 2011), has led to considering literature no longer through the lens of a purely textualist approach, but rather within a more dialogical perspective (along the lines of a social construct), as the outcome of a process that mobilizes a plurality of actors and activities. Could literature be qualified simply from the standpoint of the author’s design, or would it need to be received as such by society, through various social groups participating in its actual production and symbolizing the work itself. What are the sequence of activities, the actor input in staging the various spaces and the traditional literary evolution processes underlying the given qualification? How have Oulipians occupied space since the 1960s like a laboratory and thereby renew these modes of literary proliferation?

a) Traditional means of creating literature

A literary work is not merely the end product of the author’s labor. It mobilizes a “cooperative chain” (Becker 2010, 49), a “division of labor” (*ibid.* 32) among the various actors. Their associated activities take part in in spaces and at distinct moments which constitute the individual steps in building a literary work.

The output of this chain starts to take shape well in advance of the actual writing. As exposed in literary genetics targeting the nascence of written works, spaces inhabited by the writer are influential, to the same

extent as the imaginary and fictitious spaces encountered in his/her reading. Literary work is also shaped in an intertextual manner and moreover lies within a network of ramifications connecting it to other works (Kristeva 1969). To achieve its production, the author takes a position within a “space of the possible” (Bourdieu 1998, 390), in acknowledging the output of his/her predecessors.

Formalization through the act of writing becomes a key to the challenge of producing a manuscript. As the central literary activity, writing within the collective imagination winds up being shrouded in a certain mystique and prestige. Writing is often associated with private spaces, notably that of the writer’s bedroom or office. Flaubert exemplifies this now legendary figure of the reclusive, solitary writer toiling out of the world’s view, enclosed in the silence of his/her office, vigorously writing and rewriting text before depositing the draft in the “mouth of the dragon”. While literary production is often assimilated with and simplified to this solitary writing activity, in reality it comes on the heels of many other steps essential to the nascence of the work. (Becker 2010; Escarpit and Bouazis 1970)

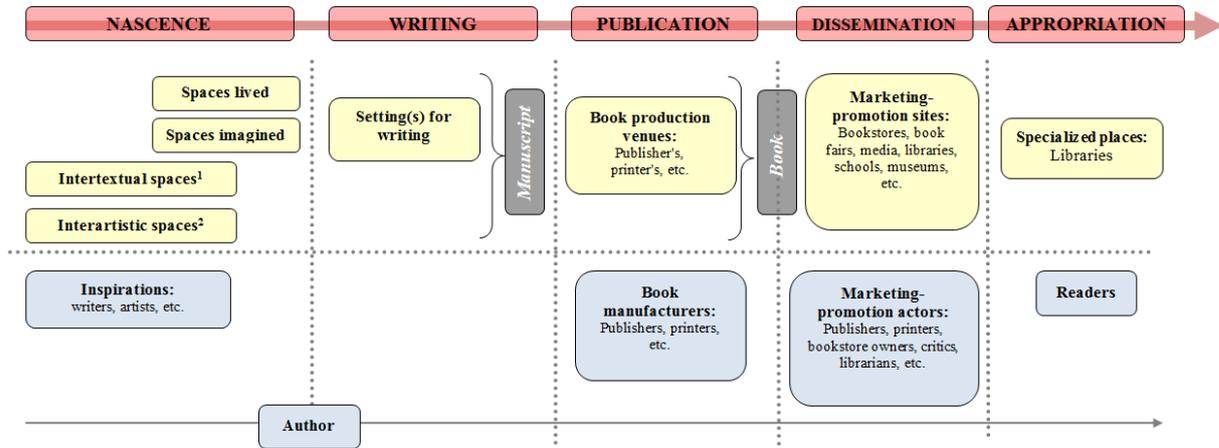
The ultimate publication presumes the existence of collaboration between the writer and his/her publisher, in implying a whole series of activities: external proofreading, potential rewriting sessions, a hard copy printout. This metamorphosis of the manuscript into a text takes place in different successive venues: the publisher’s, the printer’s, etc. Several actors then get involved in the book’s marketing, distribution, dissemination and promotion, at which point not only is the publisher quite naturally active, but also the author takes part in auxiliary activities (public readings, interviews, etc.). A host of other players in the book production chain then enters the fray as well, including bookstores, librarians, teachers, the media and literary event organizers. Their activities are conducted in venues traditionally dedicated to the dissemination and promotion of literature, while able to offer the same treatment for the arts: libraries, bookstores, book fairs, museums. Institutions like schools also tend to play a role in the establishment of literary culture and the dissemination of literary works.

Moreover, literature implies a dialectic interplay between the text, which offers a number of possible interpretations, and its readers (Eco 1965, 1992). The existence of a literary work is contingent upon being refreshed and updated by the act of reading, which occurs in several social contexts and rallies both lay and professional actors (e.g. publishers, critics). In reviewing the contributions from over 40 years of research in

the field of pragmatism and sociology of art, Jean-Pierre Esquenazi summarized by noting that more than a simple "object", artwork appears as a "working process." (2007, 194)

The practices involved in appropriating literature cannot be reduced to the act of reading alone. Literary works can indeed be adapted (e.g. cinematographically or theatrically), used and even manipulated by a variety of actors within an array of social spaces (Molina 2010). This renewal process playing out across myriad social spaces is what serves to chart the "social destiny" (Moulin 2007, 22) and ensure the "survival" (Escarpit 1970a, 129) of a piece of work once its production apparatus has been dismantled.

Diagram 1: The traditional literary production process



Legend:

- steps - activities
- actors
- objects produced
- spaces
- possible involvement throughout the chain

Notes:

- 1. Intertextual spaces:** The set of spaces depicted in other texts that underlie to a certain extent the literary work under examination. This intertextual link may be established via, for example, citations, allusions, plagiarism and references, or (somewhat more difficult to detect) other forms of influence that shape the text more implicitly. This notion of intertextuality was first introduced by Julia Kristeva at the end of the 1960's; her main premise was that a literary text is constructed through reliance in particular on a combination and transformation of various previous texts.
- 2 Interartistic spaces:** These spaces are situated beyond the narrower literary and poetic fields that contribute to the construction of a literary work. Inspired by theories on intertextuality, literary analysts have developed a sort of trans-literary approach that evaluates the relationships existing between literature and the other arts, via the phenomena of interartistic transposition.

The traditional mode of literature production typically revolves around a series of activities and social protagonists, whose interplay is staged in a multiple number of spaces. In the end, the literary work appears to be “crafted by society, shaped by a progression of historical situations, laced with collective connotations.” (Escarpit 1970b, 17) According to this production mode, the relationship between author and reader is offset within the temporal domain, as mediated by the book but also by an entire series of actors. As of the 1960’s, writers began to question this linearity and the underlying sequencing of the literature production process, while focusing on renewed modes of literary creation.

b) The “spatial orientation” of literature

The Workshop of Potential Literature (under the banner “Oulipo”) was founded at the beginning of the 1960’s, at a time characterized by greater fluidity in the literary scene and a decompartmentalization of scientific fields and the artistic realm. Georges Perec, for example, befriended architects and attended their schools. In seeking to distance themselves from the technician’s and scientist’s approach espoused by predecessors of the modern movement, the young generation of architects emerging during this period drew inspiration from literature and semiotics in rethinking and reformulating architecture (Molina 2010). Such attraction by actors from the fields of architecture and urban planning to Oulipian literature can be explained by the depth and uniqueness of the relationships these writers nurtured with space.

The Oulipians in essence attempted to restore literary practices by reexamining the relationship between space, time, writing and society. Given the intensity of burgeoning social exchanges, as well as their steady pace and the diversity of the spaces included, the city was experiencing an Oulipian occupation as a favored theater of observation. In providing multiple possibilities to impose constraints and encourage invention, the city offered a perfect backdrop to experiment with new ways of practicing literature. Raymond Queneau initiated a mental writing experiment around a “walking poem” that gave rise to “*Courir les rues*” (“*Hitting the Streets*”) in 1967. By also making use of the city as “a poetic laboratory or test bench” (Schilling 2011, 57), Jacques Roubaud attempted to “once again hit the streets” that had been visited 30 years prior by his Oulipian predecessor (*ibid.* 58). With “*The Invisible Cities*”, published in Italian in 1972, Italo Calvino also tried his hand at a kaleidoscopic poetic portrait of

an array of cities. Apparently, the Oulipians had established a special pact with the city. It was perhaps Georges Perec however who was most responsible for spatial experiences stimulating the level of literary activity.

While the city had been a preferred subject for poets and novelists, the setting of Baudelaire's and Rimbaud's outings, "detours" by the surrealists (Stierle 2002), with Georges Perec it had become the laboratory of a new experiment, namely that of *in situ* contextual writing, whose substance was derived from a relationship of geographic immediacy. From the end of the 1960's, Perec began taking on "projects completed 'in the field'", as described by Derek Schilling (2003, 144). This "spatial orientation" was set into motion with the project entitled "*Lieux*". The writer sought to occupy twelve Paris sites intimately associated with their history. Temporal constraints would interfere: for twelve years running, he produced two texts a month at these places by utilizing two distinct writing methods. The first was *in situ*, whereby the writer present inside the space attempts to relate his perceptions with objectivity and neutrality. This technique resembles that of the social sciences researcher employing an "ethnographic" type method (Schilling 2003, 145). The act of literary creation is thus bound to a given space and time that the writer fills. The second mode adopted during this project was less direct: *in absentia*, the writer seeks to physically access the site through the power of his writing and the exercise of his mind in recalling memories. By superimposing stringent spatial and temporal constraints and necessitating an endurance exceeding twelve years, this project begun in 1969 was ultimately abandoned in 1975. Perec would continue the experiment at other Paris venues. For example, from October 18th to 20th 1974, he took a seat at the *Café de la Mairie*, on Paris' Saint-Sulpice square. In his *Attempt at exhausting a place in Paris* (1974), his project consisted of accurately transcribing his perception of the space, exhaustively describing the life of this public sphere. These projects reveal the ambition of making a literary theme out of day-to-day existence, this "background noise", the commonplace as exposed in all its banal immediacy, which a few years later would constitute the main topic of *L'Infra-ordinaire*. (1989)

Perec's projects are to be placed in an era characterized by an extraordinary intellectual climate. Intellectuals and artists were both keen on "hitting the streets" (Buren 2005) and gaining greater proximity to society by demonstrating their interest for the mundane. Two-way exchanges and shared influences characterized the relationships built between Georges Perec's output and the works of contemporary artists, like Christian Boltanski (Joly 2010). As of the 1960s, contemporary art

had adopted a “spatial orientation” by exiting the museums and dedicated institutions to occupy the public space and reestablish proximity with its public (Bourriaud 1998, Ardenne 2002, Ruby 2001). These modern artistic practices suggested the pursuit of “*outdoor*” spatial strategies, in contrast with the traditional art world. They developed within a relationship-driven attitude with respect to their public and their context (Volvey 2008). Like artists, writers were intent on establishing direct ties with their times, their city and their fellow inhabitants who sustain and energize the city. Their goal was to reside in the world and “work” with the world in refining their craft.

As of the 1990’s, in drawing inspiration from these literary and artistic experiences as well as from contemporary artists (like Sophie Calle), Jacques Jouet would pursue this experience by placing literature and poetry in a spatial context using even more extreme techniques.

2. Space or the new spawning ground of literary production

Georges Perec’s legacy can be measured more precisely by the influence of his work on contemporary writers. François Bon, Patrick Modiano, Jean and Olivier Rolin, and Annie Ernaux, to name a few, all recognize their debt of gratitude and their “affiliation” with the Perec movement. (Heck 2011) Among these followers, Jacques Jouet held a unique role. With this author, the space-time-society triad was paid special emphasis and gave rise to a set of constraints spurring a literary dynamic that renewed both the author’s and reader’s experiences with great fervor. As the Oulipian he was, Jouet dabbled in an array of genres: poetry, novels, short stories, theater, essays (that he would resurrect by working from spatial, temporal and social constraints). These experiments ushered in the invention of new literary forms: the “metro poem”, the “landscape poem”, the “portrait poem” of individuals or social groups, an author’s attempt at exhaustion, or a project intended to coordinate literary devices. What were the specific socio-spatiotemporal systems that these literary forms embraced? Outside of any distinct features, what were the new underlying literary production principles?

a) The spatiotemporal dynamics of writing

One of the initial ramifications of Jouet's writings consisted of grasping the immediate experience the author had infused into the place of story narration. The spatial practice had thus generated a unique literary dynamic, a set of constraints and resources that the Oulipian drew upon to write. Perhaps the "metro poem" serves to best symbolize this new mode of literary production from the standpoint of the temporal and spatial relationships being forged.

What exactly is a metro poem?

From time to time, I'll write poems while riding the metro. This poem is one such effort. [...]

A metro poem is actually composed in the train during the time of a transit trip.

A metro poem contains as many verses as your trip covers stations less one.

The first verse is written in your head between the first two stations of your ride (including the departure station).

It is transcribed onto paper when the train stops at the second station.

The second verse is composed in your head between stations two and three of your itinerary.

It is transcribed onto paper once the train stops at the third station. And so forth and so on.

No transcription is to take place while the train is in motion.

And verse composition must not occur while the train is stopped.

The final verse of the poem is transcribed on the platform of your last station.

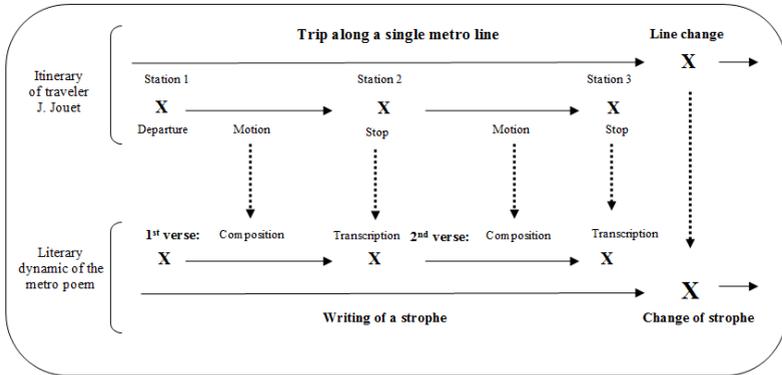
Should your itinerary require one or more line changes, the poem will contain two or potentially more strophes.

(Jouet 2000, 7)

The writing dynamic relies on the trip-making sequences of the author-metro user. Individual mobility is utilized as a constraint of spatial as well as temporal resources. Jacques Jouet's approach was inspired from that adopted by the *Autonauts of the Cosmoroute* (*Les autonautes de la cosmoroute ou Un voyage intemporel Paris-Marseille* (1983), undertaken at the beginning of the 1980's by the couple of writers Julio Cortázar and Carol Dunlop, as their mobile writing adventure played out during a trip along the Paris-Marseille motorway. In this instance, the writing practice was predetermined by a constrained travel itinerary, with the writers

forcing themselves to stop at every other rest area to spend a night. For Jouet, like for these South American writers, travels through space and time energize the writing process. In aiding the Oulipian poet to traverse space, the metro had become the setting of new poetic creation.

**Diagram 2: The "metro poem" (J. Jouet):
Mobility and space-time as poetic dynamics**



Source: Molina G., 2013

In opting to write “live”, to appropriate immediacy as an advent of new literary production, Jouet distanced himself from a certain model of writing:

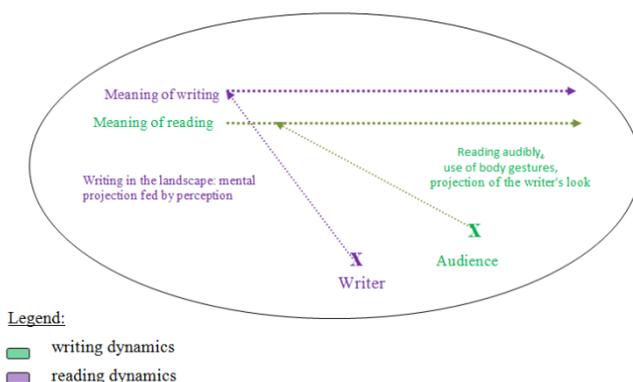
It’s also a working idea. Flaubert’s model is not mine. [...] I prefer to work in the domain of enjoyment, that’s for sure. Beyond that, it all has to do with energy, I mean it doesn’t have to be the accumulation of hard labor that’s required... naturally it still might be! But offering a one-size-fits-all model, that’s not for me. No way. In the metro poem however, it’s all about compression. The physical realm, energy, it all gets compressed. The purpose is stated: "I'm working very intensively for a very short time."³

Jouet’s poetry is thus rooted in and spawned from a story, that of a place experienced at a given moment in time. The touching experience of the place becomes the driver of instantaneous writing. As a counterpoint to the “metro poem”, the “landscape poem” is also written “live”, in fact

³ Interview conducted on 15th October 2012.

horizontally onto a single verse (known as a couplet) and “within the landscape.” A panoramic sweep is thus used for the poem writing mode. Mr. Jouet is emboldened by his perception of venues. He starts out in the static position of his body’s stance in space and proceeds like a photographer in seeking to immortalize a panorama by means of a succession of horizontal images. This poetic layout does not merely imply a renewed writing mode, but also reconfigures another fundamental piece of the literary production process in complementing reading by a relationship held with the reader.

**Diagram 3: The "landscape poem":
Panoramic sweep as a writing and reading mode**



Source: Molina G., 2013

b) Space: A setting of joint literary production

In the traditional production process, the reader is actually first and foremost a *recipient* whose primary activity, namely reading, occupies a place downstream of this process. By “hitting the street” and constructing poetry *from* and *in a here and now*, Jacques Jouet embarks on an entirely different relationship with the reader. The spaces being occupied become the stage of a meeting between poet and resident or user of the space.

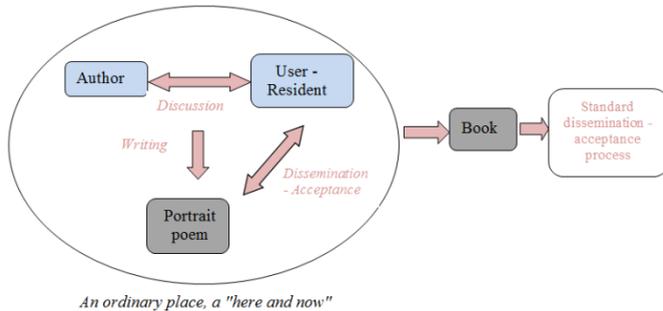
With this “landscape poem”, writing and reading both share a space and are driven by a panoramic sweep dynamic. Reading is thus no longer simply the reader engaging in textual interpretation; it leaves the confines of the book and evolves through the speaking voice of the poet and the audience’s rapt attention. The act of reading is projected orally and accompanied by staging the poet’s gestures in space, in visually scanning the public from left to right. This scene is an immediate offering to the recipient, who has been transformed from reader into listener, spectator and partner of an experience influenced by landscape. Production therefore takes place in the collusion between writer and reader in a designated venue. In this manner, writing and reading meld *within* and *via* space.

“An author’s attempt at exhaustion” constitutes another radical form of experience in the author-reader relationship, with the following constraints: penning a novel by taking up permanent residence in a public space or a space hosting the public (Paris June 2009 and Beirut June 2010), in the view of passersby and fans especially on hand for the event. The writing is projected onto a giant screen in real time as it is being produced by the author to ensure instantaneous reading. Sequenced in traditional literature production processes, writing and reading tend to be synchronized within the same space-time domain.

In considering that “poetry spans all topics”⁴, Jouet occupied spaces of day-to-day life in order to produce another poetic experience, namely that of “portrait poems.” Acting like a geographer or ethnologist, he undertook the task of observing space and its uses in order to draw portraits. He targeted an individual or social group: customers in a pastry shop, a hairdresser’s salon, a class of middle school students, factory workers in the Nord-Pas de Calais Region, or patients committed to a psychiatric hospital in Cotonou. All were in the process of living a unique poetic experience: freely stating their relationships with the setting, showing the poet their lifestyle and uses of space. This initial step of interacting with an ordinary place provides the basis for writing the “portrait poem”, under the scrutiny of the future reader who then becomes both the subject matter of the work and its co-producer. Once the writing is complete, the author submits his text to the reader (by either distributing a copy to read or reading to him out loud) and observes his/her reaction.

⁴ Interview conducted with Jacques Jouet on 15th October 2012.

Diagram 4:
Collaborative production of the "portrait poem"



Legend:

- ▬ dynamics - activities
- actors
- objects produced

Source: Molina G., 2013

Jouet's set-up therefore fundamentally modified the relationship to literature and both the writer's and reader's experiences. With the "portrait poem", the author-book-reader linearity has been broken. The spatial construct of literature strengthens its collaborative dynamic. Works stem from an encounter within a given space and time between writer and user; they lie within a "relational" framework comparable to that of the contemporary artistic movement observed by Nicolas Bourriaud. (1998)

The reader's status changes significantly, becoming multifaceted. For one thing, the reader is no longer simply involved downstream of poetic production through the dual effort of interpretation and appropriation through reading. Instead, he is now integrated upstream in the text production process itself. As subject of the work and a character in this "portrait poem", the reader also partners to produce the work. The relationship between the author and his reader no longer appears as spatially and temporally remote thanks to *mediation* by a series of actors, activities and objects. This author-reader cohabitation leads to a change in the type of interactions held between these two actors and, more broadly, in the literary "worlds". (Becker 2010)

Reading also assumes a new status, becoming an exhibition and rendering by the author of the outcome of collective efforts accomplished with his partner/subject: "Reading must take place audibly. I'm a stickler for that. A face-to-face response is required", explains Jouet during an interview. These poetic participation devices therefore rely on an interactive relationship between author and subject, which on occasion yields unexpected extensions. Along these lines, Jouet notes that some "subjects" of "portrait poems" have taken the participatory experience much further, of their own volition. After discussions with the poet during his "live" sessions writing their portrait, the subjects themselves tried to write a "portrait poem" of Jouet, to generate a certain reciprocity between the two. Their roles overlapped with no more room for distinction, each of them sharing time as subject, author and partner to an extreme poetic experience made possible through communing in a given place and time.

c) Literature adds a spatial dimension: Theatrical productions, demystification and acknowledgment of the literary experience

Within the realm of "portrait poems" and the "An author's attempt at exhaustion", Jouet's approach resembles an effort to expose the author's persona, now that he is no longer distant and inaccessible. The author must come forth from behind the book, where the traditional literature production process parks him; instead, he is exposing himself to the reader-spectator and offering insight into how literature is manufactured. Jouet's poetry is thus built from a relationship of proximity. Literary production undergoes a major alteration, since the relationship with the reader is no longer being mediated by the book. The setting becomes the writer's stage at work and the scene of his writing process. While modernity had proclaimed the death of the author, i.e. his relocation behind the book (Barthes 1984, Foucault 1994), Jouet's efforts cry out for his resurrection and exposure to the literature development process. Not only has the author stopped communicating *in absentia*, but now he's drawing attention to himself. Writing is displayed as it is being produced, choreographed by a staging process (e.g. installation of the writer in a transparent tent and projection of his/her work on a giant screen as part of the initiative "An author's attempt at exhaustion"). It takes place in full view of readers. A public space corresponds to the exhibition venue of the writer at work, in the theater of radical experience for both author and

user, as a synchronization between the acts of writing and reading. The book is discarded as a transactional object tying author to reader, since the writing process itself is now performing mediation. While this occupation of space provides a theatrical stage for the writing and the author's persona, it also removes any inherent mystique. Exposing the techniques used to produce written text looks very much like an unveiling to help dismantle a myth, and a big one at that, namely the "mysteries of creation" (Bourdieu 1998). On display in a public space immersed in the "creation" process, the writer's persona is rendered mortal, demystified. The staging of literary production therefore ultimately places the author's identity at risk.

The change in production venue also serves as a fundamental evolution in the eyes of readers it attracts as well as in author-reader relational interactions. For starters, the author receives the reader's direct reaction and accepts the reader's verdict without any of the typical intermediaries (bookstores, critics, librarians, etc.). Moreover, by getting set up in a public space, literature inserts itself and imposes itself in the lives of users and residents alike, in upsetting their daily routines. It must also face a radical distinction whenever an actor does not correspond to a typical reader (who chooses to take part in the work by owning a book), but instead to a user or resident discovering literature by chance according to his/her spatial practices, a so-called "unintended spectator", a "spectator almost despite himself". (Ruby 2001, 18)

During an interview, M. Jouet also explained that his work responded to a social and activist ambition: publicizing literature through sharing its production process and enhancing its accessibility to all. This push for democratization is embodied in a more general movement that tends to characterize contemporary art (Bourriaud 1998, Ardenne 2002). Literature is extracted from its usual spaces (book, bookstore, library, etc.), to be built via an "outdoor" dynamic by hosting discussions in the public sphere. Through occupying spaces like a factory or psychiatric hospital ("portrait poems"), literature seeks to encompass the neglected, the subjugated, making them not only "readers" but full-fledged actors to the literary production process, in short partners.

Conclusion

Those few pages have helped me explain how the "geography of literature" could clarify the evolution of the literature production modes and the fusional relation that contemporary literary practices have with

space. Fed by the sociology of literature and literary criticism, geography builds its legitimacy as a social science and makes a specific contribution by exploring the coproduction logics between space, literature and society.

An analysis of the production of Oulipian works has led to observe how this contemporary literature is being “crafted” by space to the same extent as contemporary art (Volvey 2008). The addition of this spatial dimension has reshuffled the typical relationship held with literature. Space has become the scope of a total literary experience, a place of inspiration as well as a site of joint literature construction, where the writing is anchored and then received by residents and space users. While this Oulipian literature is being created across a multiplicity of social interactions all made possible by space, it also helps modify not only the experience of the particular site, notably in the public sphere, but also residents’ and users’ practices and representations.

Moreover, it would be fruitful to extend this perspective by analyzing how literature “shapes” space. Research has already explored this line of investigation in recognizing that literature is asked to contribute to city building projects. Architects, for example, have collaborated with writers to refurbish public spaces (Molina 2010), and the Oulipians seem to be the most commonly cited contemporary literary references by city fathers during their public speeches (Molina 2012). The use of literature to build and run a city thus constitutes a current trend. An accurate determination is still required in an upcoming paper on Oulipian works in order to assess their contribution to contemporary urban development with greater precision. Staged and ascribed a spatial dimension, how has this literature rendered space more poetic? In what way does it help modify social representations and, in some cases, even materiality?

This article is a synthesized version in English of another one that was published in a French review in 2014 (MOLINA, Géraldine. 2014. « La fabrique spatiale de la littérature oulipienne : quand l’espace renouvelle les pratiques littéraires », available at *Espacestems.net*, <http://www.espacestems.net/articles/la-fabrique-spatiale-de-la-litterature-oulipienne/>)

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